

Endorsements for Defend the DIA campaign

10 October 2013

We publish today another selection of endorsement messages from around the world for the campaign in defense of the Detroit Institute of Arts. On October 4, the Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality held a demonstration that attracted hundreds of workers and young people. This was only the beginning of the campaign to oppose the attack on culture and defend all the rights of the working class.

All endorsements will be collected and posted at defendthedia.org, where you can also send in your message of support and find out more about the campaign.

Diana Prince

“When lands of old were conquered and the first libraries destroyed, we wept for the loss of our ancient scrolls, tablets, works of art... the chronicles of our cultural development, and what it is to be human. To auction off the contents of the DIA as assets is far more insidious, because it is being perpetuated by those who swear to protect our fair city—barbarians at best who may never understand that the value of art is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Tod Stevens, Architect, Birmingham, Michigan

“I support the importance of art to a society. They are languages that all people speak that cut across racial, cultural, social, educational, and economic barriers and enhance cultural appreciation and awareness.

“They provide opportunities for self-expression, bringing the inner world into the outer world of concrete reality. They develop both independence and collaboration. They make it possible to use personal strengths in meaningful ways and to bridge into understanding sometimes difficult abstractions through these strengths. They improve academic achievement—enhancing test scores, attitudes, social skills,

critical and creative thinking. They exercise and develop higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and ‘problem-finding.’ They provide the means for every student to learn.” (Adapted from “Why are the arts important?” by Dee Dickenson)

Tatiana K, Rochester, Michigan

“Taking away the art and culture from this city that is starting over and thriving on art would be the worst crime to the working class, and to us as students learning and creating art of our own.”

Josh Holmes, Detroit, Michigan

“I wholly support a popular movement to save and preserve art, history and the DIA, bound up with the opposition to financial dictator Kevin Orr and the system of the corporate-financial elite, being advanced from the working-class based on an international and socialist perspective.”

Jayantha Chandrasena, Retiree Pilyandala, Sri Lanka

“I strongly condemn the attempt by the US government preparing to sell off DIA—the cultural achievements which are the achievements of humankind. We must join the SEP campaign to defend the DIA as well as the democratic rights of the international working class as well as the peasants. I believe only the independent working class leadership can defend and win democratic rights, eventually aiming for socialism through working class leadership.”

Adam Boehmer, Graphic designer/artist/musician, Seattle, Washington

“Selling the city’s art to pay off debts will only worsen the problem. Cultural artifacts imbue a sense of stability and pride in its citizens, and to take them away from an already anxious population would only further embed a sense of shame. The city of Detroit must take other actions to pay off its debt. The selling of a huge body of curated cultural beacons of hope, pride, and creativity is not the answer.”

Birgit Huttemann-Holz, Artist, Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

“The DIA’s Art is nonnegotiable!

“Let’s demonstrate every Friday, 5:30-6:30pm to make it clear this is our museum and art. It has been done in Switzerland, Basel 1967, where the youth flooded the streets to protest the selling of two Picasso paintings. In 1967, a Basel collector wanted to sell Picasso’s works. The people of Basel took a public vote approving a city loan of CHF6 million to the Kunstmuseum to acquire the paintings and keep the paintings in Basel. But it was tied to the condition that 2.4 million had to be collected through donations. The Basel people, especially the young, went to the streets and demonstrated under the motto “All You Need Is Pablo”. They organized a “Begging day” where money was collected, art was sold and events took place all over Basel for a whole day. They succeeded; the paintings were bought and stayed. Isn’t it amazing to see people taking to the street *for* something rather than *against* it?

“Picasso was so touched that he donated several paintings.

“Let’s DO THIS! All you need is DIA!”

Thomas Scripps, London

“It gives me great heart to witness the struggles being waged by the working class of Detroit. Assaulted down to the cultural core of the city, students and working people are taking a stand against the destruction being wrought by the bourgeoisie and political elite. It is an inspiration to those similarly oppressed across the globe. Just as Detroit becomes an example of capitalism’s ruthless persecution of every aspect of the working class and its community, so will it

become a beacon of resistance to such attacks.

“I wholeheartedly agree with the aims of the October 4th demonstration and wish the defenders of the DIA every success in their further campaigns.”

Kristen S, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia

“The majesty of museums is that they create a space where the seemingly magical are given credence, where that sense of ‘whether’ is, amazingly, verified. Especially in this time of cultural crisis, stripping Detroit of this glorious and inspiring collection would indicate nothing more than the abandonment of hope in the future.

“Museums do not develop as independent structures—they are driven by social, national, financial, cultural, and personal interest. In the financial hardship, let the DIA stand as a tribute to the city, to humanity, to art, and to the universal desire for engagement and inspiration and awe.”

Tyson Burghardt, Physician, Howell, Michigan

“The DIA is one of the cultural treasures of Motown. It would be the very height of irresponsibility and short-sightedness to dissolve it in the interest of creditors.”

Shayna, Yoga instructor, Detroit, Michigan

“Henri Matisse, a Fauve artist, once said, ‘Creativity Takes Courage.’ Defend the Detroit Institute of Arts. Let no debt condone the selling of the DIA’s art.”



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