African American History: An Empathetic Reflection

Booklet

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African American History: An Empathetic Reflection
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THE ISSUE

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

-Nelson Mandela

Beginning capstone this semester I was open to exploring multiple topics like fashion, sports, African American history & culture, and more subjects that I'm interested in. However, exiting the summer it seemed nearly impossible to get away from seeing how police brutality is extremely higher for African Americans than other races. More so, we were in the midst of an election year and the 45th president brought out the hate in the country against African American people. Reading about injustices toward African Americans became an everyday thing and, since it was already a topic in mind, I decided to move forward with researching more about it.

African American history is inaccurately taught throughout American history classes in the United States. In most cases, less than 9% of African American history is devoted to the subject and as students progress throughout the years, they are still learning about the same distorted historical figures or events without any additional content. Learning more about different cultures can grow a community and bring them closer together to appreciate each other's differences. I've identified two general issues to focus on; The misperception in the imagery used in textbooks for schools in the United States and Historical events and people not being taught or being mistaught in schools in the United States. Unlike math and reading, states aren't required to meet academic content standards for teaching social studies and the United States history. Therefore there isn't a consensus on the curriculum around slavery [15].

"Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on."

-Thurgood Marshall, 1978 University of Virginia Commencement Speech

THE GOAL

The goal of this project is to explore different design possibilities that will decipher misconceptions related to African American History and Culture while educating individuals in the process through the use of speculative design. I seek out to understand outlets that already exist to help guide me to a final solution, such a solution that gives an accurate and detailed account of what happened in the past.

THE SOLUTION

Immersive Reality
Environment Room

Immersive Virtual
Reality Room

Immersive Music Room

3D Printing
Artifact Room

Front Desk/
Ticket Booth

Exhibit Descriptions

The solution that I propose is an African American Immersion Museum that consists of four exhibits. All four exhibits are fully interactive, immersive, and try to manifest a place that induces an empathic reflection. The exhibits are as followed:

The Immersive Virtual Reality Room includes human-to-digital body suits along with virtual reality headsets and virtual reality controllers to step in the shoes of African Americans in order to experience some stories in their lives. Once ready, users will be hooked up to electric, retractable elastic bands that are attached to the ceiling and placed over a 360° multi directional treadmill to simulate the user's virtual experience in the real world.

The 3D Artifact Printing Room consists of multiple rows of stands topped with 3 dimensional printers equipped with holographic screens that allow users to choose and learn about historic African American artifacts to print, interact with, and take home for further exploration.

The Immersive Music Room allows anyone who walks into the room to hear a song that depicts their mood. The song is played through an individual's wristband that is given to them for entry into the museum. The wristband broadcasts a hologram of the artist in a live performance. After the song is played, it shows and tells connections the artist and song has to African American history.

The Immersive Reality Environment Room is an enormous space that recreates historic African American events in full detail with buildings, people, etc in order to model a realistic environment to learn what actually happened at those events by walking around, analyzing, and experiencing it firsthand.

HOW I GOT TO THIS SOLUTION

Background

While we have come a long way, hate is still very much alive in the United States and we have much further to go to obtain equality in all aspects of our lives. People have the birth-given ability to learn, however, what and how we teach certain information play a huge role in how one can mold their beliefs and values. Initially, I explored the United States education system and how they contribute to spreading hate by not teaching history accurately and creating misconceptions through the use of imagery in textbooks and more to mislead students as information relates to African American history. However, I had to refocus my project and slightly shift from primarily focusing on the United States educational system to a broader audience and design for the community. I had to refocus the scope of my project due to a ton of blockage connected to policies, rules, and regulations when researching information related to the topic. Grade schools, middle schools, and high schools each have their own requirements as to what is studied in school and, more specifically, history classes. Usually, middle schools cover ancient civilizations, medieval and early modern history, and early United States history while high school usually covers modern world history, 20th and 21st century US history, and American government and economics. Currently in the US, there are no federal requirements for teaching black history. The United States educational system has created their own history and, unfortunately, passed those misconceptions and inaccuracies to the impressionable youth. Nevertheless, my project's goal remained the same; to explore different design possibilities that will decipher misconceptions related to African American history and culture while educating individuals in the process through the use of speculative design and/or service design.

The first design concept I ideated included individuals utilizing virtual reality tools in a dome-like environment like the Peloton's kiosk. Once a person decides to interact with the kiosk, it'll start to ask a few personal questions obtaining their age, race, religion, then create a scenario where they have to make a few empathetic decisions. These scenarios will be pulled from a diverse set of real life past situations where African American individuals had to make intense decisions or encountered racism. After the series of decisions made, the software will display the person the user was compared to and the details of their situation. The details include the decisions the person made and the outcome of their decisions. The idea is to showcase how anybody, regardless of race, can be in similar situations and make life changing decisions. This environment however will allow individuals to step in the shoes of others by experiencing the effects of making intense decisions.
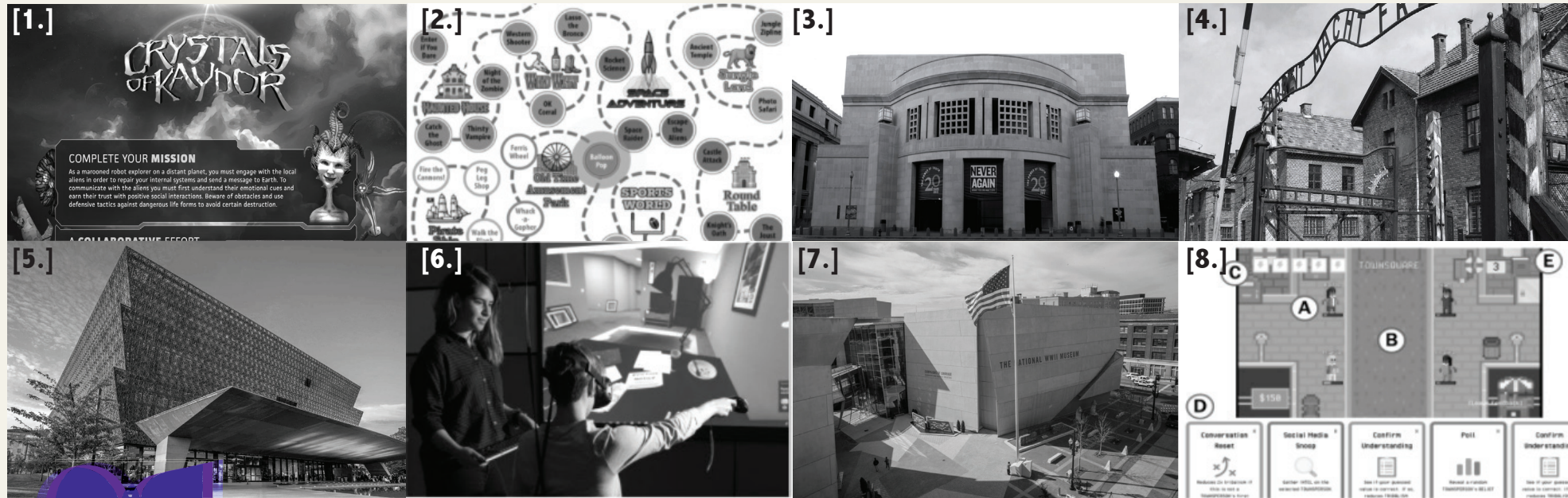
I wanted to take a step further and look into a more speculative way of thinking about this concept. In doing so, I conducted research methods that helped guide me to my final design concept.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS

In order to generate new insights into my topic, I conducted primary and secondary research. In conducting these methods, I was able to generate a **Speculative Experience Design** deliverable that explores the idea of a futuristic African American Immersion Museum. The research compenents I conducted are as followed:

Exemplar Curation	Interviews
Journey Mapping	Co-Design Workshop
What-If Scenarios	Speculative Exemplar Curation
Feedback Analysis	Personas
Story Curation	Design Fictions

[1.] CRYSTALS OF KAYDOR — COMPLETE YOUR MISSION

[2.]

[3.] NEVER AGAIN

[4.]

[5.]

[6.]

[7.] THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

[8.]

EXEMPLAR CURATION

Goal

My goal behind conducting this exemplar curation was to help identify a final concept for my final deliverable by brainstorming and collecting a set of examples that relate to having an empathic reflection toward someone or something and understanding bias toward other people.

Insights

Being able to research and analyze the multiple avenues whose aim is the same but pursued it differently was very insightful because I was able to correlate it to African American history and culture. Evaluating different museums, games, and tools to use really helped me understand the different routes I can take in order to achieve my goal of understanding how to make an individual empathize with someone completely different from them.

The main takeaway I obtained from conducting this exemplar curation is the fact that I was able to confirm that I wanted to make my solution community-based; allowing more people to have access to this service. It also brought up the huge potential in utilizing virtual reality as a component in my final design with paying close attention to ensuring I'm not creating traumatic experiences for individuals.

Exemplar Descriptions

[1] Crystals of Kaydor is a video game that tests the possibility of mindfulness and kindness being taught through training. "It was designed to help develop empathy and improve social behavior for children." The game's plot essentially has the player stranded on an alien planet trying to collect all the pieces from their broken ship. The player has to interact with the alien population in order to get their help to put the ship back together while only having emotional gestures to communicate.

[2] Decimal Point is an educational game that investigates motive to better learn decimals in a non-conventional, fun way. The game's theme is an amusement park which allows researchers to discover the effects of different instructional strategies through the use of mini-games. The team was guided by two research questions; (1.) Can erroneous examples increase learning and add motivation to an educational game? (2.) Will making erroneous examples adaptive to individual students increase learning and motivation beyond the non-adaptive version of the educational game?

