

# APOLLO

**Apollo Theater  
Presents**

## **John Legend and Salamishah Tillet in Conversation On the Artist's Duty**

**Wednesday, September 23 at 7pm  
On Apollo's Digital Stage**

*“An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times. I think that is true of painters, sculptors, poets, musicians. As far as I'm concerned, it's their choice, but I CHOOSE to reflect the times and situations in which I find myself.”* – Nina Simone

**Harlem, NY** – September 8, 2020 – On **September 23 at 7:00pm ET**, the Apollo Theater presents **In Conversation: John Legend and Salamishah Tillet**. The event will be presented free of charge on the Apollo Digital Stage at [www.ApolloTheater.org](http://www.ApolloTheater.org). Inspired by their mutual role model Nina Simone and her thoughts on the artist's duty to reflect contemporary issues, Legend and Tillet will discuss art and social justice, the roots of Legend's activism and what he believes the responsibilities of artists are at this critical moment in American history.

For over 86 years, the Apollo has served as an incubator for social and civic advocacy in Harlem, and the Black community at-large. This conversation extends the non-profit Theater's commitment to using its internationally renowned stage to amplify Black voices and stimulate timely conversations on race and social justice. To RSVP for the program, visit [this link](#).

Multiplatinum recording artist, composer, activist, and philanthropist John Legend has been an outspoken champion of civil and human rights. Throughout his life, Legend has been deeply committed to philanthropic efforts, launching several organizations, including the [Show Me Campaign](#), an organization that works to break the cycle of poverty through education. His nonprofit Free America funds formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs through a program called Unlocked Futures offering a 16-month accelerator. Founded by John Legend in 2014, FREEAMERICA is a campaign to transform America's criminal justice system. When 70 million individuals across the country have a criminal record, mass incarceration can only be categorized as an epidemic due to decades of misguided policies and practices. Legend also serves on the board of the Harlem Village Academies, a progressive K-12 charter school network.

Scholar, writer, and activist, Salamishah Tillet is the Henry Rutgers Professor of African-American and African Studies and Creative Writing at Rutgers University–Newark and a contributing critic-at-large at *The New York Times*.

The program is part of the Apollo's Fall all-digital season, streaming free of charge on the [Apollo Digital Stage](#). As a non-profit organization, the Apollo depends on the generous funding from donors, foundations, and the community at-large. Please consider donating to the Apollo

Theater in support of these free virtual programs. To do so, please visit <https://www.apollotheater.org/donate>.

### **ABOUT JOHN LEGEND**

Multiplatinum artist John Legend has garnered eleven Grammy Awards, an Academy Award, a Golden Globe Award, a Tony Award, and an Emmy Award, making Legend the first African-American man to earn an EGOT. Legend has released seven celebrated albums including, “Get Lifted” (2004), “Once Again” (2006), “Evolver” (2008), “Love in the Future” (2013), “Darkness and Light” (2016), “A Legendary Christmas” (2018), and “Bigger Love” (2020). Legend starred in NBC's "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert" in 2018, winning an Emmy for Outstanding Variety Special and nominated for Outstanding Lead Actor (Limited Series). Legend joined "The Voice" for Season 16 (2019) and is currently a coach on Season 19. John is a partner in Get Lifted Film Co., serving as an Executive Producer for "Southern Rites," "United Skates," WGN America's "Underground," and films "Southside with You" and "La La Land." As a philanthropist, Legend initiated the #FREEAMERICA campaign in 2015 to change the national conversation surrounding our country's misguided criminal justice policies and to end mass incarceration.

### **ABOUT THE APOLLO THEATER**

The legendary Apollo Theater—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging artists and launching legends. Since its founding, the Apollo has served as a center of innovation and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world.

With music at its core, the Apollo’s programming extends to dance, theater, spoken word, and more. This includes the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of Master Artist-in-Residence Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *Between the World and Me* and the New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*; special programs such as the blockbuster concert *Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo*; *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*; and the annual Africa Now! Festival. The non-profit Apollo Theater is a performing arts presenter, commissioner, and collaborator that also produces festivals; large-scale dance and musical works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend the Apollo’s legacy through a contemporary lens, including the Women of the World (WOW) Festival; as well as other multidisciplinary collaborations with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first *Amateur Night* contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms and has ushered in the emergence of many new musical genres—including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Among the countless legendary performers who launched their careers at the Apollo are Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, H.E.R., D’Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, and Miri Ben Ari; and the Apollo’s forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy. For more information about the Apollo, visit [www.ApolloTheater.org](http://www.ApolloTheater.org).

### **SUPPORT**

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