

Afrofuturism Action Project: Reclaiming the Legacy – Restoring the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Monument at Cal Poly Pomona

Project Summary

The Afrofuturism Action Project titled "Reclaiming the Legacy: Restoring the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Monument at Cal Poly Pomona" focused on revitalizing and reimagining a long-neglected symbol of justice, resilience, and hope. Located at a prominent academic institution, the MLK monument had faded from public view—physically and metaphorically. Through this project, I led a community-engaged effort to restore the monument, elevate its historical significance, and reframe it as a living tribute to Black excellence, social progress, and visionary leadership.

The project's core objectives were to (1) raise awareness about the monument's origins and its connection to the university's legacy of Black student activism, (2) physically revitalize the site to increase visibility and educational value, and (3) curate a space of reflection and empowerment for future generations through digital storytelling and interpretive signage. The restoration not only honored Dr. King's enduring impact but also symbolized a forward-looking vision rooted in Afrofuturist values—centering Black narratives, reclaiming space, and fostering collective healing through historical remembrance and cultural innovation.

Collaboration and Community Impact

This project was carried out in collaboration with a diverse team that included graduating doctoral student DeVoneia L Jordan, faculty, alumni, and staff. Key collaborators included Dr. Clark Rucker, Director of Engineering Student Success; Samuel Moore, Director of Development in University Advancement; Chara Swodeck, community advocate and alumna; and Dr. Akers from the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. Their involvement provided institutional backing, intergenerational perspectives, and logistical support.

We also engaged current Cal Poly Pomona students through volunteer opportunities and open forums to voice how the monument should serve their vision of justice and belonging. The project positively impacted Black students, student activists, and the broader campus community by fostering a deeper sense of identity, cultural pride, and belonging. It created a renewed gathering place for reflection, ceremony, and celebration, a symbol of resilience and unity in the pursuit of liberation.

Connection to Afrofuturism

Rooted in the principles of Afrofuturism, this project bridged ancestral memory with speculative futures. It imagined a future where Black historical figures are not relegated to the margins of campus life but are centered as architects of possibility and purpose. The restoration of the MLK monument functioned as a cultural reclamation—where art, activism, and architecture intersected to envision what a liberated Black future could look like on a college campus. By honoring the past while designing for the future, this project enacted the Afrofuturist ethos of “radical imagining” and reinforced the idea that liberation is both a memory and a mission.

Impact Artifact:

<https://www.cpp.edu/news/content/2025/04/graduating-doctoral-student-helps-restore-the-monumental-legacy-of-mlk-on-campus/index.shtml#>