[3] The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is dedicated to helping individuals confront hatred and promote human dignity. The museum offers exhibitions that showcase historical footage with eyewitness testimonies to excite emotion. For example, one exhibit called Remember the Children: Daniel's Story tells the narrative and experiences of children during the holocaust. Remember the Children: Daniel's Story is designed to teach children aged 8+ and is based off a variety of different diary accounts from children's perspective in the holocaust. Below's video displays an overview of the exhibition in the Smithsonian Holocaust Museum.

[4] The Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp was the largest and most complex camp that held over 40 concentration camps operated by German Nazi in World War II and the holocaust. This camp has become a symbol of sadness, trauma, and pain but creates empathy and compassion through the use of tours to provide an emotional trip for visitors. People experience the heaviness of the camp from start to finish and how seeing these historical artifacts can bring out intense emotions for some individuals.

[5] The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a museum that is open to the public that is devoted to document and educate people about African American culture. The museum prides itself in upholding its 4 pillars that encourage the exploration of African American history.

[6] Becoming Homeless is a Virtual Reality (VR) experience developed by Stanford researchers in order to create a scenario where users lose their jobs and homes. This results in people developing long-term compassion toward homeless people. This VR experience explores the possibility of this emerging technology changing people's attitude and becoming more empathetic toward others.

[7] The National World War II Museum is a military history museum that emphasizes the United States' aid in winning World War II. The museum's website currently has Profiles with Wendell Pierce which shares African American stories from the war where viewers can read firsthand experiences.

[8] Persuasion Invasion is an AI-powered video game that teaches productive civil disclosure and overcoming tribalism by simulating valuable adaptive instruction through engaging with aliens. In the game, the user acts as a government agent who's fighting pacifist alien invaders that conquer worlds through distortion and division instead of war. When the community can't agree on small issues, the aliens strike and the agent's goal is to choose the most persuasive argument for a particular computer-generated character. If the human player is biased, they'll select the argument that aligns with their own values rather than the other player's. The overall aim of the game is "to provide students with a better understanding of the values that shape both their own beliefs and those of others, with opportunities to practice overcoming bias."

Goal

The goal of creating this journey map was to ideate and determine the underlying interactions, thoughts, and feelings of an individual while interacting with the design I envisioned at that time.

"A journey Map allows you to identify and strategize for key moments in the product, experience, or service you're designing."

-DesignKit

JOURNEY MAPPING

A Description of the Journey Map

The journey map below describes an interactive digital kiosk that will be deployed in a high traffic public area to provoke reflective thought. The kiosk displays a slide show playing between images, statements, and questions that will invite people over to interact with it. Questions and statements that might display include "who are you?" and "identify yourself." and "compare your past."

Once a person decides to interact with the kiosk, it'll start to ask a few personal questions obtaining their age, race, religion, then create a scenario where they have to make a few empathetic decisions. These scenarios will be pulled from a diverse set of real past life situations where African American individuals had to make intense decisions or encountered racism. After the series of decisions made, the software will display the person the user was compared to and the details of their situation. The details include the decisions the person made and the outcome of their decisions. The idea is to showcase how anybody, regardless of race, can be in similar situations and make life changing decisions.
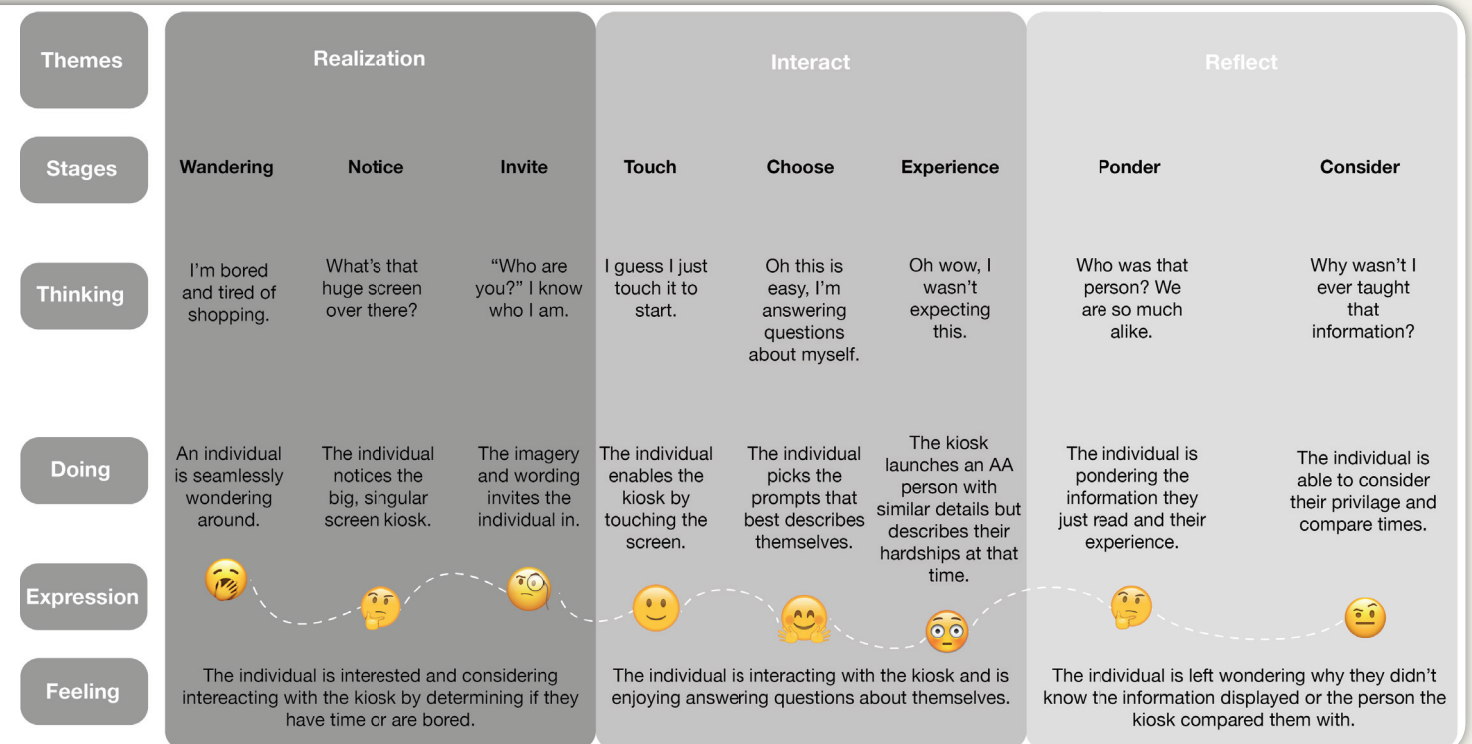
How the Map Correlates to the Solution

Looking at the journey map as a whole and knowing what my final solution consists of, this journey map can be used to signify the journey in which an individual might encounter when interacting with an exhibit within the African American Immersion Museum. Of course, some of the text would have to be changed, for example, in the themes thinking and doing. However, this journey map turned out to be very useful while creating the design fictions for my personas. I was able to use this original journey map as a framework for their experiences in each individual exhibit.

Ideating for Future Possibilities

While researching kiosks, I came across some of the Peloton kiosks that are already setup in malls. I thought it would be cool if I merged the modern design of the kiosk with virtual reality to create an emotional experience. The idea behind this concept includes individuals utilizing virtual reality tools in a dome-like environment like the Peloton's kiosk. The VR scenarios will be similar to the digital public kiosks by having prompted situations where the individual will have to make decisions and experience the outcomes of those decisions made. This environment however will allow individuals to step in the shoes of others by experiencing the effects of making intense decisions. Obstacles I've identified include:

[1]Determining the pictures, questions, and statements to display to invite people in to interact with the kiosks.

[2]Determining how to invite people in and keep their interest.

[3]Determining the situations that will ignite empathy and produce long-term change.

[4]Technological issues using virtual reality.

[5]Implementing policy that unilaterally affects long term change.

Themes	Realization			Interact			Reflect	
Stages	Wandering	Notice	Invite	Touch	Choose	Experience	Ponder	Consider
Thinking	I'm bored and tired of shopping.	What's that huge screen over there?	"Who are you?" I know who I am.	I guess I just touch it to start.	Oh this is easy, I'm answering questions about myself.	Oh wow, I wasn't expecting this.	Who was that person? We are so much alike.	Why wasn't I ever taught that information?
Doing	An individual is seamlessly wondering around.	The individual notices the big, singular screen kiosk.	The imagery and wording invites the individual in.	The individual enables the kiosk by touching the screen.	The individual picks the prompts that best describes themselves.	The kiosk launches an AA person with similar details but describes their hardships at that time.	The individual is pondering the information they just read and their experience.	The individual is able to consider their privilege and compare times.
Expression	🥱	🤔	🤓	🙂	🤗	😳	🤔	🤨
Feeling	The individual is interested and considering interacting with the kiosk by determining if they have time or are bored.			The individual is interacting with the kiosk and is enjoying answering questions about themselves.			The individual is left wondering why they didn't know the information displayed or the person the kiosk compared them with.	

Goal

I decided to create "What-If" Scenarios in order to help ignite my imagination for possible alternative futuristic scenarios that relate to learning and/or teaching African American History and Culture.

