

Support grows for campaign to defend the DIA

1 October 2013

In recent days, dozens of workers and youth in the Detroit area and around the world have sent in messages of support for the October 4 demonstration, called by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, to oppose the sale of art from the Detroit Institute of Arts.

We publish today another selection of endorsement messages. All endorsements will be collected and posted at defendthedia.org, where you can also send in your message of support.

Minda Martin, Independent Filmmaker

“Artists commissioned to make art for any city do it as a community service and an expression of how they see and remember the city. It’s an incredible mutual gift that the artist and the people of the city pay for. To sell it to the private sector is gutting the history of the city and its citizens’ memories and depriving future generations from access to a unique experience of their city and country then and now.”

Stephanie Miller, Music student, Eastern Michigan University

“I support the campaign to defend the DIA because art is not a privilege, and it should not be restricted in any way. Art is part of what makes us human; it’s the creation and enjoyment of it. To take that away is to deny a basic human right. And no one should be expected to trade one basic right for another. I also think it is significant that the murals by Diego Rivera were created by someone who was obviously a socialist and who was opposed by a section of the ruling class at the time. And now after people have been able to appreciate this work, they are once again trying to suppress it.

“People are starting to realize that the Democrats or Republicans are not going to help us, but many people have been trained to believe these are the only options. It’s our job to show the regular people like the firefighters, teachers, manual laborers, artists, students, that there is another option.”

Whiteeagle Arai, Student, University of Hawaii at Hilo

“I support this cause, to protect art. It is the future investment for our children and their children. The value of education in the arts is priceless! Hands off DIA’s art!”

Brett Farkas, Musician, Los Angeles, California (formerly from Novi, Michigan)

“This is outrageous and has nothing to do with ‘saving’ Detroit’s economy. Do they want to rape the city dry of the truly unique monuments that the city still has to offer? This is one of the world’s best museums that I’ve spent countless hours in. This is quite alarming!”

Bob Louis, Social worker, California

“I support the campaign to defend art, culture and the DIA. This art shapes and reflects the spirit and pride of Detroit, and like all great art, it is part of the history of mass social struggles for democracy and equality. The art collections and the pensions should be expanded, not sold off or cut back. Workers need to organize independently of the capitalist parties and unions, and go on the offensive. Nationalize the banks and big corporations to expand social services, and provide greater access to art for the masses!”

Scott Dennison, Taylor, Michigan

“Not one single piece of art for banksters! It *all* belongs to the people.”

Scott Pakulski, Artist, Ypsilanti, Michigan

“I love the DIA! Selling its pieces would be a shame for the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan. Keep the art for the public!”

Jen David, Detroit, Michigan

“Read the message inscribed on the *front of the building*”

Ellen Stern, Artist, Farmington Hills, Michigan

“When I examine the brushstrokes, the variations in color, the mood, the composition, the line of a painting, and the painting as a whole, I feel the paint going into my eyes, through my body, and out through my fingers, thus am I inspired to create my own art. Having the art in one main building, much of it as there is, is so important. If the art is removed and separated to different locations, where it may not even be viewable by the public anymore, it would be a great deprivation to artists and non-artists alike. It is a cruel act to deny human beings of all walks of life a connection to their cultural heritages.

“And besides all that, the whole reason some people come to Detroit and other cities is to visit the museums. The city will lose the tourist dollars it brings in, and this will make the city even poorer. The looters of the museum are shooting themselves in the foot.”

Brenda Oelbaum, Women’s Caucus for Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan

“In my opinion, this is an outrage and a crime. The city should let the state take over Belle Isle and charge entry fees before they dismantle this very important collection. Shame on you!

“I am personally notifying all our membership and making sure our local members will be there in person to protest.”

SMC, Unemployed teacher, Los Angeles, California

“The very idea that poor and working people have access to these art treasures must deeply anger the ownership classes. They are behind the attempt to destroy any and all cultural experience of the workers. An independent fight is the only mode of behavior.”

Keliher Walsh, Artist, Los Angeles, California

“What would Ford say now?”

Haley Behr, Music Student, University of Michigan, Dearborn

“Detroit is just beginning to rebuild itself. How can we get rid of something so important to our city’s culture? The DIA is part of who we are!”

Mysoon Rizk, Hamtramck, Michigan

“The calculated targeting of such cultural institutions as the DIA, with its incommensurable values (despite Christie’s), may seem trivial and harmless, but this is the kind of blow from which Detroit could never recover, at a time when it finally seems like it has a chance to do so. If Kevyn Orr and the bankruptcy court compel Detroit to sell off art from the DIA, I will feel compelled to leave Wayne County and the State of

Michigan.”

Cherie M. Redlinger, Visual artist and photographer, Alexandria, Virginia

“I wish I could be at the protest on Friday!”

Susan Barber, Artist, Levering, Michigan

“Stop the greed. I took countless students to this grand museum for years. We visited from a small rural school in Northern Michigan. Eight hours driving round trip just to have the honor to visit. It was breathtaking for them.”

Lauren S., Teacher, Detroit, Michigan

“I fully understand it’s about a city/state in need of money. And I’m sure I was probably the only person who felt getting rid of the “Michigan Promise” was a good idea to help... This isn’t the answer. Detroit gets a horrible reputation thanks to the media—the people who don’t live it first-hand and probably never even stepped foot within the boundaries. In fact, it’s so badly shown in the news, that a typical city attraction, our art museum, is considered a “hidden gem” to newcomers. The DIA considered to be fairly respectable in many different aspects. If you are to strip the city of its remaining beauty, what are you left with? Let’s keep those jazz clubs, theaters, parks, libraries, and so forth. Don’t take away all what we have going for us. We need things to fall back on that to keep our city going. It’s motivation and something to keep us sane. We can’t get rid of what makes us who we are and so different from the others.

Art isn’t a waste of time and money and it certainly isn’t useless. I mean, just look at what the Bohemians did to Paris, Soho, the Schwabing district in Munich...”

Christie Schaefer, Barista/bookseller, Washington

“The proposed selloff of the DIA’s holdings is criminal. The attitude taken by the city’s elite and Orr toward the working and poor people of Detroit—and the world—in this rotten endeavor goes beyond condescending. What they’re saying is that we do not deserve art, that art is a privilege. They’re saying that the cultural history of the human race is none of our business; that it belongs to the parasitic layers whose fortunes were made off of the sweat of our backs.

“They are wrong. Art is for everyone. Access to our cultural heritage is a right, and we need to fight for that right with everything we’ve got.”

Antoinette Bovee, Retired, Rochester, Michigan

“The DIA is a jewel in the city of Detroit, it draws people to the city. To even think about selling off the treasures housed at the DIA is a crime. The DIA is thriving as a result of good management. The city of Detroit is not well managed, and the sale of this wonderful art will not change that.”



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