Tracey: [00:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gMkITTk6ItISxuNXeBrSRp2Ytzl1-i01GsbhVNMHn8s9K-71FTdYQ3amEyEZYyMEenMPrEtebfFY0pAnQUxOm1Q9cIc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1.45) Hello and welcome to NC State's Audio Abstract. I'm your host, Tracey Peake. As MLK day approaches, it may surprise some people to discover that NC State shares a connection with the civil rights leader. On July 31st, 1966 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr gave a speech at Reynolds Coliseum, and he spoke while a huge counter protest by the Ku Klux Klan was occurring downtown. We're speaking today with Jason Miller, an English professor here at NC State and the curator of a new on-campus photography exhibit commemorating the historic speech. Welcome, Jason.

Jason: [00:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SqKaqZRfCzRIv2zYVwe5H08IXPt_114yXD08K-TEhsj2DVKEhDI1gIvrD84GY_BfORmSUBHR8fS8tfM877gAZNo6q4w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=37.29) Thank you for inviting me.

Tracey: [00:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Q4L7UHhBy6JCgFqDq-OypKAbgSgrMWAFZ9I-DUo5O4bQEV_IQmlcc1haSVvqtxhutlzstDR1mOYNH4282fbJiWc3dAE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=38.69) Yeah, this is fascinating. So I had no idea that Dr. King came here and gave a speech in 1966. Can you set the stage for us historically a little bit.

Jason: [00:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tn6AEfySr4yqn5lTKOzq5bymerxhqjS_W1QmoX5KnzgYVDiGfdyakRn-HZajDWy9MqwHuSDAiWEBHrCFh6nVk0VVPks&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=48.63) 1966 is an unusual period for the state of North Carolina. The Ku Klux Klan has revived itself, and at this time in 1966, over half of the national membership of the Klan is right here in our state. So that means if you combine all other states, they have less KKK members than the state of North Carolina. That membership has actually been spurred on by the appearance of Dr. King in the national forefront. And so Grand Dragon Bob Jones is sitting at his television and watching Dr King's speech at the famous March on Washington 1963 and said, "Something needs to be done about this." What Dr. King would call the white backlash. And from that moment on he starts gathering a contingency of people around him that make North Carolina earn a terrible title, Klansville, USA.

Now 1966 is also different because where you often move Dr. King straight from the March on Washington to Selma and then his assassination, so we forget about years like 1966 and 1967. In 1966 nonviolence is really under pressure from the African American community. A number of people, Stokely Carmichael just months before Dr. King comes here, our calling for black power and they want action now. No more of this Gandhian nonviolence. Moreover, Dr. King has taken on a new role that people are unfamiliar with. He's moved himself and his family in Chicago's neighborhoods, into ghetto conditions as he would describe them, to try to bring attention to the housing practices and the way the discrimination is playing out in Chicago.

So Dr. King is coming from Chicago, the Klan is coming from all around our state, even though Bob Jones and his contingency are centered around Salisbury in the Denton area. The majority of members of North Carolina were actually to the North and East of us, and they're all meeting on July 31st, 1966. Now, what's very interesting is this as preempted by a false start. Dr. King was originally going to come July 10th, but coordinating for another event, just a small thing like a 60,000 person speech he had to give at Soldier Stadium where the Chicago Bears played, got in the way. And so that event drew the Klan into Raleigh, and drew the attention of the governor and the police officers, who recognized we might have a major conflict on our hands if Dr. King would have come this day.

And so everyone is prepared for this showdown on July 31st. Moments when racial tension and violence are spewing over in the streets in any number of cities. And so 200 National Guardsmen are standing guard outside the city. Police are guarding the Capitol grounds saying, "We don't want Klansmen anywhere near this Confederate monument," and the Klan is gathering at the South end of the city to counter protest Dr King's appearance very specifically and directly. And so this Sunday begins in Raleigh with numerous pastors and preachers speaking out against Dr. King from the pulpit, calling him more communist than Christian, even taking out advertisements in the local newspapers. And it culminates then with this March down Fayetteville street, 1800 hooded Klans members walking right down the heart of Raleigh. Hours later, Dr. King will appear on our campus to speak at Reynolds Coliseum in front of 5,000.

Tracey: [04:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iElRzF-sEM2Rd4K-2i_khySJrHOHcLp65d3DtD0bFmXdfyhWJl4RX-dI8Vg0v6Cq16UIkSoqGr6GswyJeRDCOQEL9iU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=243.28) That's amazing. It's amazing that that happened. It's also amazing that this is really the first I'm hearing of it and I was born and raised in this state. Why is that? Did people just, it was so embarrassing, they wanted it down the memory hole? I mean is that proper to say?