Introduction

This form of research helped me analyze possible futures and the conceivable effects of a particular concept while undergoing the ideation stage of my design process. It was actually pretty difficult generating What-If Scenarios at first because my mindset was stuck to the United States education system and, therefore, had the majority of my first scenarios circulating that field. I was focusing too much on my existing knowledge and not relying enough on my imagination. Nonetheless, I was able to get out the slump and generate multiple ideas that I would be able to slightly draw back to feasibility. A few of the concepts generated from performing this method ended up being featured in the African American Immersion Museum, two to mention are the historic hologram figures and the immersive virtual reality room.

Insights

Conducting this method turned out to be very helpful when creating my design fictions because I was able to refer back to the scenarios I thought out and combined. The scenarios allowed me to begin the creation of alternate worlds until I found the right synthesis became established. Insights and new awarenesses I gained from this method are as followed:

 • It helped me identify the multiple outcomes and impacts then plan for my final solution
 • There can be many technological issues with the museum as whole if these concepts were brought back to feasibility
 • By combining a few, it allowed me to think of a future which let people visit the past but how would you patrol and protect the past from being altered?
 • I have to take into consideration the ethics of my entire project and the demographic because it depends on the knowledge of the individual and their own morals to help bring awareness to the issue

"WHAT-IF" SCENARIOS

"What-If" Scenarios

What if high school and lower teachers had to be certified in African American History?

What if the United States remained segregated but actually was equal?

What if there was a device you could walk in and it told a movie-like story of your life to share your experiences?

What if there were "black hubs" set up around the United States as complete safe zones?

What if slavery was reversed in the United States?

What if descendants of slaves were paid reparations?

What if people could enter a building and experience the past firsthand?

What if it were so far in the future and people mated to the point there weren't races anymore?

What if people were able to walk in other's shoes?

What if the United States had an unbias history book for all schools?

What if people could travel back in time to see how times really were?

What if holograms of African American figures had their minds and could go around to explain their experiences?

What if citizens in communities educated one another?

What if there were a way to hold people accountable for misteaching?

What if states didn't have their own regulations and school boards?

What if you could take tours in the past?

What if a person were shocked everytime they taught wrong information?

What if people had a visable conscious always with them telling them right from wrong?

What if everyone already knew accurate African American History?

Goal

The goal behind my feedback analysis is to collect and analyze the feedback received from peers while conducting a project pin-up on my design concept at that time; interactive digital kiosks.

Reflection

My most obvious piece of feedback that was used for improvement on my design concept is the use of immersive virtual reality and how it can be really beneficial in storytelling. Better understanding VR will help in the long run to determine how to utilize stories in an impactful and educational way while remaining ethical. This also relates to the insights related to understanding triggering moments for people and how to stay away from those types of experiences. Ensuring the stories told in the VR environment are realistic but not too overbearing to cause panic or anxiety. I should consider individuals who know the history and make accommodations for how those moments can be triggering. One suggestion stood out that could help me with this, someone pointed out that I can either try to find Holocaust survivors or watch interviews and watch their expressions, etc. to understand what's ethical and respectful to ask. I thought it was fun that people were suggesting shows for me to watch. Two of the shows my classmates suggested were HBO's Lovecraft Country and HBO's The Watchmen. These shows embrace alternate history related to African Americans and racism and were thought to help me ideate for speculative design. The Watchmen, in particular, focuses on events surrounding racist violence in Tulsa, Oklahoma which leads me to another piece of feedback; people aren't taught the big, historical African American events. That's no secret, however, there are also people who are just nonbelievers and don't think events like

the Holocaust exists or racism in general.

Insights

The insights I obtained from each individual comment is laid out in the feedback analysis's table. However, conducting the method and looking at it as a whole, I discovered the following:
• Having new eyes and ears on my project a few times throughout the process is very important because my peers hold relevant information that I don't know
• It helps redirect my search and makes me explore different avenues I didn't initially intend on inspecting
• It helps validate my research and confirm that I'm researching proper things along with weeding out outdated information

Concerns

Due to this project pin-up being conducted during the time my solution was an interactive digital kiosk, my main concern related heavily upon not making the stories traumatizing. However, this ended up being very relevant throughout the creation of the museum and the story curation because I had to be mindful and consider the visual effects of the technology I plan to use in order to ensure the scenarios don't result in traumatic experiences for users. Another concern I have is the lack of feedback I received and included in this analysis. I used comments from a post that was pinned-up for about 1-2 weeks in order to collect data and was only able to accumulate about 5 physical comments and about 3 oral comments. In the future, I would hope to have multiple critiques like this throughout my design process in order to analyze data as the project progresses.

Jaz Talley's October 21, 2020 Project Pin-Up
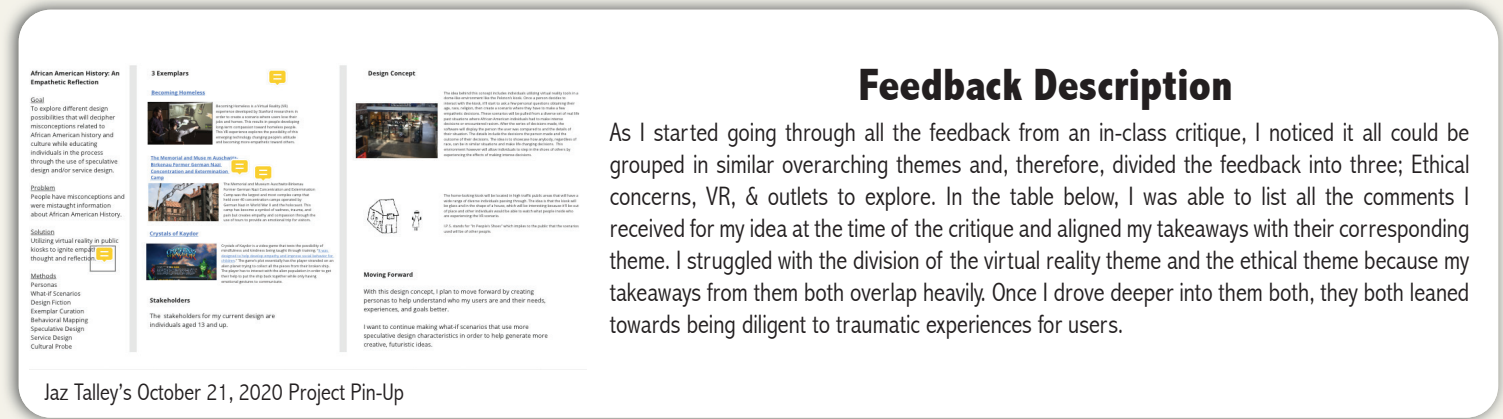
Feedback Description

As I started going through all the feedback from an in-class critique, I noticed it all could be grouped in similar overarching themes and, therefore, divided the feedback into three; Ethical concerns, VR, & outlets to explore. In the table below, I was able to list all the comments I received for my idea at the time of the critique and aligned my takeaways with their corresponding theme. I struggled with the division of the virtual reality theme and the ethical theme because my takeaways from them both overlap heavily. Once I drove deeper into them both, they both leaned towards being diligent to traumatic experiences for users.

Feedback Analysis

Theme	Comments	Takeaways
Ethical	"Love the concept! How do you think that you'd deal with the negative emotions that come up and frustrations that arise while people are talking about this concept? Even though they're willing to learn - the process is strenuous in general. " Have you considered people who know their history and how this could be triggering for them? Maybe look into Holocaust survivors and their reactions/expressions when touring or talking about Auschwitz.	These are ethical implications I would have to consider especially with VR in mind for realistic effects; things I hadn't yet considered. The last thing I'd want someone using this design is to have a traumatic experience and, therefore, should find people to interview or find interviews of people who've had those traumtic experiences like someone suggested with Holocaust survivors.
Virtual Reality	"A lot of her projects have immersive VR experiences in this vein." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonny_de_la_Pe%C3%B1a	Better understanding VR will help in the long run to determine how to utilize stories in an impactful and educational way while remaining ethical. This also relates to the insights related to understanding triggering moments for people and how to stay away from those type of experiences. Ensuring the stories told in the VR environment are realistic but not too overbearing to cause for panic or anxiety.
Explore	Try watching Lovecraft County or The Watchman on HBO. "I think what stood out to me when I took this tour was how much time was left for quiet reflection. The tour guides did talk and guide us through the area but there was quite a bit of quiet time left for people to walk around and reflect in silence. I went with a friend and I don't think we said a word for the entire 6 hour tour. It might be worth exploring more about how silence is combined with strategic amounts of content to leave room for reflection." "Unfortunately, there are people who deny that the Holocaust happened. On top of that, there are events such as the Tulsa race massacre that people don't even know about because people were able to cover it up."	I think watching these shows will help me ideate and dive into speculative design, however, I don't want to venture off into altering history. I didn't know there was anyone I knew that went to Poland and took this tour. I find this interesting because he suggested I look into how silence can leave room for reflection which is apart of my goal.

Goal

To collect and analyze different first-hand experiences and stories of individuals that underwent the Civil Rights Movement and other past historical events/times related to African American History.

Introduction

The story curation started with one question; who am I going to base the stories after for the exhibits? Of course I will include well-known African American figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Fredrick Douglas, and Harriet Tubman whose lives were heavily recorded. However, I wanted a broader set of stories. Stories of unfamous African Americans who endured, survived, and prevailed encounters with racism because it highlights the fact that it happened all over the country and to anyone with brown colored skin. Starting with African American figures whose lives were heavily recorded is obvious and easiest because they are familiar, have a multitude of stories to choose from, and are very relevant to African American history. However, putting more emphasis on gathering African American stories in general will allow for more people to learn about another culture and their struggles.

