VIRTUAL MLK PROJECT

DIGITAL HUMANITIES PROJECT OF MLK’S “FILL UP THE JAILS” SPEECH
Exhibition Format for Online and Material Spaces

While each exhibition component—historical experience, collective sound experience, listening experience, virtual reality experience, simulation experience, and feedback/share your creative protest—may be experienced individually in online and/or material spaces, they may also be customized a number of different ways for a transmedia experience, including a public performance, walking tour, virtual reality tour, and online exhibition. The vMLK project works with institutions to develop a unique format.

Exhibitions have been featured at a number of online and public spaces across the nation, including the James B. Hunt Library, recipient of the 2016 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. Recently, the vMLK project was invited by the King Institute at Stanford University to exhibit at an event in the city of Palo Alto in April, 2018 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of King's assassination.

The selected list of events below provide a sense of how each of the six experiences can be uniquely configured for online and material spaces. After the schedule, descriptions of each exhibition component and several sample configurations are provided.

Feb. 2019 - Rochester, NY
Rochester Institute of Technology

Public Sound Performance, VR Tour, & Public Lecture: Historical Experience, Listening Experience, VR Experience, Simulation Experience, Share Your Creative Protest

Oct. 2018 - Milwaukee, WI
Rhetorical Leadership Lecture Series

Public Sound Performance & VR Tour: Listening Experience, VR Experience, Share Your Creative Protest

Oct. 2017 - Washington, DC
Smithsonian Museum

Public Sound Performance & VR Tour: Historical Experience, Listening Experience, VR Experience, Simulation Experience, Share Your Creative Protest

Sep. 2017 - NC State University
Parents and Families Weekend

Walking Tour: Historical Experience, Listening Experience, VR Experience, Simulation Experience, Share Your Creative Protest

September 2017 - Richmond, Virginia
Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Public Sound Performance: Historical Experience and Listening Experience

February 2017 - DePaul University
Rhetoric Across Borders Lecture

Public Sound Performance: Historical Experience and Listening Experience

April 2017 - University of Alabama
Hidden Humanities Lecture

Public Sound Performance: Historical Experience and Listening Experience

September 2016 - NC State University
Experiencing King at NC State

Walking Tour: Historical Experience, Listening Experience, VR Experience, Simulation Experience, Share Your Creative Protest

Fall/Spring 2015-2018 - NC State University
COM 110 Public Speaking

Walking Tour: Historical Experience and Listening Experience

February 2015 - NC State University
50th Anniversary of “Fill Up the Jails”

Public Sound Performance: Historical Experience and Listening Experience

June 2014 - Durham, NC
Speech re-creation event at White Rock Baptist Church

Public Performance: Historical Experience
EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

01. Collective Sound Experience

On June 8, 2014, scholars from NC State University partnered with the White Rock Baptist Church congregation, the Durham Ministerial Alliance, political leaders, and the surrounding communities to stage a public recreation of the speech. The recordings from that event are the basis for the 3D audio-visual installations of the vMLK project.

The collective sound experience focuses on how sound functions to immerse listeners into a moment in history, providing a sense of how and to what extent an experience of public address is a fully embodied experience. Audiences engage in guided listening of the different sound experiences of King’s 1960 speech, “A Creative Protest (Fill up the Jails).”

**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).
EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

02. Historical Experience

As with many significant events in history, the events that led up to Dr. Martin Luther King’s delivery of his speech, “A Creative Protest,” in February 1960 are, in some ways, as important as the speech itself. These events help us to understand how this particular speech came to be delivered by this particular person on this particular day in this particular church and city.

Historic archival photographs, research materials and documentaries provide the basis for the visual aspects of the vMLK project. Participants experience a historical timeline for the events leading up to the 1960 speech and its location, a timeline of the development of the vMLK project and an overview of the phases and elements.

Technology required: large display screen, directional speakers, computer system (laptop, etc.)

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 Dail 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.

20 ROYAL ICE CREAM 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.
EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

03. Listening Experience

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 system (laptop, tablet, mobile device, personal computer, etc.).
04. VR Experience

The Virtual Reality 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. 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).
EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

06. Share Your Creative Protest

Given the multifaceted nature of this project, determination of how to evaluate user experience, particularly successful audience engagement, is also multi-faceted. Audiences/visitors are also encouraged to provide feedback about their experiences of and with the vMLK project by selecting survey items, and/or by providing answers to open ended prompts.