Jason: [04:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Mgy3SMbFgbgzt-X9WD1efYe0JD7uodqW7538L2o6Oj1loI_1bVGEIr4lMxKBhsV9wharAncEIH922cQokC9XN5zXg_U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=263.15) So what's very interesting about this is everybody during the last three years of this research has asked me in one way or another, how did this get lost? Whether you're a student here on campus or you're a member of the state of North Carolina, where you've had affiliation with our university or even the city of Raleigh, how could this happen and nobody know about it? One thing that occurred is that the Klan rally was a major embarrassment for people. So to look back at this moment in history meant you had to deal with and talk about the Klan, and if you had local roots and ties, this was not a moment in our history you want to talk about. Even some of our most astute historians are glad to move past this period in 1960s.

On the other hand, if you happened to be a sympathizer of Dr. King, this is a rather embarrassing tale to tell. When our greatest leader comes to town, someone we're following and going behind on a regular basis, all of a sudden we're intimidated and right in the middle of our towns is very depressing moment of outrageous white supremacy. Then it becomes hard to tell that story as well.

But what happened basically is this. The moment is so fraught with so many people against Dr. King. He's not welcomed by the mayor even though he's already won the Nobel Peace Prize. He's not greeted by people in the local campus area, and he is not really even revered around town. A woman is called into speak at Memorial Auditorium against him days before, the pastors are calling him out in the newspapers. And so Dr. King is a very unpopular figure at this time. So that means that archival record was almost a complete void.

Tracey: [06:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=viRk1QGQhW-w-sPuBvytlbQk62BvtQSZCFKsjw4y2HPZ_BSG8-bl23LLGOsSF7JsuewUBvCIxMfZEjj6PnGA4DqgtGU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=362.7) Wow.

Jason: [06:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=7mY18nBsfAaYPDasZaexz7DtQjU_KuBvU44oQ0coIxcdklDdSXh-GXh14GU0OxHVS2tmFRl9lJpXlhNtPjpibaWCKPc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=363.29) People that had documented the Klan hid those things away. People that knew that Dr. King came, they didn't send their best resources to capture these things. And so reel to reel tapes disappeared. Photographers were AP or UPI photographers and then left our town with their images. And even though the speech was broadcast live, we don't have reel to reel technology that survives from the era. So all of these things kind of coalesce to make this incredible moment just vanish in the history of a remarkable place like Reynolds Coliseum.

Tracey: [06:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=uuawafUCJiF4R2JxsZEu0o6ZXE8t4mpQ5vVO14TjwOq3Nt_okhI6ZDiFv-pHiFakMt8fvYCfEv4uRTs3T0kMl2hLOw4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=393.03) That is amazing. So with the stage set for all this potential for just violence and conflict and horribleness, did anything terrible happen? Did Dr. King ever come into direct contact or conflict with these Klansmen?

Jason: [06:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4MKC_v0W_Xui6TMHDL9_hHb5TXn81k3z05e7DcMktt3KSdQ0wVwYhXbjPFWnrE2VvmJUqvbi2MZKsEJTOtH27M7_OwA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=416.96) It's hard to underestimate how high the tensions were at this time. The Klan starts gathering at the South end of Raleigh and they are planning to defy the governor's statements, not worried about National Guard planned out time outside the city and they're planning to go right to the Confederate monument and the state grounds and gather there to have a rally. About two blocks short of that, the police officers in our city greet them and say, "You are not coming on these grounds." And what could have been a very tense moment unfortunately is captured in one of the photographs that we'll be showing in next week's exhibit, and that is of the police officers shaking hands with Klan members, saying, "This is what we have to do. You're doing what you have to do." And everything's kind of resolved because these are white men in North Carolina.

So the Klan veers back West into Nash Square, and they hold a major rally in Nash Square. Now this is what that looked like. Klansmen didn't just bring full regalia and robes. They brought what they called security guards. And so there are men with gold helmets, green outfits and huge black boots marching around, about exactly the same number as policemen around there. So Nash Square is just like it sounds, a perfect square, and it's surrounded shoulder to shoulder by security guards who have no authority or no real credentials. And the Klan then gathers and pulls together, brings out their Confederate flags, puts a number of things together. So there are a number of conflicts between people. There are a number of scuffles as the newspaper will call it at that particular time. But fortunately Dr. King, who's staying on the South part of town, knows well enough to stay away.