Story Curation Description

I conducted more research by reading through different first-hand experiences of individuals related to African American History and tried to pick through a diverse pool of stories in similar eras in time. In the table of stories I gathered, there's four pieces of information provided; the title of the story (while researching, some of the stories had a title, however, I found it useful for organization purposes to provide all the stories with one), the column titled Name refers to the individual in which the story is about, a reference to the URL from the website I obtained the story from, and a Rating which utilizes the Film Rating System (this refers to how I classified the stories and is to caution users on which story to choose). I decided to accumulate this information because part of my final concept utilizes virtual reality and, like the Smithsonian Holocaust Museum's Remember the Children: Daniel's Story, I will take the perspectives of multiple people and combine them to allow others to step in the shoes of others that experienced those events.

Story Curation Description

Stories from Story Curation

Title	Name	Reference	Rating
An Experience with Violence in Lowndes County, Alabama	Jimmy Rogers	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/stor/s_jimmy.htm	R
"Inciting to Riot" in Selma AL	Stu House	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/stor/s_house.htm	R
My First Demonstration — Atlanta, 1962	Cathy Cade	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/stor/s_cade.htm	PG-13
My Arkansas Journey	Arlene Dunn	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/dunn11.htm	PG-13
The Making of a Freedom Rider	Ralph David Fertig	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/fertigr.htm	PG-13
A Jewish Girl in the Movement	Miriam Cohen Glickman	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/1809mirm.htm	PG-13
Sitting-In on Attorney General Robert Kennedy	Sheila Michaels	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/ag_sitin.htm	PG-13
My Story	General Larry Platt	https://www.crmvet.org/nars/plattgl.htm	PG-13
A Survivor's Granddaughter Reflects on Tulsa Race Massacre	Brenda Alford	https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/07/23/tulsa-race-massacre-centenary	R
Meet the Last Surviving Witness to the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921	Olivia Hooker	https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/05/31/615546965/meet-the-l	R
Jim Crow Stories	Joseph Holloway	https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/narrative_holloway.html	R
Jim Crow Stories	Edwilda Isaac	https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/narrative_isaac.html	PG-13
Jim Crow Stories	Nobuo Honda	https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/narrative_honda.html	PG-13
Reflections on the Greensboro Lunch Counter	Joseph McNeil, Diane Nash	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFQ3ZCAgAA0	R
The Arrest of Rosa Parks	Rosa Parks	https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2016/01/01/witness-rosa-	PG-13
Interview with William O'Neal Infiltrating The Black Panther Party	Bill O'Neal	https://vimeo.com/512709094	PG-13
A Trailblazing Attorney	Jane Bolin	https://www.biography.com/political-figure/jane-bolin	PG-13
one of the foremost African American leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries	Booker T. Washington	https://www.biography.com/activist/booker-t-washington	PG-13
The 1969 Raid That Killed Black Panther Leader Fred Hampton	Fred Hampton	https://www.history.com/news/black-panther-fred-hampton-killing	R

STORY CURATION

Goal

To understand and open dialog regarding the participant's knowledge on African American history, the film rating system, and the best ways they learn/obtain knowledge.

INTERVIEWS

Demographic

I decided to focus in on Gen Y and Gen Z because they are currently between the ages of 6 and 40 years old; which is majority of who I interviewed and are all tech-savvy, more self-expressive, and open to change [1].
Gen Y/Millennials (born between 1981 and 1994/6)
Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012/15).

Introduction

I really enjoyed conducting these semi-structured interviews because I was able to get the perspective of a small selection of my demographic and really conversed with them about African American history and culture. After each question, participants were able to explain further what they meant from their answers and reply to follow-up questions. Still, I had to ensure that my follow-up questions pertained to each individual interviewee's experience rather than something that would alter the entire interview's flow. Doing so would force me to doubleback and ask the newly inputted questions to every other participant.

Understanding

At the beginning of the interviews, I wanted to let the participants rate themselves on their knowledge of African American history then evaluate that rating based off a knowledge check-off list. Doing this allowed each participant to realize they knew a little more information than they give themselves credit for and confidence throughout the rest of the interview. It was interesting that six out of eight participants walked through the details of each event/person to ensure they had their facts straight.

The second set of questions were aimed to understand the participant's knowledge on the Film Rating System. Before and while asking these questions, I did not give the participants any background information as to why I was asking them. However, as the interview progressed and resulted in me revealing my final concept, they all saw the correlation of these questions. I made sure to circle back to the Film Rating System at the end of each interview and explain that I was exploring a way to rate the suitability of the content for audiences interacting with my design.

Finally, the last set of questions aimed to understand a specific experience at a museum in each participant's lives and recognize what made it so memorable. What really engaged me the most during these interviews was when each participant described their own first-hand experiences using museum exhibits because I was able to see their joyous or uninterested faces and feel their energy as they explained.

Interview Details

Interviewees

JT
56 Years Old
African American

JH
26 Years Old
African American
& White

SD
24 Years Old
African American,
Latino & White

IH
24 Years Old
Hispanic & white

VG
24 Years Old
African American

GV
24 Years Old
Hispanic, & White

BB
23 Years Old
White

IM
23 Years Old
Hispanic

Questions

1. On a scale 0 to 5, how would you rate yourself on being knowledgeable on African American history?
2. Please check the boxes next to the corresponding event or figure you've heard of
3. From the same list, which events or figures do you know actual details about?
4. From the same list, which events or figures did you learn in high school?
5. Are there any misconceptions that you've learned in school as it relates to African American history? What?
6. Are you familiar with the film rating system?
7. Which ratings do you know the description of if you seen it standing alone before a movie?
8. What are some ways that keep you focused on or stay interested in learning history?
9. How do you obtain the knowledge you learn?
10. If you've ever been to a museum, can you share your experience using an exhibit in a museum?
11. On a scale 0 to 5, how enjoyable was that experience?
12. On a scale 0 to 5, how memorable was that experience?
13. Why do you think that experience was so memorable?
14. If you had the chance to merge this experience with African American history/culture, how do you think that'll look?
15. Do you have any comments, concerns, or suggestions for my final concept?

Answer list for questions 2-4
• The Underground Railroad
• Nat Turner Slave Revolt
• The Civil Rights Movement
• Frederick Douglass
• Black National Anthem
• Dred Scott v Sanford
• The Emancipation Proclamation
• The 13th Amendment
• Booker T. Washington
• Bloody Sunday 1965
• Tulsa Race Massacre

Answer list for question 7
• G
• PG
• PG-13
• R
• NR
• X

Insights

It was interesting hearing the perspective of my participants and how they viewed their knowledge on African American history. I was able to verify aspects of my project like using the Film Rating System determining the direction of my project, my takeaways are listed below:
• Participants underrate or underestimate themselves on their actual knowledge about African American History.
• Participants aren't familiar with the Film Rating System by name but know the ratings when they see them.
• Participants can usually focus more on history when they are learning it in an interactive way; movie, museum, podcast, etc.
• The more meaningful the experience is, the more likely participants are to remember & obtain the information.
• Overall the interviews helped me determine the direction I would like to take my project; as a traveling museum exhibit, its' own traveling pop-up exhibit, or its' own museum

Quotes

On the page to the right, I filled it with select quotes that participants stated during their interview. These quotes ended up being very helpful in my quest to determine ways that will decipher misconception related to African American history and culture. I was able to utilize some of these quotes as insights to further move along my project. I was mindful to the suggestions and concerns participants revealed which allowed me to understand learning frustrations as they relate to African American history in the educational process. Moreso, How I can move forward when creating the museum.

Interview Quotes

"This idea has potential for growth, trying to think about the lasting effect of it. Incorporate or recreate a slave ship; show all aspects of life as it was. As long as it's digestible(something that isn't difficult to grasp the concept of it) to people & informative there's room for it. "

"I learned about Nat Turner in school but like remember more of the details because I watched the movie. "

"It'll be cool to make it like a museum full of it or just an exhibit and have it broken down into different categories; black inventors or black celebrities. "

"I experienced the exhibit but it wasn't until after I saw how my African American friend react to the exhibit when I actually reflected on how this really made others feel."

"I think it's interesting that I asked about the rating system and how in school they let us watch movies like 53rd regiment that show people fighting in the civil war and dying and you would see the slavery in the background but we can't watch those R rated movies that highlight slave revolts and highlight AA sticking up for themselves because they're rating. "

"In high school they only focused on main "famous" black people like I didn't hear about Juneteenth before college and it's just superficial."

"It's watered down info, has white saviors, it favors American patriotism, black history is usually washed over in school."

"They only show the positive side of things and don't show the truth behind slavery, even in movies, they don't teach the bloody massacres."

"I like learning things I didn't learn in high school. So like I would see something on social media and I would research it myself to know. "

"I think I remember this because as a kid, it was a way to make history 3D and you aren't reading a book so you're more so walking through history instead of flipping pages. "

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP

Agenda

1. Ice Breaker - Group Map
Duration: 20 minutes
Goal: Introduce everyone and to highlight values we obtain from home - understanding experiences

2. Movie Sorting Activity
Duration: 30 minutes
Goal: Understand how my users rate African American stories based off movies (card sorting)

3. Day in My Life Activity
Duration: 30 minutes
Goal: To help acknowledge & understand the similarities and differences of each others empathize with one another (mapping)

4. Exhibit Creation Activity
Duration: 40 minutes
Goal: Understand how users rate their own experience when joined with other experiences and how they'd organize their experiences. (mapping)

Intentions

In the academic months of Fall 2020, I started a movie curation which aimed to determine the severity of stories of actual African American people and their encounters they've endured. During this movie sorting activity I developed, I am examining the system that is already in place; the film rating system and how to categorize African American stories already told in movies. Even though the selected movies already had their own predetermined ratings, I wanted everybody to ignore it and give the movie it's own rating based on if the participant viewed that specific movie or not. I also wanted the participants to use their personal experiences to relate what happened in the movie to what happened on screen to compare them in order to give it a better rating.

