

\$28 million renovation of National Civil Rights Museum nearly complete

By Wendi C. Thomas

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Rarely is the remix as good as the original.

But the nearly \$28 million renovation of the [National Civil Rights Museum](#) is much more impressive than the building that opened in 1991.

In a sneak peek Tuesday afternoon, museum spokesman Connie Dyson showed how designers skillfully merged interactive technology with the familiar favorites of repeat visitors.

“This is a new museum,” Dyson said. “It’s a very tactile experience.”

And educational, but not overtly. Imagine iPads on steroids. Wall and walls of screens come with instructions — “touch to explore” — that will surely create a shortage of screen cleaners.

New: A light-filled lobby leading to dozens of interactive exhibits, 40 new films and dozens of new artifacts. Gone is the sepia-toned color palette, replaced by reds, blues and bold text.

The first exhibit is “A Culture of Resistance: Slavery in America, 1619-1861.” On the floor is a map of West Africa and the Americas, with lighted paths to trace trans-Atlantic slave [routes](#). Walk from West Africa to Cuba or Charleston, S.C.

Toward the end of the exhibit is the interactive “Join the Movement” display. On eight identical touch screens, visitors can choose how they’d address any of eight topics, such as poverty, war, women’s rights and integration.

Although much has changed, some key parts remain the same.

The replica of the Montgomery city bus with a mannequin of Rosa Parks and a white bus driver shouts for passengers to move to the back? It remains, but in front are three mannequins representing the female domestic workers who propelled the 1955 bus [boycott](#).

Visitors will still hear Mahalia Jackson sing [“Take My Hand, Precious Lord”](#) as they approach Room 306, which is staged as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. left it on April 4, 1968.

The exhibit to mark the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers [strike](#) still includes a replica of a 1960s garbage truck, but new is a photo of a worker's pay stub — \$137.13 for two weeks of work.

The museum, which closed for renovations in November 2012, will reopen to the public at 11 a.m. April 5.



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