



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

VIRTUAL MLK **EXPERIENCE**

Smithsonian National Museum of American History



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

On October 13-15, 2017, the vMLK Project was featured as part of the ACC Smithsonian Creativity and Innovation Festival at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Through the stations of the vMLK exhibit, publics experienced and interpreted what was, what is, and what has never been in relation to the struggle for full civic integration and freedom as it unfolded in North Carolina during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s.

The vMLK Project was located in the Civic Engagement area of the National Museum of American History near the Greensboro Sit-In lunch counter exhibit. Multifaceted experiences included the following: virtual reality headset to see/hear the speech in 3-D, historical timeline and archives about the speech context, listening stations featuring the speech experienced from different auditory perspectives, gaming simulation for digitally moving around the sanctuary while listening to the speech, response and feedback system featuring whiteboards and online surveys.



ABOUT THE VIRTUAL MLK PROJECT

Just days after the start of the Greensboro sit-ins In February 1960, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered what would become a widely influential speech titled, “A Creative Protest.” It marked the first time Dr. King openly encouraged activists to disrupt and break the law through non- violent confrontation even if it meant ‘filling up the jails.’ Despite the historical and rhetorical significance of what is commonly known as the “Fill Up the Jails” speech, the old White Rock sanctuary was razed and there were no known recordings of King's influential speech.

The relationship between oratory and action, between changes of heart and changes in lived, day-to-day experiences has long been examined, articulated, challenged, and denied. Yet, as King’s speech at the White Rock Baptist Church indicates, public address is a significant part of a larger set of conversations, actions, and relationships that ultimately lead to changes in both hearts and minds, thinking and acting.

Investigators on the Virtual Martin Luther King, Jr. Project began with a digital humanities vision: to develop an immersive recreation (an interactive digitally rendered experience) of this historic moment in the US civil rights movement.

Using advanced digital and audio technology, the resulting vMLK project provides students, scholars, and citizens with a deeper encounter with civil rights history and a new understanding of the nature and process of social transformation.

Phases 1 through 3 (2014-2017) focused on creating a multifaceted experience of the speech and exhibiting those experiences for various publics. For instance, the vMLK project was featured during an event held at NC State in September, 2016. Over 300 people participated in interactive tours of the vMLK project. Mobile versions of the vMLK project were also presented at DePaul University in Chicago and the University of Alabama during the Spring of 2017.

The fourth phase of the project focuses on expanding mobile, public exhibitions across the nation, culminating in two significant public commemorations: 50th anniversary of King's assassination (2018) and the 60th anniversary of King's "Fill up the Jails" speech (2020). Upcoming public exhibitions in 2018 across various locations include North Carolina and Michigan. Most recently, the project was selected for exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum of American History as part of the ACCelerate Festival, October 13-15.

VMLK EXPERIENCE AT THE **SMITHSONIAN**



Virtual
Reality



Overview of
the Project



Listening
Station



Gaming
Platform



Your Creative
Protest



vMLK
Feedback



01. PUBLIC PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Led by the co-principal investigators of the vMLK project, Drs. Victoria Gallagher and Keon Pettway, audiences engage in guided listening of the different sound experiences of King’s 1960 speech, “A Creative Protest [Fill up the Jails]” This experience focuses on how sound functions to immerse listeners into a moment in history and to the ways and extent to which public address is a fully embodied experience.

Technology required: sound system with speakers, preferably able to play 5.1 sound mix. Optionally, large screens are needed for a combined visual and sound performance (preferably able to accommodate up to 280-degree visual surround).



02. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Historic archival photographs, research materials and documentaries provide the basis for the visual aspects of the vMLK project. These are arranged in a presentation that provides a historic timeline for the events leading up to the 1960 speech and its location, a timeline of the development of the project and an overview of the phases and elements of the project.

Technology required: large display screen, directional speakers and computer (i.e., laptop, personal computer, etc.).



1960

19 'A CREATIVE PROTEST'

