

## DES 450 **Creative Coding** Final Documentation

### **Path**

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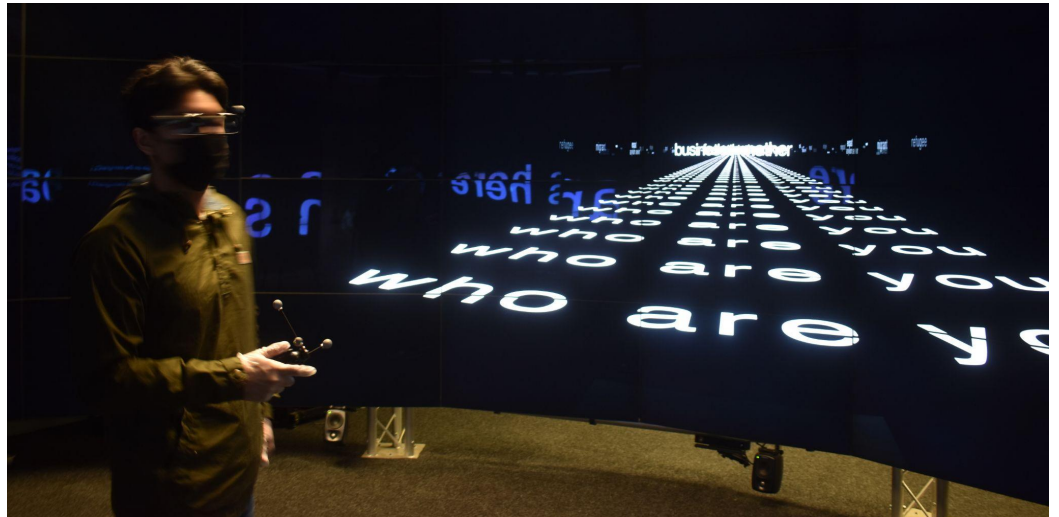


### **Statement**

Xenophobic rhetoric is intimately tied to nearly all avenues of social and political discourse surrounding immigration. Whether immigrants are first or fifth generation, dehumanizing labels projected onto them supersede their self-identities and contribute to both systematic and individually perpetuated violence. *Path* seeks to make tangible the serious power of invisible language.

## Interaction

*Path* is set in a series of text-based hallways. As the player progresses, subtle changes in the walls and floors of the environment reveal how microaggressive rhetoric can easily snowball into invalidating and dehumanizing attitudes.



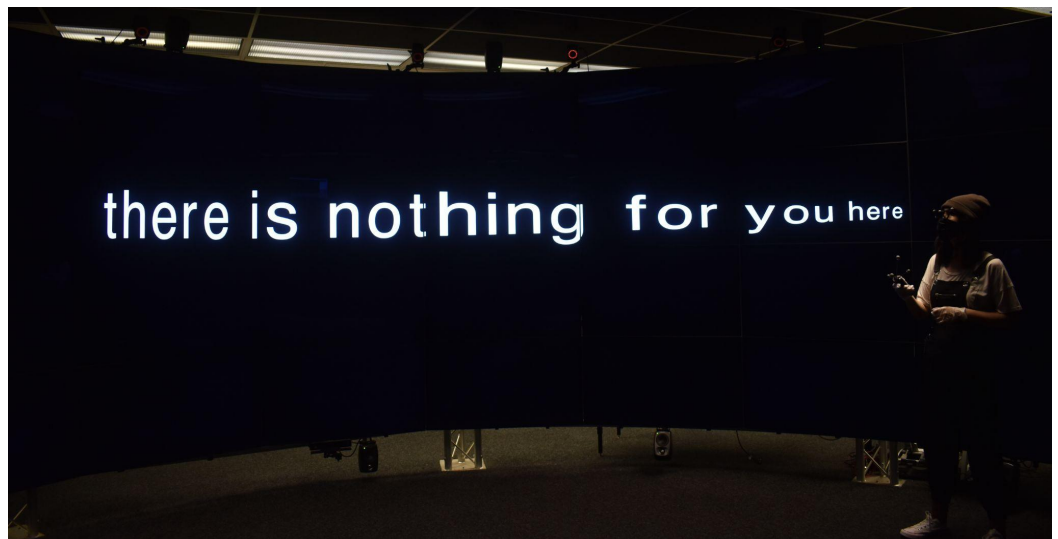
The first hallway's loose and floating semi-transparent walls are composed of positive and neutral words used in reference to migrants such as "expat" or "dreamer". These words are juxtaposed against the path itself, which is made up of a repetition of the phrase "who are you". Along the path, you encounter words one might associate with their sense of self. "Mother", "artist", "teacher" - these are the labels that a person perceives to be their own defining characteristics. While the player has the autonomy to navigate through these labels, they cannot pass freely through the word "immigrant", which scales up to fill the entirety of the space. In this way, not only does your label as an immigrant supersede all other self-identities in the eyes of society, but can also strip your power in the world.