Visitors/audiences to vMLK exhibitions are also invited to share written responses to prompts written in the exhibit space, which include: “A Creative Protest is...” and “An Idea whose time has come....”

Technology required: preferably large whiteboards and markers. Optionally, participants can provide feedback via computer and mobile devices.

Your Creative Protest

Given the multifaceted nature of this project, determination of how to evaluate user experience, particularly successful audience engagement, is also multi-faceted. Audiences/visitors are also encouraged to provide feedback about their experiences of and with the vMLK project by selecting survey items, and/or by providing answers to open ended prompts written in the exhibit space, which include: “A Creative Protest is...” and “An Idea whose time has come....” [Fill up the Jails].
VR TOUR & PUBLIC PERFORMANCE


On October 13-15, 2017, the vMLK Project was featured as part of the ACCelerate: 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, documentaries and archival images 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.
WALKING TOUR

Experiencing King at NC State University

On September 16-17, 2016, Rev. Dr. King’s extraordinary impact on the state of North Carolina and our nation’s struggle for civil rights was experienced and understood anew at NC State University. The event featured a series of public events, including a Friday evening performance by renowned actors Danny Glover and Felix Justice—as Dr. King and Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes. The event also showcased a conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winner David Garrow, and art work by Synthia SAINT JAMES.

The vMLK project was featured as an immersive, guided and self-guided walking tour at the award-winning James B. Hunt Jr. Library alongside Dr. Jason Miller’s documentary film Origin of the Dream and audio restoration project King’s First Dream. Over three hundred people engaged in different visualization stations that included all seven experiences offered by the vMLK project.

The welcome station (Art Wall) included historic photographs of Rev. King speaking in Durham, Raleigh, and Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Using documentary film, the second station (iPearl Immersion Theater) introduced participants to vMLK project, media coverage of Dr. Miller’s “Origins of the Dream” scholarship, and the Royal Ice Cream sit-in that took place in Durham, NC. The third station (Game Lab) featured a game-based experience and historical architectural overview of a rich spatial, visual, and audio environment of White Rock Baptist Church where Dr. King delivered “Fill Up the Jails.” Outside the Game Lab, participants experienced the same speech through Virtual Reality headsets.

The fourth station (Commons Wall) provided speech text from King’s 1960 “Fill Up the Jails” and 1962 “Facing the Challenge of the New Age” speeches. The fifth (Visualization Wall) and sixth (Teaching and Visualization Lab) stations provided an immersive, walk-in, collective experience of King’s “Fill Up the Jails” speech. The seventh station (Creativity Studio) provided the historical context and a contemporary timeline of King’s speeches and two innovative projects at NC State University. Participants also wrote ideas about their dream and a creative protest.
PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Commemoration of the 55th Anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Fill Up the Jails” Speech

On February 23, 2015, the vMLK project commemorated the 55th anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s influential “Fill Up the Jails” speech with an immersive audio and historical experience at the James B. Hunt Library. The commemoration honored the legacy, courage, and determination of North Carolinians, especially citizens and activists involved in the Royal Ice Cream sit-in who shaped the context of Dr. King’s influential speech. The event featured a demonstration of the second phase of the vMLK project: an interactive website, including audio files and images created from the June 8, 2014 re-enactment of the speech in Durham’s White Rock Baptist Church and archival material related to the historical contexts of the speech.
INTERACTIVE ONLINE EXHIBITION
Public Installation at vmlk.chass.ncsu.edu

On June 8, 2014, scholars from NC State University partnered with the White Rock Baptist Church congregation, the Durham Ministerial Alliance, political leaders, and the surrounding communities to stage a public recreation of the speech performed by voice actor Mr. Marvin Blanks (who specializes in performing Martin Luther King’s speeches). Over 200 people attended the live re-enactment at the new White Rock Baptist Church in Durham, including 10 individuals who were in attendance at the 1960 original speech.

The sound director for the vMLK project captured multiple sound recordings—historical perspective, speaker’s perspective from the podium, audience’s perspective from the floor, audience’s perspective from the balcony, and the reenactment at White Rock Baptist Church—on the day of the event. Additionally, ambient sounds were recorded prior the event and vintage sounds on a historical mic were recorded in a studio the day after the public event. The interactive online public exhibition included the sound recordings, as well as 1) multimedia archive of artifacts important to the locality and narrative of how the speech served as a response to a particular rhetorical problem, 2) contextual history and events that led up to Dr. Martin Luther King’s delivery of his speech, 3) and a set of assignments and curricular suggestions for how to incorporate the vMLK Project into classroom instruction.