But here's what startling. He was staying with a woman named Millie [Dunvici 00:08:40]. And she was taking him to the South part of town to, of course where Reynold's Coliseum is and Dr. King would have traveled down what is literally now Martin Luther King Boulevard. And at that moment, he would have looked over to his right shoulders and saw the Klan march breaking up. So they did not come into direct contact with one another. Extreme elements of violence were avoided, but a number of people had all kinds of slurs and epithets thrown their way, not the least of which is in these images. People actually witnessing and seeing what's going on and feeling those levels of intimidation.

Tracey: [09:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yn9oIl37Nds9zu39N0VNIzjPOx_oPpZlJpPpx0qQRQ6Dg4FbZEVqxH5zrg0vwtK6Jc7FL5G6EqSgnSKkuvJ7KQCQ2Es&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=591.67) How did you come across these photographs? How did you find out about this?

Jason: [10:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BlijUWQz2DiLLrYT2vErFCWgnFz0h6mPBUlDw4Y4novgYWaPuzyQ7Z1Cpoo9ecFphIFnmsQz_ol2Q9BOZPlXuzxbmfE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=605.82) So this all started when NC State's campus of Reynolds Coliseum was getting renovated a few years ago and they'd had a little record of things that had happened and taken place there. And so they wanted to make sure they knew the history and document what happened. They wanted to put a few banners up inside on the Concourse to document great events in its history. And so they said, "We don't know anything about Martin Luther King coming here, but somebody said this happened." So they reached out to me because of my previous research on Dr. King. I documented that Dr King's first ever, I have a dream speech, was actually delivered in Rocky Mount North Carolina nine months before the March on Washington. So in digitizing that tape to providing a full transcript and showing that to the world, they said, "We got this guy on campus that should know this." So they reached out to me and said, "What can you tell us about this event?"

As I went down the line and tracking that, I ran into any number of people that had a little bit more information would give me another lead. And finally somebody said, "You know, the state archives I believe has the newspaper photographs from that era in its collection. And they sent out eight photographers from the news and observer to cover the KKK. They sent out zero photographers to cover Dr. King speech at Reynolds Coliseum." And so I coordinated with some wonderful folks at the state archives. And lo and behold, I found myself sitting over a table looking through photograph negatives. These hadn't even been developed. They're literally pieces of plastic with four images per spot and I'm straining my eyes through this looking glass. And the wonderful folks at the state archives made sure those images got digitized to me and passed along.

And so we saw things that nobody had ever seen since 1966, and that then became the story of going around and finding out more information about what had happened and talking to people who then remembered a little bit about the era, and even running into one person who attended the speech and hearing his version of it and, and what he remembers about that day.

Tracey: [12:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SWGmNWyz22ILEUiKfrJ-ZY2IXsbxQahdbggpxc-YjkLNTu8UDR5YHVXm7a-sfycdXYcoIHktKZ6PcBaHjEsbyEi-mto&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=721.33) That's great. So you've said that there's no record of the actual speech itself, but we should be able to piece together the topics he was covering.

Jason: [12:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zFF1Q8xmHN1qkwQo13Zan0b_QHz3Zy_NcImQSsRWQaQAcQqlrFpL9G4Er8KNXFC0NJEX6BCfUijtwiDJKKuN504WQsE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=735.82) Absolutely. And Dr. King was always riffing and sampling on previous work. And so we can also look at the speeches he gave before and after Raleigh and have a really good sense of what he was saying. But also, little newspapers... This is a forgotten thing for us in 2020. Tiny newspapers outside of Raleigh were really adamant about covering these things. And so small place like Robeson, sometimes even Rocky Mount would send out news reporters and they'd have line after line on what Dr. King said in his speech, so we have a pretty good record.

Tracey: [12:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=PQM5eNWK5SO433SXM5zRl7QbuTuG123C55QEW-AoRnMnm05CmKBEq86-NI-Z1SOVJTMiY49tvKMadnNzr2xYWSXHWeo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=761.33) It's not completely lost. So that's good. Okay. So with the photographs that you found, tell me a little bit about the exhibit that you've put together. What's it going to look like, and where's it going to be, and how long is it going to run in case people may want to go and take a look at it.

Jason: [12:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Md_MYxcfF_6wz2CpsN1XUgRHROKjETdh9ALBQvk0zU8wk0uAnH62CHfCPbrfX_iZB51Uzh5TAHNA5JhRkbEhKnyL5r0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=777.57) So the wonderful folks at the African American Cultural Center, once they heard about this research and were familiar with more of my work, they invited me to serve as a scholar in residence for 2019 and '20, and they wanted me as part of that, to not only interact with students and be a part of their center, but also exhibit this new research.

