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Democracy Dies in Darkness

‘The music will go on’: Go-go returns days after a complaint silenced a D.C. store

By **Marissa J. Lang**

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A District electronics shop known for its booming go-go beats turned the music back on Wednesday after days of outrage from residents and elected officials over the sudden silence.

T-Mobile chief executive John Legere said [in a tweet](#) that “the music should NOT stop in D.C.!” With that social media post, the company reversed [an earlier decision](#) urging Central Communications to tone down the music in response to a complaint from a resident at a nearby luxury apartment building.

T-Mobile and Metro PCS are “proud to be part of the Shaw community — the music will go on and our dealer will work with the neighbors to compromise volume,” Legere wrote.



John Legere
@JohnLegere

I've looked into this issue myself and the music should NOT stop in D.C.! [@TMobile](#) and [@MetroByTMobile](#) are proud to be part of the Shaw community - the music will go on and our dealer will

work with the neighbors to compromise volume.

twitter.com/Marissa_Jae/st...

Marissa J. Lang @Marissa_Jae

A Metro PCS vendor in Shaw has become ground zero in what some call #DC's latest culture war. Days of #DontMuteDC protests & a town hall aim to address issues at its root: gentrification and a growing sense that DC culture is being eroded, bit by bit.

[washingtonpost.com/local/wheres-m...](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/wheres-m...)

1,870 11:00 AM - Apr 10, 2019

[1,393 people are talking about this](#)

The announcement came minutes before a scheduled news conference outside Central Communications, a Metro PCS vendor on the corner of Seventh Street and Florida Avenue NW. The go-go was going again within the hour.

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Droves of cars, buses and ambulances honked their support as D.C. residents gathered to dance.

But the happy ending is only part of the story, community activists said Wednesday.

The District's struggle to maintain its identity and culture in the face of rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods and an influx of newcomers is bigger than go-go, they said, and it's only just begun.

"I'm happy, as a black man in Washington, D.C., to say that it wasn't just black people who came together. It was everybody who came together to say, 'We got to do the right thing,' " community activist Ron Moten told a gaggle of reporters and residents outside the store. "That's the only thing that can make this city better: if we all come together and address the issues of gentrification."

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Several D.C. advocates criticized the speed at which elected officials, including Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), jumped to support the [#DontMuteDC](#) effort this week. They said those same officials have supported policies that disenfranchise the communities in which go-go was born.

“Go-go culture, to be frank, was historically created by people who came from neighborhoods that are often overlooked,” said Aja Taylor, director of advocacy and organizing for the nonprofit [Bread for the City](#). “When you look at displacement that’s happening in the city, these are the same neighborhoods. Black and brown people who are living on low income, who created this culture and made D.C. what it is today are being pushed out.”

Bowser’s office did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

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In a budget proposal last month, the mayor proposed spending an additional \$55 million for affordable-housing programs. But critics said Bowser’s plan doesn’t allocate enough to homelessness services, eviction prevention, housing vouchers or repairs to the District’s deteriorating public housing.

“The mayor didn’t put a dime toward fixing public housing, even though the Housing Authority tells us there are 2,500 units in a critical state of disrepair,” said Amber W. Harding, an attorney with the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. “The chutzpah that it takes for the mayor who just passed this budget to the council to tweet that she supports go-go when she has really failed to invest in the people who listen to go-go — low-income, black and brown residents of this city. I just can’t believe the hypocrisy.”

Anthony Lorenzo Green, an Advisory Neighborhood Commission member from Deanwood, accused the mayor of emboldening “gentrifiers” in the District’s rapidly changing neighborhoods.

“This week, we showed up to defend our culture,” Green tweeted. “The challenge is showing up every time our folks speak their truth.”

A town hall scheduled for Thursday will discuss some of these issues by asking D.C. residents to discuss gentrification’s effect on D.C. culture, Moten said.

D.C. Council member Robert C. White Jr. (D-At Large) said he thinks the go-go controversy might prove to be a blessing in disguise by inspiring community members to get involved in defending D.C. culture against erosion.

“Maybe this is the win we need to remind people that if you engage, you can make a change,” White said. “This has been one big message of engagement.”

Go-go music was born in the District in the 1970s and became known as the pulse of the city. For decades, it could be heard pouring out of nightclubs and concert venues, but over the past several years, the genre has struggled as the city has changed.

But over the past 48 hours, go-go, it seemed, was everywhere.

Sympathetic businesses, including Compass Coffee, pumped the percussive funk through store speakers as a sign of solidarity.



Marissa J. Lang

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Here's the scene outside Central Communications in Shaw, minutes after @JohnLegere announced the store could turn its go-go back on. Music going, cars honking in support, #DC residents dancing around cameras lining the sidewalk.

#DontMuteDC



391 11:13 AM - Apr 10, 2019

171 people are talking about this

A go-go concert on the corner of 14th and U streets NW late Wednesday had attendees dancing in the street, on top of vending machines and police cruisers.

For several nights after a tweet ignited the #DontMuteDC movement, protesters lined Florida Avenue outside the Shay — the luxury apartment building where a resident complained about the Shaw store’s outdoor music — and blasted go-go from their car stereos into the night.

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Christopher Proctor, a member of go-go band TOB, which performed Tuesday at a protest in support of Central Communications, said he hopes the attention on go-go will inspire young people to revive the District’s floundering go-go scene.

“This is a start, but there’s still more work to do to reach and engage the next generation,” he said.

Donald Campbell, who owns the Metro PCS shop in Shaw, said he was relieved when T-Mobile called him at 6 a.m. Wednesday to give him the go-ahead to resume playing go-go.

“I feel good,” Campbell said. “We’re going to turn the music on.”

With the touch of a button, the drums began. Go-go coursed through a speaker at the front of the store.

The crowd bounced and swayed to the beat, holding up signs that declared, “I love go-go” and “Don’t Mute D.C.”

Jasmine Williams held her son, 9-month-old Jerell, as he bobbed unsteadily on tiny legs. Williams said it was important for her to bring her son to the store to hear the music come back to life.

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He was born to go-go, she said. The music is in his blood.

“I call go-go my church music,” Williams said. “I’m from here, born and bred in D.C. So I feel it in my bones.”