After completing the first activity, we moved onto creating collages that expressed a semester that each participant had undergone at Indiana Unversity; pre-Covid-19 and the semester could be either undergraduate or postgraduate. Through this, I was able to showcase that although all the participants attend the same university, they all had very different experiences even though they could have similar entities. The goal of this activity was to have everyone acknowledge their differences in similar settings by visually displaying how it made them feel; looking for empathy. Continuing from the collage, participants were able to generate a scenario that would allow others to experience their semester. While creating these scenarios, they were able to merge and rate their stories in order to combine them all into one large, cohesive experience in the exhibit creation activity.

During the workshop, I noticed a few opportunities in which I could've structured the activities slightly differently in order to gain more valuable insights as they relate to my activities. If I were able to conduct this method again, I would adjust the following:
• Have a larger and more inclusive movie list
• Allocate more time for discussion after each activity
• Have a more inclusive list of emoji printouts to describe semester
• Instead of splitting people up into partners, I will have everyone in the group participate together after the icebreaker
• Input a way to brainstorm and allow participants to get into an ideation mode

Ice Breaker

Instructions
1. Think of where you grew up at and think of 1 internal value you got from that place. Think of why its important to you.
2. Write that value on your marker and place the marker on the map from where you're from/grew up at.
3. You can share a story or just explain why.

Movie Sorting Activity
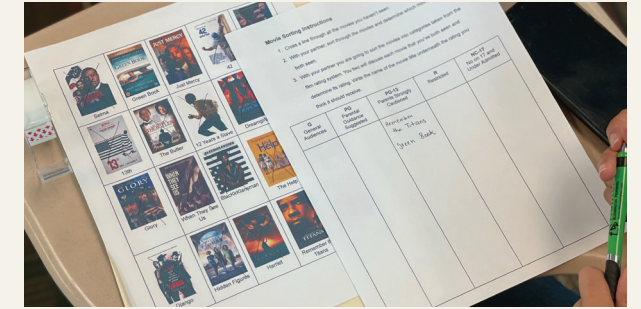
Instructions
1. Cross a line through all the movies you haven't seen.
2. With your partner, sort through the movies and determine which movies you've both seen.
3. With your partner you are going to sort the movies into categories taken from the film rating system. You two will discuss each movie that you've both seen and determine its rating. Write the name of the movie title underneath the rating you think it should receive.

Day in My Life Activity

Instructions
1. Recall a semester pre-covid and write it at the top of the page (undergrad or postgrad)
2. Think of the semester in general (10 were listed)
3. Cut out an image that correlates with/represents your personal experience and glue it to the paper. You can make this any way you want (collage style, timeline, etc.)
4. Once you're done, take time to look at your masterpiece then look at others. If you would like to share your thoughts, please do so.

Exhibit Creation Activity
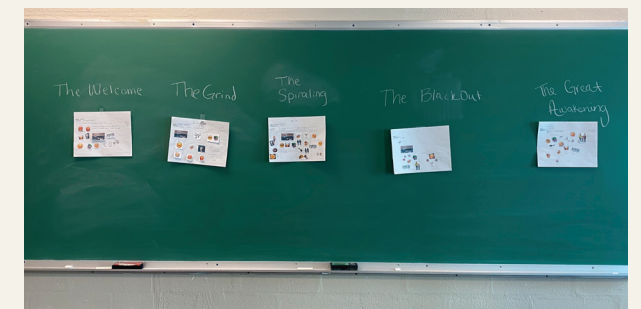
Instructions
1. With your partner, look at your collages and discuss them more in depth. Explain to them more what some things mean (the deeper meaning). I want you to reflect here with your partner.
2. Now if your semester were a movie how would you both rate your collage on using the film rating system and why?
3. Now I want you to try to create an exhibit that would showcase your experience but to others. More so, make it so they experience the pain, happiness, sadness, excitement, adrenaline, etc that you felt at that time. There are no wrong ideas and you can be as imaginative as possible. This has to be a combination of both your stories, figure out a way to determine what's important to show in the exhibit.
4. Now that you all have your exhibits, explain them to everyone one. Now everyone come together and create a floor plan out of their combined exhibits to determine a flow.

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP

Workshop Insights

The images on the page to the left were taken during the co-design workshop and includes the participants that contributed. It was very interesting hearing the different perceptions of my participants and analyzing their feedback. I was glad that I was able to recruit a diverse group of participants but understand that it isn't all-inclusive to my entire target demographic; the information I received is only a small portion of a bigger pool. Nevertheless, observations and insights I received from conducting this workshop include:

• No participants rated any of the movies G
• The participants reflected on when and where (ABC Family, school, etc.) they first watched some of the movies. Two in particular, Remember the Titans and Glory, multiple participants watched them in school but had to get permission slips signed by parental guardians.
• When watching Glory in middle school, teachers didn't fully explain what was happening historically which had one of the participants "rooting for the wrong side" (participant from workshop)
• Participants grouped ratings based off who the audience was targetted to; they took into consideration that the movies had slurs and explicit language but also referred to the movie's actual storyline.
• Some movies that have deeper concepts like The Greenbook, for example, has intense conversation and viewers will have to mature enough to mentally grasp the concepts
• We don't give children enough credit for their mental capacity and how much they can actually comprehend but you should also take into consideration the value they receive from viewing such movies at a young age and if they're beneficial and tasteful
• Participants found if difficult trying to ideate and create a stories that describes a way that will allow others to experience their collage firsthand
• It was easy for everyone to come together and collaborate with their collages in order to create one big floorplan of all their experience exhibits
• While creating their floorplan, they plotted it out like a movie and how their own collage would fit in the grand scheme of things in the full college experience
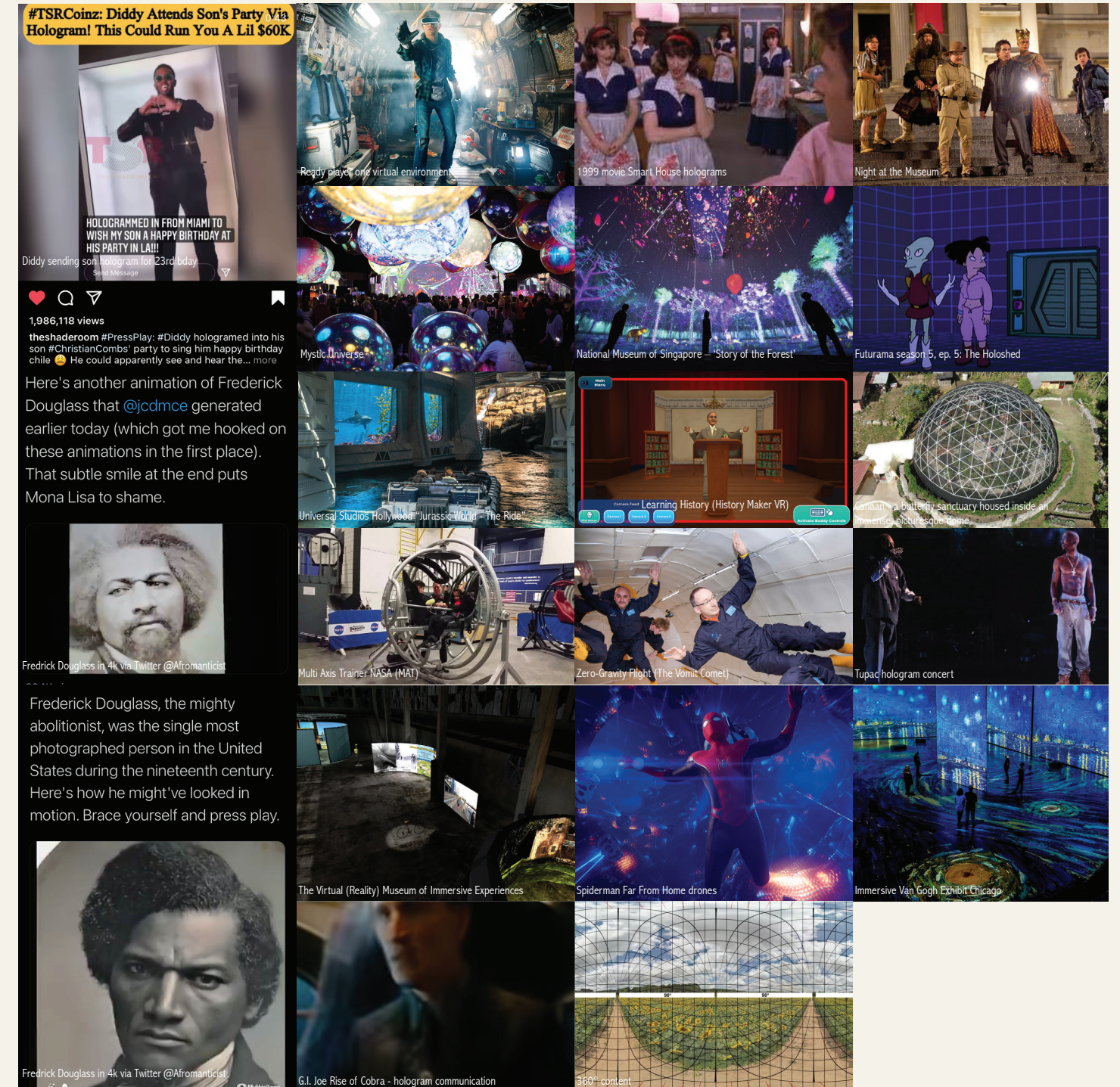
Goal

Research and explore futuristic solutions and frameworks to become more open minded and creative to produce design fictions explaining the entire immersive museum experience.

