



## KENNEDY CENTER, JOHN LEGEND LAUNCH NATIONAL DIGITAL YOUTH CAMPAIGN FOR ANNIVERSARY OF MARVIN GAYE'S "WHAT'S GOING ON"

### "What's Going On...NOW" Aims to Inspire and Engage Teens

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Singer-songwriter John Legend joined the Kennedy Center today to launch "What's Going On...NOW," a national arts and digital media campaign to inspire and engage youth while marking the 40th anniversary of Marvin Gaye's iconic album and his 1972 Kennedy Center performance. Online now at [www.whatsgoingonnow.org](http://www.whatsgoingonnow.org), the project will culminate with two concerts at the Kennedy Center May 3-4, 2012 featuring John Legend with Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Using Marvin Gaye's music as a catalyst, the Kennedy Center's campaign asks: "How have things changed in the last 40 years? What's going on...now?" Young people can go to [www.whatsgoingonnow.org](http://www.whatsgoingonnow.org) and share their own creative perspectives on the similarities and differences between Marvin Gaye's "then" and their own "now." They can upload video, photos, poems, music - whatever art form inspires their own creative expression.

"'What's Going On' is an anthem for today's times," said Darrell M. Ayers, Vice President of Education at the Kennedy Center. "Marvin Gaye's music hit an emotional nerve and awakened many to a new social consciousness. We're seeing that same awakening now across America. Through this project, we are asking young people to capture the spirit of 'What's Going On...NOW' and use the arts to tell us what is happening in their lives and communities today."

In 1971, Marvin Gaye's album spurred audiences to reflect on the times. In 1972, he performed *What's Going On* during the Kennedy Center's inaugural season. The Kennedy Center will celebrate this historic performance with a week of celebrations in May 2012 that will culminate in a national youth summit with representatives from Washington, D.C. and seven youth groups around the country. Partner cities include: Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and Santa Fe. On May 3 and 4, John Legend, Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings, and the National Symphony Orchestra will come together to reimagine Gaye's performance in an evening-length concert.

Today, Gaye's classic Motown's recorded music catalog is managed by Universal Music Enterprises (UME). "Marvin Gaye's music resonated across America and helped shape a generation," said Bruce Resnikoff, President/CEO, Universal Music Enterprises. "The 'What's Going On...NOW' campaign will ensure that his music continues to inspire, educate, and engage America."

The Kennedy Center will curate the user-submitted content and feature it online and during the May events. From the work chosen to be featured on [whatsgoingonnow.org](http://whatsgoingonnow.org), two participants will be selected for a trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the May 3 Kennedy Center concert. Additionally, performances and events will be held that week in Washington and around the country that will celebrate the intersection of youth-produced digital media and the arts.

“We know that the arts boost learning and achievement for students,” said Nichole Pinkard, Founder, Digital Youth Media. “Digital literacy has become just as critical to student success as traditional reading and writing.”

“What’s Going On...NOW” will apply the tools and platforms young people already use to communicate and help focus their thinking and artistic expressions on our history, culture, and current events. In doing so, the project becomes a unique collaboration between some of the country’s leading youth development, digital learning, and entertainment industry organizations.

### **ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER**

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President Kennedy. The nation’s busiest performing arts facility, it annually hosts approximately 2,000 performances for audiences totaling nearly two million; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more. Now in its 41st season, the Center presents performances of music, dance and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts and arts management education. The education programs of the Kennedy Center have become models for communities across the country and have unlocked the door to learning for millions of young people. This has been accomplished by fostering creativity, teaching discipline, improving self-esteem, and challenging students to think in new ways, as well as offering them experiences in the pure enjoyment and excitement of the performing arts. For more information, visit the Center’s website at [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org).

For more information about “What’s Going on...NOW,” please visit [www.whatsgoingonnow.org](http://www.whatsgoingonnow.org).

For more information about the Kennedy Center, please visit [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org).

Please visit [facebook.com/kennedycenter](https://facebook.com/kennedycenter) for behind-the-scenes news, special offers, advance notice of events, and other related Kennedy Center Facebook pages.

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Patrons 30 and under and active-duty members of the military are invited to join the Kennedy Center’s [MyTix](http://MyTix) program for special discount offers and chances to win free tickets.

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