”To sell off any of its assets is to rob us all!”

# Endorsements flood in on eve of DIA demonstration

**4 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 today’s 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 defend defendthedia.org, where you can also send in your message of support and find out more about the campaign.

**Efe Bes, musician, Detroit, Michigan**

“I think this demonstration is necessary and way overdue. I’m also supporting it because it has the right energy. I’ll be there.”

**Terri Cafcalas, art teacher, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan**

“The DIA is not just a connection to the glorious past of Detroit, it has remained a dynamic and living part of the community since its inception. It is a place that my students go to see the primary source of artwork and artifacts that can’t be completely understood from a picture. To sell off any of its assets is to rob us all! The DIA is a sign that Detroit is still vital, and we need to preserve and protect this important institution.”

**Leslawa Niemiec, San Diego, California**

“The front of the DIA reads: ‘Dedicated by the people of Detroit to the knowledge and enjoyment of art.’

“Selling property that belongs to the people of Detroit and held in a public trust would be a theft of an unprecedented magnitude in recent history, a crime comparable to the pillage of the European art committed by the Nazis in the previous century. In full support of your campaign, my thoughts will be with you on October 4th.”

**Darlene Waller, Detroit, Michigan**

“The DIA is more than just art, it’s the place I can take my girls to experience culture from around the world. It is a place of inspiration and discovery and encourages children and adults alike to seek out new cultures beyond their borders. Most of all, the DIA inspired me to research my roots and take pride in being an African-American woman. We cannot allow it to be torn apart!”

**Audrey, Eastern Michigan University, Ludington, Michigan**

“I am endorsing the defense for the DIA because it would be a complete upset and heartbreak to see this artwork auctioned off piece by piece, as if it has meant nothing. It would be sold to the wealthy, most of which have no ties to the beautiful, underappreciated, historical Detroit. Yes, the people of Detroit have taken some wrong turns and have made some mistakes, and yes the city is bankrupt. I don’t believe this would do anything for the city, besides make the end closer. I love Detroit, I love visiting the riverfront. The DIA is a symbol of hope for this city and the state of Michigan. I hope the rally gets the message out there, and the DIA remains public, and remains with the people of *Detroit* .”

**Elise Joan Williams, Delta College, Saginaw, Michigan**

“I am not a resident of Detroit, but I am very familiar with the area. One of the major draws for me is the DIA. I’ve almost completed my Associates of Fine Art at Delta College, and am excited about possibly transferring to Wayne State next year. I love the idea of living in Midtown, being surrounded by culture, and that the DIA is right near campus. Detroit can’t lose the DIA, it’s far too valuable.”

**Brenna, archaeology PhD student, Michigan**

“The practice of art teaches you how to live, and that there is another world beyond toil, sickness and suffering—a world of the mind and imagination, of skill, discipline, empathy, beauty and nuance. To bring an idea to life through artistic expression is thrilling and enriching. Even if it’s not your job or career, creative expression can be the means to a more enriching and healthy life.

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"To study it and experience it is also fulfilling and wonderful. Having access to art, history and science museums, to orchestras, to galleries, libraries and other institutions of culture is an essential element to the development not only of artistic sensibility but also our collective historic and cultural memory. Access to culture is the birthright of every human, and the mere mention of the destruction of that right is appalling. Even the sale of a single painting from the DIA is a crime akin to the looting of the Iraqi National Museum after the US invasion or the burning of the library of Alexandria.

"A world without access to art and the practice of art, without encouraging people to think and perceive in that way, would be desolate and bereft of life. We need more art, not less!"

**Rachele Mechem, artist, San Francisco, California**

"Please keep this institution's collection intact to enrich and educate current patrons like myself and future generations to come. Protect the DIA, the arts are an important legacy!"

**Jonathan Mitchell, writer, Madison, Alabama**

"I support the campaign to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts. The museum's collection is for the community to enjoy, and must not be sold."

**Dick Durkin, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK**

"Yet another crime against the working class waiting to happen. Good luck with the campaign."

**Jacqui Pederson, New Carlisle, Indiana**

"I am so angry at the ruling elite (with their 'aristocratic principle') for shutting down social programs and now selling off the art treasures that belong to the people of Detroit. And further, as has been pointed out, the money from the sales will end up in the pockets of the super-rich, while the various paintings, sculptures, and artworks would be hidden away in their private mansions. This shows so graphically how society is going backwards (the counterrevolution). It took revolutions to originally create the museums so that the working class could learn about and appreciate their culture and history; now the vultures are trying to grab it away, hide it, and destroy it. It's their failing system that must be destroyed so that we can defend our basic rights."

**Stephanie, Eastern Michigan University, Brownstown, Michigan**

"Yes, let's just get rid of one of the most prominent and wonderful aspects of the culture that is Detroit. This is absolute BS. How is it fair that someone who was never even elected *by the people* can just take something as important as this away? I am so sick and tired of the political bull that surrounds this city. Save the DIA or we will officially be on our way out of an educated society."

**Robin Coleman, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan**

"Defend the DIA! The DIA was created and endowed in a public trust for the people in celebration of the arts. It is not a commodity for sale. The DIA is not for sale!"