SPECULATIVE EXEMPLAR CURATION

Pushing Forward

I decided to conduct a speculative exemplar curation because after the co-design workshop I concluded that I wanted to move forward with an entire immersive museum, however, I needed to become more open minded and creative when developing the exhibits. Initially, I had the idea of solely using virtual reality for the entire museum or just as a standalone exhibit but quickly that it wouldn't be as interactive or have as many educational components as I would like. In order to accommodate for that, I designed a four exhibit museum that encompases some features and characteristics from the examples in this curation.

In doing this second exemplar curation, I was able to ideate more and brainstorm different ways to teach African American history in more immersive directions. During this curation, I was able to start visualizing how I would want the exhibit to look like and how they would work. I looked heavily into holograms and movies that included them and were a necessity for the museum. I researched immersive rides, museums, animal exhibits, and more. I was able to identify and dissect educational pieces from each exemplar collected to bridge the gap between what's imaginary and reality to generate design fictions.

Speculative Exemplars

30
31

Goal

To create a visual representation of my potential users and layout their wants and needs which will be used to advance my design fictions.

Finding Value

I included personas in my spring plan from the beginning but I didn't necessarily know what I was going to use them for. It wasn't until after I held the interviews that I started to have an idea of the value my personas will have toward my project. I was able to completely make use of my personas for my final deliverable as a means to describe their immediate experiences while attending and interacting with The African American Immersion Museum's exhibits. Essentially I created the personas as a referance tool to help familiarize and acquaint my audience with my target population and to help explain my final concept.

Persona Formation

It was simple generating all the persona's demographic information like their names and ages due to a predetermined population base, however, it was tough producing their background stories and goals. I've researched my user group plenty and based my personas off of multiple real life experiences with the combination of fictional, assumption based data. But creating a life that fits within the margins of a world I created sometimes makes me feel uneasy because I feel like I'm generalizing a demographic into four narratives. Nevertheless, I understand that I am looking at and creating different user types showcasing their different wants and needs toward my final concept.

PERSONAS

Gladys Chase
Age: 23
Race: African American & Hispanic
Born and raised in Decatur, GA, Gladys owns her own boutique shop and fashion line only 4 years after graduating high school. In her spare time she likes to travel with friends and family, sing karoki, collect shoes, and do yoga.

Goal
• Gladys would like to visit cool, new, informative, and fun tourist activities while traveling.
• She has the desire to learn about her own background and culture.

Frustrations
• Gladys does not like it when movies and things that represent historical events depicts a water-downed narrative.
• Gladys also dislikes the fact that Hollywood paints the picture of the white savior narrative.

Lucia Vinson
Age: 21
Race: Hispanic & White
She is an aspiring actress out of Los Angeles, CA and works at the vetenarian's office. Lucia makes extra money by driving Uber and in her spare time, she like to be outdoors, go hiking or to the beach, and read history books.

Goal
• Lucia is always looking for an alternative yet effective way to learn history rather than books.
• She loves to explore new and exciting places.

Frustrations
• Lucia loves visiting museums but gets frustrated when she doesn't have any sort of guide to help her through the museum.
• She doesn't think museums do a good job at showing the tumultuous history behind each piece.

Dakota Dunlop
Age: 32
Race: White
Dakota is from Arlington, VA and grew up in an upper-middle class home with a strong military background. His current occupation is in law enforcement and enjoys spending time with his wife and son. In his spare time he plays video games and makes art.

Goal
• Dakota wants to make memorable moments with his family and son especially.
• He is always looking for a innovative way to recharge his inpiration for his artwork.

Frustrations
• Dakota struggles to see all of his white privilege and fails to identify his deep, ingrained advantages due to his skin color.
• He also isn't a fan of not being able to physically touch and inspect objects he is learning about.

Raj Orr
Age: 25
Race: Asian
Originally from The Philippines, Raj came to the U.S. enrolled as an international student at the University of Pittsburgh studying business management. He currently works at Charles Schwab as a financial advisor and enjoys reading comic books, working out, cooking, and chilling with friends in his spare time.

Goal
• Raj is always looking for a positive way to connect with friends and meet new people.
• He wants to learn about other countries and their cultures around the world.

Frustrations
• Raj feels like most museums hold back on showing all their educational pieces/exhibits and are hiding them in storage.
• He is easily triggered and can become very emotional when seeing violent or graphic content.

"Design fiction does all of the unique things that science-fiction can do as a reflective, written story telling practice. Like science fiction, design fiction creates imaginative conversations about possible future worlds."

-Julian Bleecker

DESIGN FICTIONS

A Design Writing Technique

It was very difficult writing these design fictions essentially because I really dislike writing and don't think I'm really good at it. Nevertheless, I challenged myself by utilizing a writing design technique that explores the possible futures by creating scenarios using speculative artifacts. My design fiction's environment molded a concept from the "what-if" scenarios and set on;

What if there were a future where African American history and culture was mandatory to be taught accurately in grades k-12. This scenario depicts the aftermath years later from incorporating this into schools in the United States education system. The US has fully adopted this model and, as a result, has made Americans more educated, empathetic and understanding toward all histories and cultures, not just African American. During these series of design fictions, I will explain this future and economic status of the world.

I was then able to draw futuristic inspiration from existing solutions to envision how it can possibly function in my world. It was tough determining objects as referral objects for imaginary attributes to the world and remaining consistent with everything I introduce is important. The series of design fictions describe 1. The setting of the future and describing the environment, 2. A description of the entire museum along with details of the exhibits in the museum, and 3. The experiences of one persona when visiting the museum. From this series of design fictions, I hope one can envision a way to learn history in a fun, immersive way.

My final main deliverable is a combination of design fictions that paint different pieces of one picture. I broke up the design fictions into three portions:

1. Description of the future

2. Description of the entire museum

3. Description of first-hand museum visits experienced by Raj Orr

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The year is 2075. From the second civil rights movement of the 2020's, to the ice cap flooding of 2050's, many Americans began to prioritize new things and take hold of new values. Following the second Civil Rights Movement, under the leadership of the first female African American President of the United States, Whitney Winslow, America began to prioritize the education of African American history and culture to the masses as it was legislatively mandated to be taught accurately in grades k-12 nationwide.

Following many decades of debate regarding the legitimacy of "Global Warming", in 2051, ice caps throughout the arctic began to melt and led to flooding of nearly all coastal land throughout the world. For the United States, that meant the entire state of Florida, much of California and New York would be permanently submerged underwater, along with much of the rest of its coastal land. Due to the ice cap flooding of 2051, nearly half the East and West coasts of the US are under water forcing relocation of much of American society and its infrastructure. The grand flooding influenced huge changes which motivated the United States to go "all in" on renewable energy. All power generated for America now comes from clean and renewable energy sources, government officials have elected to eliminate and criminalize the consumption of and distribution of red meat and processed foods. As well as eliminate the use of plastics or other non sustainable materials in order to completely eliminate Americans greenhouse footprint and preserve the remainder of Earth's land.

The fastest rising city, and the present capital of the United States, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is also the leading technology hub in America. Tech giants such as Misero and GlassCo host their international headquarters in Pittsburgh. Misero specializes in automated systems, widely known for mass production of automated automobiles. A subsidiary of Misero is PICKUP, the primary form of transportation which serves as a public transportation through universal ride share as passengers are picked up and delivered to desired destinations. GlassCo is the telecommunications and World Wide Web powerhouse, as it serves as the majority internet and communication provider throughout the world, due to the United Nations agreement to execute a merge to all world nations, within the UN, to a worldwide network.

The mandated implementation of Black History in education and the restructuring of federal funding and how tax dollars are distributed among society have led to new public health and services policies and increase community morale and health to everyday citizens of the United States. Minimum wage in America, can now afford you the ability to live comfortably as a single adult working 35 hours a week minimum. Americans are able to afford higher wages and in turn are retiring younger and the nation's economy is thriving while leading to later life expectancy in the lower economic demographic as well as more financial freedom among this demographic, while the wealthy does not appear to be affected negatively among its overall health and happiness.