And so the Witherspoon Center on NC State's campus, on Wednesday, January 15th at 7:00 PM will be a big kickoff presentation, where I'll show a number of these images and give this background information in even more detail. And then afterwards, people can come in to the free exhibit and see these photographs framed on the wall. We'll take people's responses to the exhibit and they can actually record those on television as part of a Wolftails. We'll also have people from the libraries who have loaned us their button makers, because huge buttons were handed out when Dr. King spoke. So we'll be recreating those and passing those along. And then really interesting, we've also run into a person at design labs that's really thinking about how some of this could be incorporated into Reynolds Coliseum in kind of a virtual way, so you could walk around the Concourse and learn this history without having to see it physically on the walls.

So that has been a leading point that we're going to think has a profound impact on starting a larger process, which is building an archive where presently a void exists. So this history, these photographs, people's responses, my work in gathering the newspaper articles, is going to make sure that this doesn't get lost. If you happen to be somebody that comes through the area in another 15, 20 or 50 years, there won't be an absent void. There'll be this history and record of what happened, documented in pretty startling detail.

Tracey: [14:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_MhzIOEtLf-bYvEnF5lJjpu7s1jIuImB_LeZecmz0fH83DRld-idRxBSqnbVY8Rrj3vT_30UQmjClzxZSS0oomyYs9Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=883.06) Well, that is excellent. One final question. What is... All of this is fascinating. What is the most fascinating thing that occurred during this process?

Jason: [14:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GLlsZIfQ0AAeDS4nAiKlSOWxXtep8Yor91e7-uUYWwUOAFHTVuBhUwKRiMzhYdwAb9TkSuy6r5FQwQI6_qRH6H2syqM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=892.64) There have been so many. But the single most startling thing was when I pieced together a timeline very late in the process, of what Dr. King's appearance here in Raleigh on July 31st, 1966 meant that he avoided by not being in Chicago. On that exact date in Chicago, he would have been marching with a number of other people, about 260, through an all white neighborhood of Gage Park and Dr. King would have joined them. That was part of the plan, but he left and so everyone else went. That day, no less than 60 people were severely injured, sent to the hospital, brutalized, attacked by people that were all white in that neighborhood, throwing things at them, attacking them, overturning cars is the kind of thing we're talking about.

Tracey: [14:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=kraKQ9WQij8rf-o07DAVBdDerS7mQpIFMTeKGC2_mmwk0GBWJaoSkb6B9N-zXMeFzly_htSu8AsgeyVLFgRWdAzIgzU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=892.64) Wow.

Jason: [16:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0mrSp-Mw0DvT5Jw_66qLkPe0Ud1XZXTXZX3p7cjhogxXnQrZjOcYeZfbRqhgO8FCGCVylY41IW_eInPe6_F5xnmD6BY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=969.35) So the fact that Dr. King was here meant that he avoided that, but he didn't stay out of the fray long. When he went back on August 5th, he joined in another march to another all white neighborhood of Marquette Park, and he witnessed the most violent counter-protest to his march he'd ever seen in his life, unlike those ever experienced in Mississippi or Alabama. He was hit in the head with a brick, doubled over and started bleeding and he said on camera immediately afterwards and for years to come, "I've never seen crowds this violent and angry." So in some regards, Raleigh is fortunate that it didn't rise to that level of conflict. On the other hand, we see that that was the language of the era and Dr. King said it so well. "What is a riot? It's the language of the unheard."

Tracey: [16:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3hw8K5Br1c0ObaErGUX9idk6fegwuW7WYWbXd5ev_9SzTyJnMztnXW4Zsxh_M_cqTJOxFQDneA0vSMGdUhund-cFK_I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1014.59) Well, thank you so much for being here today, Jason. This is all very fascinating and I cannot wait to check out the exhibit.

Jason: [17:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_3lb_f9nr_NuZP7DfGaDXINYqsbbQCzHgMQi0x6USpSthPCx-BDHo_WdzAgy9dI28IMQxHCVRtzxTzodd-hwfdoHTbY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1021.06) It's been my privilege. Thank you for inviting me.

Tracey: [17:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GkmLwiTimLymolzGZw9w01ZWn30-Huu33a5Zc9GUYjQmirL4ETNJ2cJzBEMmYnlXFzk4EjRex-WiXo-v_cF4VDo4eMM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1022.9) We’ve been speaking today with Jason Miller, and English professor here at NC State. This has been NC State’s Audio Abstract. I’m your host, Tracey Peake. Thank you so much for listening.