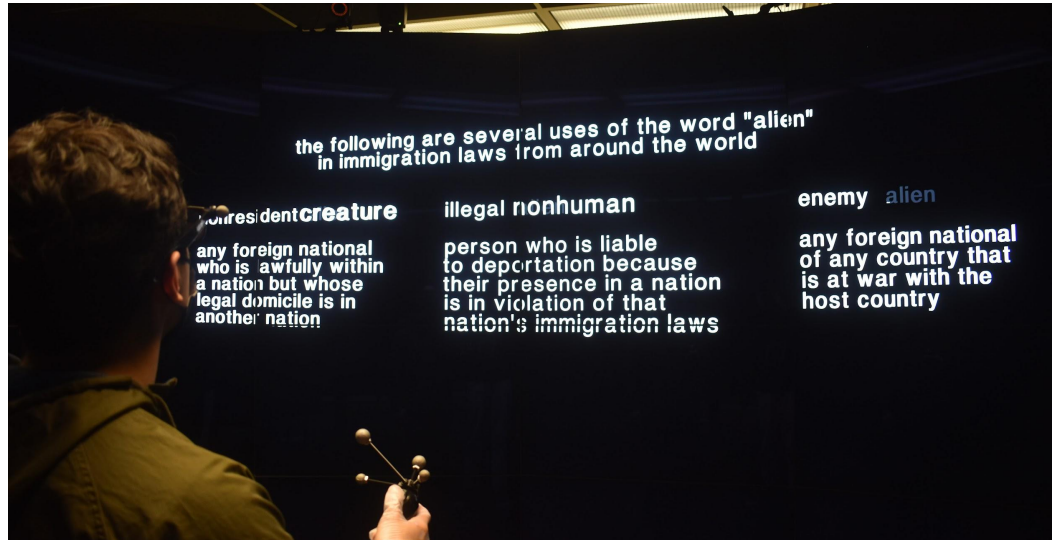
Reaching the end will teleport you to the second hallway. The text that make up its walls are larger, more opaque, and move quickly back and forth, at times crossing over one another to be indecipherable. While still words used in reference to migrants, they have more negative associations (like “foreigner”). The path here is made up of a repetition of phrases: “another nationality”, “another race”, “another culture”, “another ethnicity”, “another language”, “another religion”, “another heritage”. Attempting to return through the teleporter will trigger the phrase “there’s no turning back”.



Proceeding forward will teleport you to a vast, empty location with only the words “there is nothing for you here” - a common phrase levied at migrants in both their mother country and their destination country. The audio here is taken from NASA compilations of the sound of space.



Returning to the path, all of the phrases will have shifted from starting with “another” to “an other”. Proceeding forward will again teleport you, this time to a wall of text with various uses of the word “alien” in immigration laws from around the world. Walking up to inspect each will trigger the word “alien” to be replaced by its synonyms “creature” and “alien”, or its latin root *aliēnus*, meaning “slave”.



Returning to the path, all of the phrases will again have shifted from starting with “an other” to “other”. In the distance, the words “you are welcome” are visible at the end of the hallway. As you come closer however, the word “not” slowly scales up in bright red. The path shifts one final time, to simply the repetition of the word “other”.





Reaching the end will teleport you to the third hallway. Its walls are even larger, nearly opaque, and closer together - seemingly closing in on the player. Words like “outsider” and “clandestine” are even more disparaging towards migrants, rapidly moving up and down in a hostile manner. The path now only says one thing: go back.



In the distance is the word “home”. Approaching it will prompt confrontational dialogue to spawn along the way which demands you to hasten your pace. But no matter how far you go, “home” will scale down in size, making it seem perpetually out of reach. For many immigrants, what’s home to them doesn’t always feel that way when you’re constantly being told you don’t belong. Towards the end the dialogue tells you that “to continue is to trespass”. With no other option, all you can do is go forward.



Reaching the end will teleport you to the fourth hallway. Its walls and floors are made up of “CRIMINAL” on all sides in full opacity, completely still, like an accusation. It’s not just your behavior that is deemed illegal, but your humanity in it of itself. Proceeding will cause each letter of the wall to turn red.



At the same time, the player will trigger audio samples of anti-immigration rhetoric from politicians around the world - even those we might expect to have more progressive stances. These samples are a reminder of just how powerless one might feel navigating a society that denies your legitimacy at the highest levels of authority.



Eventually, the walls change, gradually shifting to all the other walls you’ve encountered on your way to this point. The floor too shifts, becoming simply “YOU ARE”. At the very end, you are met with the phrase: “who are you”. Proceeding will teleport you to back to the start, signifying the intergenerational transmission of racism and xenophobia.

## **Acknowledgement**

*Path* was developed on Unity for CAVE2, a virtual reality and visualization hybrid environment at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Thank you to our professors Daria, Andy, and Jeff; the EVL team; as well as our many peers who helped us specifically with navigating Unity and the coding space.

## **Collaboration**

Throughout the semester, our group met weekly via Zoom and kept in contact on a daily basis through text and Slack. We used Google Drive and MURAL for file sharing. When assigning tasks, we tried to consider each other's strengths and interests to ensure the best possible workflow.

### **Sabrina Zhang**

Set the visual and conceptual direction of the project. Conducted secondary research. Created sketches, storyboards, and early mock-ups. Created all 3D text in the environment. Mapped out the order in which interactions happened within Unity. Contributed to scripting. Explained the project in presentations throughout the semester. Took photos, edited the final project documentation video and wrote the concept essay.

### **Christian Palacios**

Coded the interactions in Unity. Managed scripts, as well as the appearance and timing of interactions. Implemented sound. Troubleshooted project in CAVE2. Helped explain project ideas to professors and classmates. Formatted and contributed to the final project write-ups.