While growing in education, black culture had completely begun to dominate entertainment and pop culture worldwide. By 2032, the city of Atlanta, Georgia had become the entertainment capital of the world. The "New Hollywood'', as the city has become infamously nicknamed, consists of majority African American executives, producers, writers and directors of cinema, television programming, as well as music, thus developing a black influence and changing perceived imagery of America throughout the world. Today, the influence of black culture is evident throughout all parts of American society. nicknamed, consists of majority African American executives, producers, writers and directors of cinema, television programming, as well as music, thus developing a black influence and changing perceived imagery of America throughout the world. Today, the influence of black culture is evident throughout all parts of American society.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN IMMERSION MUSEUM

As you approach the enormous, starship enterprise shaped building, you see multiple cycling clips between African American figures and paintings alternating on a huge digital screen just below a sign embedded into the wall that reads "The African American Immersion Museum". You're able to walk up the massive grand staircase in order to enter the museum or, if you're unable to walk, ride the magic carpet up on either the far right or left sides of the staircase. The magic carpet is essentially a continuously slow-moving conveyor belt that allows for people to move up the stairs with only taking a single step. Once you reach the top of the stairs, there's automatic grand doors that slide open in opposite directions when you approach them. Taking your first steps in, you initially see the huge, 360° sided front desk, however, you can't help but take a panned view around the museum in awh. Confronting the front desk, you pass rows of kiosks placed in order for people to purchase entry wristbands. The kiosks emit translucent beams from one another to the ceiling to form a hallway until you reach the front desk. These translucent beams don't allow you to pass through unless you acquire a wristband or else it'll feel like you're walking into a cushioned wall. Once a wristband for entry is purchased, individuals are able to pass through the translucent beams like their walking into a historic yet modernly new world.

When you walk through the beam, you see historical African American figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks as tour guides giving excursions to groups throughout the museum. Protruding from the ground and on the walls are projections of beautiful African murals, paintings, and sculptures scattered around the museum.

To the left of the front desk is the **3 Dimensional Printing Artifact Room** where there are rows of 3D printing machines with digital screens placed on the front of each. There are shorter stands, the height accommodating for children, with 3D printers topping them off, that have the interface for people who need less intellectual stimulation; allowing children to operate them easily. As children run through the exhibit, some stop to just press buttons while others interact with the machine in order to create artifacts. As you stroll up to a 3D printing machine, it first allows you to pick through a series of African American artifacts like plastic CD cases, old plastic cassette tapes, plastic clock chains modeled after the ones worn by Flavor Flave, tiny plastic sneakers, plastic nameplates, tiny plastic boomboxes, a tiny plastic Commemorative bell from the 1883 Swiss National Exhibition, slavery and freedom objects, trophies and medals from the Negro Baseball League, and more. Once you select an item, the system prompts you to a description of the item and its' significance to African American culture. Next, the system will let some items be personalized by the user by allowing them to select the color. Next, it'll let you put your signature on it by writing whatever you want on the screen that'll be engraved on the artifact. Finally, in order for the artifact to actually be printed, you'll have to scan your wristband which allows you to print up to three artifacts in one visit. Roaming around the exhibit more and moving closer to the back, there is a sitting area that has a wall playing old b-roll footage on it of happy African American people from the late 1800s to the present. Along the sitting area is a play area that permits children to paint in 360° outlines of digital African American murals,
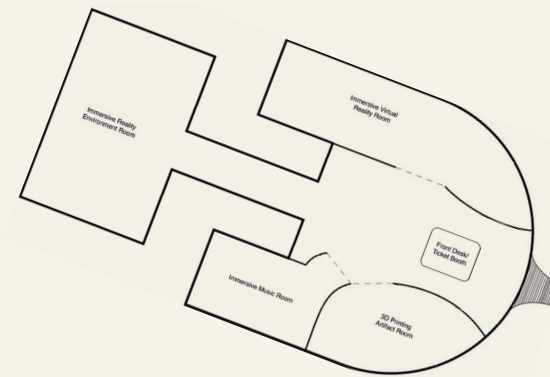
African American murals, portraits, and paintings on holographic projections which also displays information on the outlined piece. After you're done with your masterpiece, you can send the art to a 3D printer machine to be printed.

Continuing on around the left edge of the museum, you'll stumble across the **Immersive Music Room.** As you walk through the entrance, your wristband starts vibrating rhythmically and a song starts playing from it. As you fix your shoulder to raise the arm with the entry band attached, it begins to emit a holographic video of a musician singing a song that reflects your mood; if you're feeling excited, the song will be enthusiastic and if you're feeling down, the song could be more emotional. Once you finish watching their performance, the wristband grants you the option to have a short conversation with the musician where they can tell you more about themselves and their autobiography by asking questions. Once you say goodbye to your current musician, you're then able to switch between other musicians to see them perform or to have conversations with them. You are still able to choose musicians based on your mood or you can choose musicians based on your personal preference. As you begin to explore the exhibit more, you see shelf-like glass boxes holding disc jockeys folding out the length of one wall. They all have spiral stairs leading up to them allowing you to access the DJ booths in order to interact with it and learn how to use it properly. As you're DJ'ing, the booth emits a holographic crowd jumping and enjoying the beat to the music you're playing. If you look past the crowd, you see the rest of the exhibit. From the top view of the DJ's booth, looking into the distance, you'll see other visitors standing and sitting around looking at their wristband along with people walking up to the stage like a wall that's also a digital huge screen. You will see the screen project an individualized extension outward as a person approaches it displaying a life-sized version of the musician on their wrist.

Moving back to the lobby area, you can see the **Immersive Virtual Reality Room** past all the passing groups of people, holographic sculptures, and tuskegee airmen war reenactments zooming through the air above people's heads. Proceeding to the hallway that leads to the Immersive Reality Environment Room, the walls are filled with a collage full of historical paintings, posters, and documents to inspect. Before entering the hallway, there is the option to stand on a machine-lift-like platform that gives you the opportunity to operate it horizontally and vertically along the walls. Once you make it to the end of the hallway to the Immersive Reality Environment Room, there's a translucent door as the entryway displaying "Welcome to the past. When you walk through the bubble, it's like walking into another era; the museum sets the huge dome to specific historical events like Barack Obama being sworn in as the 44th President of the United States, Serena Williams winning the U.S. Open Women's Singles Tennis Championship in Flushing Meadows, Arthur Ashe

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN IMMERSION MUSEUM

Meadows, Arthur Ashe becoming the first African American to win the British Men's Singles at Wimbledon, Rosa Parks refusing to relinquish her bus seat to a white man on December 1, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and more. This exhibit allows you to walk around, enter buildings, pick up items, and watch the holograms in the room reenact it's scene. It feels so realistic because the exhibit utilizes drones that illuminate a ton of the projections for the environment. You can interact with items in the scene, however, there are instances, like people, where you can walk through and can't interact with.

As you make your way to the last exhibit in the museum, the **Immersive Virtual Reality Room**, you see a singular row from wall to wall of virtual reality controllers, headsets, and 360° multidirectional treadmills hanging from the ceiling. Along the wall in front of each station are human-to-digital body suits in their own hanging sanitation wardrobes that fully sanitized the suits as good as being thrown in a washing machine. When you put the thick yet light suit on, you are one-third closer to immersing yourself into a virtual experience. After the suit is fitted on you properly, you have the option to have multiple people in the experience with you or go by yourself. On the human-to-digital body suit's sanitation station, there is a projected screen that allows you to choose a specific African American individual from the past's life to jump into. During this experience, you are seeing, hearing and feeling everything in the scenario by being physically present in a non-physical world. The extended headset from the ceiling gives you the leisure to walk freely while wearing it to a determined limit the length of a 10ft retractable cord.

PERSONA EXPERIENCE

RAJ ORR

Age: 25
Race: Asian
Originally from The Philippines, Raj came to the U.S. enrolled as an international student at the University of Pittsburgh studying business management. He currently works at Charles Schwab as a financial advisor and enjoys reading comic books, working out, cooking, and chilling with friends in his spare time.

Goal
• Raj is always looking for a positive way to connect with friends and meet new people.
• He wants to learn about other countries and their cultures around the world.

Frustrations
• Raj feels like most museums hold back on showing all their educational pieces/exhibits and are hiding them in storage.
• He is easily triggered and can become very emotional when seeing violent or graphic content.

The sun is beaming through the window as my roommate, Jeff, and I are sitting on the couch watching ProjectTV. The first commercial that appears on the screen is one for the African American Immersion Museum that is flashing videos between people using virtual reality headsets, historical African American people giving tours, DJ booths, and finally a pan of the enormous building in which it is all held in. I swing my head to the left and say "hey Jeff, you wanna go to that museum today?" and Jeff responds "sure". So we both pour a bowl of cereal, finish then start getting dressed and ready to leave. We put in an order for a PICKUP to give us a lift to the museum.

As we pulled up to the museum, I couldn't help but feel like a starry eyed child walking up to a chocolate factory by starting to get butterflies in my stomach. Every step up the giant grand staircase was a step closer to learning more about a culture different from mine. I was in awh as I fully strided through the automatic doors of the museum. Straight ahead, all I can see is a desk and it feels like I am in a transparent, semicircle, bubble hallway. A hallway where I can see other visitors in the museum but can't touch or interact with them, just watch and hear them enjoy themselves. Placed along the inside of this long bubbled hallway are digital kiosks that allow you to purchase entry tickets to the museum along with a holographic tour guide to escort you around the museum. Jeff and I decided to purchase a general entry wristband. The kiosk dispensed the wristband, we put them on, and they started to light up. I heard a voice say "welcome to the African American Immersion Museum, enjoy your visit. Feel free to walk through the translucent barrier to enter a new world."

I thought walking up to the building was astonishing, but passing through the barrier was mind blowing. I saw projections of Tuskegee Airmen flying around in the air, taking off from a far location. When I walk closer to the take-off location, I walk past Malcolm X explaining this ideology to a group full of people. I make it to the platform and it's displaying a running list of who is currently in the air flying and who's next to take off from the platform. A couple pilot names listed were Lt. Col. Charles Dryden, Lt. Col. Lee Archer, and Lt. Col. Hiram E. Mann to mention a few. I turn my head looking around for Jeff and catch him with a crowd of people looking at something. I proceed to the left toward Jeff in order to see what he's viewing. As I walk over to Jeff and I'm shocked because I started passing through a stationary holographic projection. Once I exited my intrusion, I stopped to look at what I walked through; it was the Emancipation Monument. As I analyzed the towering Abraham Lincoln, I noticed the details of the emancipation proclamation being held in his right hand. Although Lincoln is freeing the slaves, I thought it was still degrading because from one angle, it looks like Lincoln is petting the kneeling, shackled unnamed and barely-clothed slave's head and from another angle it looks as if Lincoln is bestowing freedom upon him and giving him direction. Nevertheless, the way Abraham Lincoln is depicted in this monument is a showcase of white supremacy African American's faced in the 1800s.