**Stu Z., Albuquerque, New Mexico**

"While these great and timeless art collections are housed within the noble institution of the DIA, the art itself 'belongs' to everyone and no one. That is, it is part of the collective heritage of all humanity. This is why we have museums, to remind us of who and what we really are. Every generation stands on the cusp of those who have gone before.

"The notion of the art being sold off to rich speculators is obscene beyond words and provokes within me a rage I can barely express. I totally support the efforts of the Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality to draw attention and mobilize opposition to this potential cultural travesty and the economic system which facilitates it."

**Bryan, physics graduate student, Bozeman, Montana**

"As a physicist, I wholeheartedly support the campaign by the SEP and IYSSE to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts. It is an affront to the whole of human culture. Art acts in tandem with science as the way humans understand nature. Any attempt to privatize art, thus privatizing the ability of people to learn about the world, should not only be met with contempt but with hostility. It is clear that no section of the ruling establishment in Detroit, nationally or internationally has any interest in the progress of the human race, only in the progress of their checkbooks.

"It then falls to the workers, students and youth—those interested in the advance of society as a whole—to defend all cultural gains and fight for a society that embraces the advance of culture."

**Matthew, music student, Ontario, Canada**

"I was appalled, though hardly surprised, by the financial dictator's threat to sell off the art at the DIA. Art in the eyes of the rapacious oligarchs, who hunger for nothing more than increasing their profits, is just another commodity, like wheat or labour, to be exploited for profit and dispensed with when it is deemed to no longer be 'useful.' The citizens of Detroit, who have suffered so much, and indeed North America and the world, are rightfully shocked and disgusted by this cynical notion. Art, whether it is the visual arts, literature, music, or film, has the ability

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not only to present the world to us as it is, but to alter and enrich our perspectives. Art is the medium through which the best and noblest aspects of mankind can be cultivated and refined. ‘Art,’ Leon Trotsky wrote, ‘is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.’

“Culture, like theory, can become a material force when it grips the masses. The working class is the only genuine constituency for culture and democratic rights. The philistinism and barbarism of the ruling class knows no bounds. The art of the DIA is not the property of the speculators, usurers, and outright criminals on Wall Street or in the federal, state, or municipal governments. It is the property of the people. Only through the mobilization of the working class, in defense of both cultural and democratic rights, can a concerted effort be made to defend our artistic heritage and pave the way for new artistic developments and the cultivation of genuine social equality.”

**Lee Wildgen, Toronto, Canada**

“As someone who works in the arts in Canada I look to art and culture to humanize what is an increasingly inhuman world. The stripping of the DIA of so many wonderful treasures to pay off the financial aristocracy is nothing short of criminal—an affront not only to the public, but to artists such as Diego Rivera who created their art for the benefit of all and who showed with their work and otherwise their opposition to a social order based on exploitation and oppression. This looting of social wealth by the wealthy, which has become the order of the day, exemplifies all that they fought against.

“Having stripped American workers, and not least those in the Detroit area, of so many hard-won gains, the political elite are now bent on depriving the general population access to a vital heritage by selling it off piecemeal to the highest bidder. In drawing the world’s attention to this travesty, this campaign serves to illuminate our common interests. In promoting an understanding that this art belongs to all of us, and has a vital role to play in uniting artists, and working people everywhere, we move closer to a world where all can share and participate in the material as well as cultural achievements of humanity.”

**Dennis A. Stein, graphic artist (retired), Albuquerque, New Mexico**

“Long live the DIA and the people’s art within!”

**Doran, teacher, Buckeye, Arizona**

“The DIA belongs to the people of Detroit, and they must stand up and fight against this outrage. We are with you in solidarity! Cultural treasures like the DIA are not unaffordable luxuries given to us by the government. WE give them to *ourselves* by working together to make our cities good places to live. And we must not allow ourselves to be robbed by a tiny minority of the rich and powerful who see value only in corporate profits and their own private enrichment.”

**Lawrence, teacher, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

“I wholeheartedly endorse the campaign to save the DIA. The moves by the super-rich and their flunkies to sell off artistic treasures that should be accessible to all expose the ruling crass (not a typo) as barbarians and thugs. And it highlights the fact that only the working class can and will take up the fight to defend our cultural legacy, which is as essential to humanity as food, water and shelter.

“Best wishes on your campaign. Keep up the good fight, and may the working class everywhere take heart from it.”

**Matthew MacEgan, Tampa, Florida**

“The attack on the DIA is an attack on the cultural awareness of the working class. The rich prefer the most uneducated and docile population possible for exploitation. We must preserve our cultural heritage by defending it from this attack and all future attempts by the rich to pilfer it. If we do not, collections like this may not survive the struggles to come.”

**Jarod George Bardon, nurse, Troy, Michigan**

“The DIA houses one of the greatest and more unique collections of art not only in the country but in the world. The DIA is a symbol of pride for Detroit. The access to works of art for the people of Detroit and surrounding communities is a definite right. These works were meant to be displayed for generations upon generations of patrons: locally, nationally, and internationally. The sale of the DIA works of art is absurd and a disgrace not only to Detroit but to art institutions the world over.”

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