



National Recreation and Park Association

ABOUT MARVIN GAYE

Marvin Gaye (April 2, 1939 – April 1, 1984) was an American singer-songwriter, and one of the greatest musical legends ever to come out of Washington. Starting as a member of the doo-wop group The Moonglows in the late fifties, he ventured into a solo career in 1960. Gaye ranked as Motown Records' top-selling solo artist during the sixties.

Gaye was born on April 2, 1939 at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. As a teenager, he grew up in East Capitol Dwellings, at #12 60th Street, NE, near the east end of where Marvin Gaye Park is today. Neighbors recall him regularly walking down the hill from his home to the Greenfield section of the park to play music beside the stream. These natural experiences in his childhood might have inspired him to sing about environmental justice in such world-renowned songs as "Mercy, Mercy Me, Ecology" and "What's Going On".

One of Gaye's first performances was at the nearby Crystal Lounge. Now transformed by Washington Parks & People into the Riverside community center, the Crystal Lounge was a trendy club in community. It became the local hangout and performance venue for Marvin Gaye and the Rainbows, and experienced noteworthy success before closing in the 1980's.

In 1960, Gaye moved to Detroit where he signed with Motown Records. During the next decade he created such hits as "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)," "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," "You're All I Need to Get By," and "I Heard It Through the Grapevine."

In 1971, Gaye released two huge hits: "What's Going On" and "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)." After the release of "What's Going On," Motown renegotiated a contract with Gaye that allowed him creative control. The deal was worth \$1 million, making Gaye the highest-earning black artist at that time.

His mid-1970s work including the Let's Get It On and I Want You albums helped influence the quiet storm, urban adult contemporary and slow jam genres. After a self-imposed European exile in the late seventies, Gaye returned with the 1982 Grammy-winning hit, "Sexual Healing" and the Midnight Love album before his death.

Gaye's father fatally shot him on April 1, 1984, one day before his 45th birthday. Gaye was posthumously inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. He was also inducted to Hollywood's Rock Walk in 1989 and was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1990.

In 2008, Rolling Stone ranked Gaye #6 on its list of The Greatest Singers of All Time, and #18 on its list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time.

Marvin Gaye Park was officially rededicated on April 2, 2006, on what would have been the singer's 67th birthday. Naming the park in his honor celebrates the rich community heritage, inspires people to pursue their greatest dreams, and recognizes the tens of thousands of DC residents who, like Marvin Gaye, grew up through adversity in public housing. Just as Marvin Gaye's music never forgot the place where it began, that place will never forget Marvin Gaye.