I finish reading the description of the projection and continue on to Jeff only to see he isn't where I initially saw him. As I look around for Jeff, I find myself exploring the museum more and stumble into the Immersive Music Room. It was impressive to see a long and tall wall full of Dj booths with spiral staircases leading up to them. As I walked into the room my entry wristband started to vibrate. As I lift my arm, a hologram of a miniature concert starts, starring The Pointer Sisters playing I'm So Excited. As I focus my attention on the musicians to watch their concert, I stop in the middle of the exhibit. When The Pointer Sisters were done, they said to me "how did you enjoy that song?" I respond with "that was great!" They then state "you know how we came up in life don't ya? Well we formally started vocal training with our father in his church in West Oakland, California".

While this conversation is going on, I am thinking to myself "this is surreal! Am I really talking to The Pointer Sisters?" It was like they had a conscious of their own and are really having a conversation with me, discussing their autobiography. I finally say "goodbye, it was nice speaking with you all" and the women disappear from my wristband. I drop my arm back to my side and take a look up to see I'm facing the DJ booths. Behind the booth, it reads a sign saying "Disc Jockey". During that moment, I realized the DJ was an anagram for Disc Jockey, I'm mind blown learning that and surprised that I didn't initially know that piece of information. I make it to the top of the spiral staircase and see crates full of flat vinyl records, two turntables, a mixer, speakers, and headphones. I look through the crates of records to pick out an Earth, Wind, and Fire album called September. I slid the headphones onto my head and put the record on one of the turntables then buttons started to light up on the turntable, so I pressed it. After I pressed the highlighted button, another button on the mixer began to flash. So I pressed it. I soon realized the buttons are guiding me, helping me assemble a beat. I started to really get the hang of the DJ'ing concept and decided to switch the disc to Marvin Gaye's Romantically Yours album to continue on. It was easy to get lost in the music. I didn't know that there were so many popular songs that descended from African American culture. As I'm in the DJ booth looking past the holographic crowd, I see Jeff and call out his name for his attention. He's turning his body around scanning the exhibit, looking for whoever called his name and finally lifts his head up to make eye contact with me. I rushed down the stairs to

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meet him.

Jeff asks "dude, where have you been? You gotta check out the Immersive Environment Room". He rolls around and points to the exhibit. I say "okay let's go" and we begin to walk toward the exhibit. As we walk, Jeff explains to me that this week the environment is depicting the Montgomery Bus Boycott and that it gives the illusion you're physically there walking around it all. We arrive at the exhibit and Jeff was right. As I walk around the exhibit, I can't help but feel like I am an extra in a movie. Or a background character with no significance in the movie. In addition to not being able to converse with the figures in the scene, I couldn't interact with the majority of items in the scene. I can see African American holograms waving bye as an old Montgomery bus would pull up to a bus stop. It was nerve racking because I saw someone, a real physical person, in front of the bus pulling off and I thought the bus was going to hit them. So I sort of jumped and shouted low, however, the bus went right through them. I walked toward the leaving bus up to an old house. I took a step into the house and saw an African American family consisting of two boys about 6 and 10 years old. The mother was in the kitchen when a group of Ku Klux Klan came in a group of about 20 men and women holding torches approached the house. They screamed, "get out of here, this is our town!" Then proceeding to throw glass bottles blazing with fire into the windows of the house. The mother gathers the children and all run out of the house coughing. In the midst of the scene, I tear up and can't watch the scene anymore so I grabbed Jeff's shoulder and said "let's go". Jeff nods and turns around with me to head to the exit.

"So which exhibit do you want to visit next?" Jeff asks and I respond "I think we should go to the 3D printing artifact room because after the last exhibit, the immersive virtual reality room would probably be too much for me." Jeff nods and chuckles while saying "yea, even I was a little surprised and shaken up." So we begin to head over to the 3 dimensional printing artifact room and see rows of 3D printers in the distance. Jeff and I approach a 3D printer and decide to interact with it together. The first prompt on the holographic screen projected from the base of the machine allowed us to go through a series of African American artifacts. When you select an artifact, the machine reads off the title of the object along with its description. In the description it would explain the significance the artifact has to African American culture along with the options to customize the artifact if I want to physically print it. I flipped through a few artifacts but I decided to print a biscuit cutter invented by Alexander P Ashbourne simply because I enjoy cooking. When I selected the biscuit cutter, I chose the color red and signed my name in what felt like the air, hologram screen. After I pressed next, I raised my arm so that my wristband was near the base of the 3D printer. The printer scanned my wristband, "print redeemed, initiating printer", and started to squirt out plastic from the needle of the machine in order to form my personalized biscuit cutter. After my finished printing, a green light appeared and the glass doors of the 3D printer unveiling my enclosed biscuit cutter. I grab it and Jeff begins the process to print an artifact he prefers. Since Jeff watched me, he knew which artifact he wanted to print and went straight to it; a clock chain modeled after one worn by Flavor Flav in the episode when Pumpkin split in New York's face. I guess he enjoyed that show or his music or whatever but once that finished printing, Jeff instantly put it around his neck.

"You ready to go?" Jeff asks and I respond "Yes, I am getting kind of hungry but I do want to hit that last exhibit." Jeff answers "okay but I hope we can make it quick" and I nod in agreement then make our way to the immersive virtual reality room. It's impressive to see how many virtual reality sets they are able to fit into the space. There is only one row but it extends wall to wall with about 50 setup in between. Jeff and I head over to a sanitation booth to grab our human-to-digital body suits and put them on over our clothes. It was weird at first, having the suits over our clothes, but once I adjusted everything the suit fit fine. The suit feels like another layer of clothing on top of my clothes, however, it's more tight fitting while still leaving space in the genital area. After we put out suits fully on, I wave my hand in front of the case that was holding my suit in order to activate the hologram that displays the scenario options I'm allowed to choose from. I really had no idea which scenario I should choose so I set filters. The first filter I set was to have a 5 minute time limit in the virtual world because I don't want to become nauseous. Once that was set, the amount of scenarios displayed decreased although there were still hundreds to choose from. I proceed to go back to set another filter; the vulgarity of the scenario and I choose rated PG due to the fact that the immersive reality environment room was intense for me. The amount of scenarios decreases further and leaves about 100 options to choose from. I decide to scan through the options and stumble across the 2020 March on Washington in Washington D.C. As I recall, this march was short and had very instrumental African American figures speak at the march during the great COVID-19 pandemic. I select this event and it displays a preview of the portion I'd be dropped into with a description of the era and event. I make a fist to activate the scenario and walk over to the 360° treadmill and put on my virtual reality headset just about my eyes. When I grabbed the controllers and slid the headset over my eyes, I am virtually placed on the sidewalk watching protestors walk past shouting chants while raising signs reading "Justice brings peace", "for Breonna and George" with a heart, "How many weren't filmed?", "My skin is not a weapon" to name a few. After I took about a minute just to watch and take things in, I jumped into the crowd and joined the march. I began walking up to the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial and thought it was pretty cool that there used to be a monument in our capital for MLK. It made me think about how misfortune it is that society has lost all those historical monuments but this VR experience is making me feel as if I am actually seeing it and touching it. Continuing on with the march before my time expired, I finally made it to the Lincoln Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. The stairs leading up to the Lincoln Memorial are filled with stages, huge screens, and people. This is my first time coming close, and probably the closest I'll ever come to, experiencing Washington D.C and the monuments that existed there. I flick my right index finger to speed the scenario up in order to hear and see some of the speakers. I want to fast forward the screen in order to hear one speaker, in particular, Rev. Al Sharpton because I remember seeing his name is the hallway to the immersive reality environment room. During Rev. Al Sharpton's speech, everything around me just paused and floating text read "continue or end session?" I select end session and take off my head set. As I take my first step off the treadmill, I instantly become dizzy and need to take a seat. While sitting, I see Jeff finishing up with his virtual reality experience. Jeff takes a stumble and instantly finds a seat next to me as he steps off the treadmill as well. We take a look at each other and Jeff says "well that was interesting.." I had the slight feeling he wanted to say more but needed time to process what he saw. We unclothed out the human-to-digital body suits and placed them in their designated sanitation booths. We continued to walk from the immersive virtual reality exhibit toward the front desk and returned our wristbands. Once we return the wristbands, we are escorted by Maya Angelou to the exit. She makes small talk with us asking if we enjoyed our visit to the African American Immersion Museum and Jeff and I both said something along the lines of "yes it was great, I'll definitely tell others and come back!" I walked through the translucent bubble emitted from the entry band purchasing kiosks and started to walk down the grand stairs of the museum.

THANK YOU.

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Persona Images
[21] Caique Silva on Unsplash - Lucia Vinson persona image
[22] Lucas Kepner on Unsplash - Dakota Dunlop persona image
[21] Mitsuo JR on Unsplash - Raj Orr persona image
[22] Troy Spoelma on Unsplash - Gladys Chase persona image