Detroit blues singer Thornetta Davis: “DIA is important to the youth of Detroit”

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The campaign by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts is winning worldwide support.

Over the past several days, workers, retirees, artists and musicians have sent in endorsements for the October 4 demonstration, called by the SEP and IYSSE, to oppose the sale of DIA masterpieces to pay off the city’s wealthy creditors. (For more information and to endorse the campaign, visit defendthedia.org)

We publish today another selection of endorsement messages, beginning with Thornetta Davis. Davis, a singer, songwriter and recording artist, is one of Detroit’s premier blues performers. She grew up in the Detroit, and her music expresses some of the best that Detroit has produced. During the course of her 15-year career, Thornetta has won dozens of awards. When legendary greats like Ray Charles, Gladys Knight, Smokey Robinson and Etta James held concerts in Detroit, Davis’s band was the opening act. Thornetta has written many of the songs she performs and tells a story with both passion and elegance.

When asked to endorse the demonstration in front of the DIA, she immediately responded, “of course, it would be a disaster to sell off the precious works at the museum.”

Thornetta Davis, blues singer, Detroit, Michigan

“I, Thornetta Davis, agree with the aims of the October 4 demonstration in defense of the Detroit Institute of Arts and oppose the sale of art or the closure of one of the premier museums in the US as threatened by Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr. *The DIA and its artwork are important to the Detroit community and should not be sold. They are important to the youth of Detroit as learning tools, and if our children are not able to be exposed to such great works, the city will be at a great loss.*”

Deanna Pini Waldenberg, social worker, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

“Destroying or ridding a city of its art is like destroying the human soul and the heart of the city!

The sweat of men working on cars was painted on canvas for all eternity. The sweat of an honest day’s work. For a better future for progress. Those paintings and others belong to Detroit. Keep them there so that the hard work of the ordinary man will be always be remembered. We owe it to them and the artists!”

A. Niklaus, bus driver, Berlin, Germany

“Dear defenders of the Detroit Institute of Arts,

“When we heard of the threatened sale of the art at the DIA by the rich financial oligarchy, we were horrified. Even if we were not yet in the institute, we could already find out in film, pictures and writing a lot about the DIA.

“The DIA is a treasure of humanity, and now this haughty rich layer wants to sell it. The Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr can assert himself only because of the bankruptcy of the trade unions and the pseudo-lefts. We support the fight of the SEP and the WSWS to

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mobilize the working class of Detroit, the US and worldwide in defense of the DIA. We believe like Trotsky already said more than 60 years ago, the working class must defend all democratic and cultural bastions against the bourgeoisie. The defense of the DIA also belongs to it.

"Already the financial oligarchy looks worldwide to Detroit: How will the population fight back against the attack on housing, pensions, jobs and art? We have to unite our struggle.

"In solidarity with your fight from Berlin, Germany."

Ron Blascoe, retired, Madison, Wisconsin

"Selling off public art would be a crime against the working class. No way!"

Barbara Hotelling, nurse educator, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

"I lived in Michigan for 25 years, and the DIA is a jewel amongst ruin that was the fault of the Detroit leadership. With 600,000 visitors a year, you stand to lose much more than the money they bring. You lose your integrity and intelligence."

Harvey Lichtman, public high school teacher, New York City

"I strongly endorse the Socialist Equality Party's campaign to defend the DIA, all the more so because the SEP understands that this needs to be done as part of the struggle to unite the working class under a socialist program. The capitalist class is trying to take away the gains by which the working class has raised itself in struggle for more than a hundred years—the rights to health care, decent housing, pensions, education, the eight-hour day by which it can find the time to enjoy culture, and even the culture itself, as the threat to the DIA exhibits. As a high school history teacher with working class students, I have found some of the most rewarding lessons for students to be through the use of art. This campaign and the SEP deserve mass support."

Peter L, Newburgh, Maine

"If the art of the DIA is auctioned off, then this signifies the further enrichment of those who have no need for further enrichment, and the increased degradation of the 'slave' population. Making such a move represents a further claim by a tiny super-wealthy layer on wealth that is collectively produced. As profit making becomes increasingly difficult, the demands of those in power become more and more extreme. The drive towards austerity for the working class will come to an end only when that class decides that it must independently take control of society."

Alita DeMarco, Ypsilanti, Michigan

"Art is a *great* teacher and *belongs to the citizens, not the banks!* "

Donald Jones, photographer, Pleasant Ridge, Michigan

"Hands off the DIA, Hands off the people's pensions, immediate moratorium on all foreclosures! Bail out the people, not the banks!"

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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