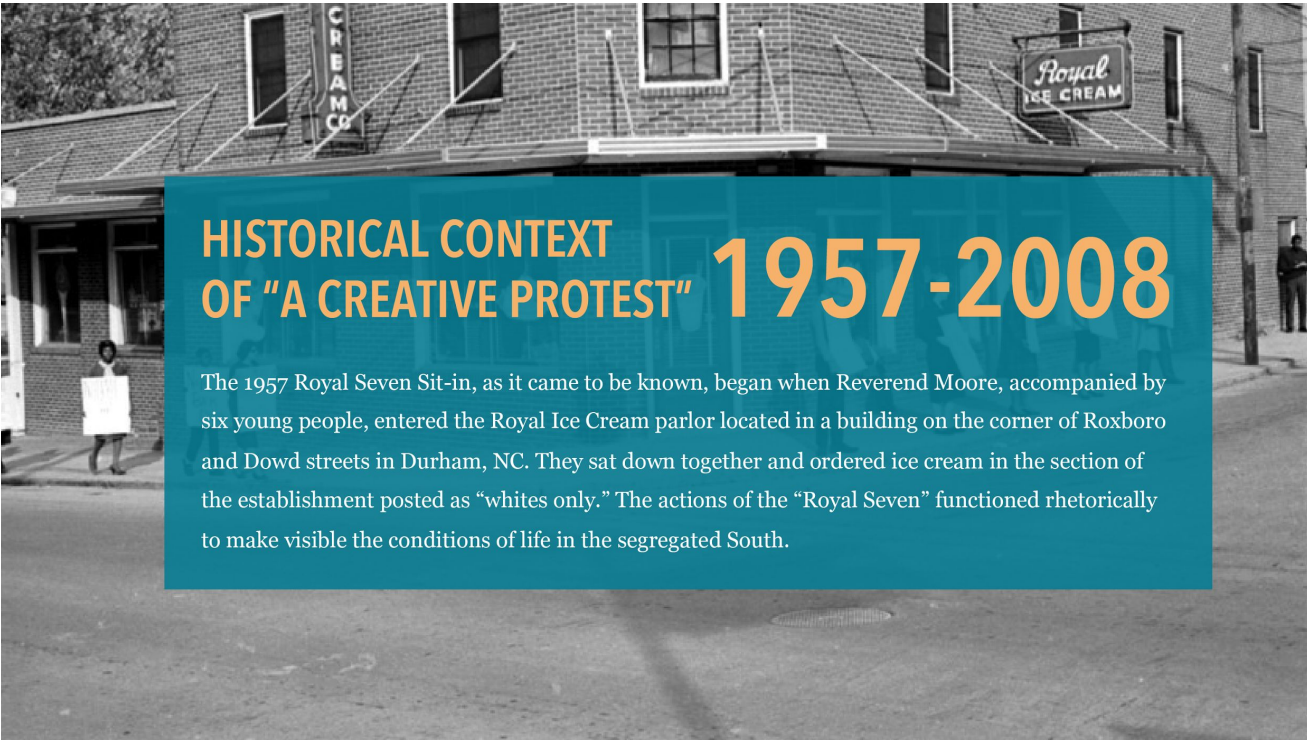
Two weeks after the start of the Greensboro sit-ins in 1960, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his speech titled, "A Creative Protest" at White Rock Baptist Church in Durham, NC. Participants estimate that close to a thousand individuals attended the speech including congregation members, community leaders and students from Duke University's Divinity School.



2008

20 ROYAL ICE CREAM 08 SIT-IN MARKER

After more than 50 years, the members of the Royal Seven were formally recognized for their role in desegregating Durham's restaurants and public places. The State Historic Commission approved a plaque which was erected on the Durham corner where the 1957 sit-in occurred.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF "A CREATIVE PROTEST" 1957-2008

The 1957 Royal Seven Sit-in, as it came to be known, began when Reverend Moore, accompanied by six young people, entered the Royal Ice Cream parlor located in a building on the corner of Roxboro and Dowd streets in Durham, NC. They sat down together and ordered ice cream in the section of the establishment posted as "whites only." The actions of the "Royal Seven" functioned rhetorically to make visible the conditions of life in the segregated South.

03. LISTENING EXPERIENCE

For individuals who wish to explore the audio recordings individually, this experience allows them to do so. Four professional recordings/sound mixes provide distinct listening experiences of the speech and are helpful for audiences to begin to understand how an individual's position in the room and physical relation to the speaker impacts one's experience of a speech.

Additionally, they can view the video of the June 2014 re-enactment given at the new White Rock Baptist Church that is the basis of the project.

Technology required: headphones and computer devices (i.e., laptop, tablet, mobile device, or personal computer, and mouse).



LISTEN TO THE SPEECH



Historical perspective
of the speech



Speaker's perspective
from the podium



Audience's
perspective from the
floor



Audience's
perspective from the
balcony



Speech reenactment
at White Rock Baptist
Church

04. VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE

This experience provides viewers an embodied sense of what it might have been like to sit, stand, and move around the historic sanctuary, listening to King's speech with others.

Technology required: the VR experience can be made available in two ways: through a mobile device using a VR viewfinder and headphones or through an Oculus Rift headset.

05. GAMING SIMULATION EXPERIENCE

This experience enables viewers to move themselves around the historic sanctuary while listening to the speech using a game controller to do so.

Technology required: gaming computer such as Alienware with headphones (preferably with a game controller).



