

Project 2 Writeup

The social justice issue that I chose for this project was the issue of homelessness. Living in San Francisco, I see or walk by a homeless person every day of the week, and I have become so accustomed to this that I rarely think twice about it. I know that there is a growing homeless population in many regions of the Bay Area, and more often than not, the government tries to hide them more than they help them. My girlfriend had done a research project on how big corporations have been kicking homeless people out of their sites, and this has forced them to reside around small shops instead. There, they scare away many potential customers, and shopowners have had to be more vigilant over their products due to an increase in shoplifting. Unfortunately, there is not much that the police can do for them either, leaving many of the shop owners frustrated and helpless.

In my project, however, I actually wanted to take the perspective of a person who had just found themselves homeless. I didn't want to villainize the homeless population, but rather bring attention to their situations, and encourage people to want to help them. The story that I wrote was loosely based on some stories that I read of single mothers finding their way out of homelessness. Many of these stories involved them finding a homeless shelter and working with the employees and volunteers to get themselves back on their feet. As I was doing my research, however, I was a bit discouraged when I started reading stories about people's not-so-great experiences in homeless shelters. I discovered that these shelters are often very difficult to get into and sometimes more dangerous than sleeping in your car. However, for the sake of simplicity, and because I didn't feel that the game was long enough to address something like this, I decided to stick with my original story. If I were to perhaps visit the game again, I would probably try to add some more of these obstacles and difficulties in the story. I already poke fun at how unrealistic some of the interactions are within the dialogue of the game itself, and in reality, the story I ended up telling was highly optimistic.

Design-wise, I took a lot of inspiration from video games that I had played in the past. The design of the map, the text boxes, and the sprites were all heavily inspired by Pokemon games that I used to play as a kid. Some of the dialogue itself was inspired by text-based games that I had played before, where most of the interactions were described through the text instead of animations. One of the things I noticed when playing some of the example games in class was that it felt clunky when I had to move my right hand from the keyboard to the mouse/mousepad. With this in mind, I carefully designed all the interactions so that you could do all the key-based events with your left hand, and the rest of the interactions could be done with your right hand on the mouse. Overall, I wanted to create a fairly free and unrestrictive gameplay experience, where you can follow the main storyline or you can simply wander around the map. Although I really would have loved to have more time to add some side-quests or to really polish the interaction and artwork, I am pretty happy with how it all turned out.