

Jannah Farooque



As someone who grew up on the East Side of Denver, now known as "Rhino", I have seen so many changes. People and places have been pushed out and erased right before my eyes. I really wanted to create flags paying homage to the Black, Native and Chicano communities that I was raised in here in Denver, CO.

The serape fabric is for my Mexican siblings. Serape is traditionally a woven blanket that is very popular in the Mexican tradition. As we know much of Mexico was stolen. Colorado, New Mexico, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming all used to be Mexico. We can never forget this fact. Chicano culture is deep in Colorado, and they share ties with the Black Panthers. In the 1960's the Brown Berets emerged as a pro-Chicano organization. Often the Panthers and Brown Berets marched side by side for the same causes.

The Thunderbird is for my Native siblings. Colorado is home to many Native tribes such as, but not limited to, Navajo, Arapaho and Cheyenne. The deeper meaning of the Thunderbird varies among the many Indigenous nations, but a common belief is that it's a symbol of strength and might. Most of America is Native land and their genocide is one of the most devastating in world history. More than 90% of their population was wiped out when European ships arrived at these shores. Today both Native and African blood run through many of our veins.

The cowrie shell is native to the west coast of Africa. It has been used as currency, in jewelry, ceremonies and more. Through trade the shells have traveled through the Americas and have become a part of Native clothing and art as well. I felt the cowrie shell was an important symbol that ties us all together.

On the first flag I chose mudcloth to represent the Black/African American community. Mudcloth is originally from Mali, a west African country. West Africa is where most of my people were stolen from. Mudcloth is made by fermenting mud then using it to stain cloth. The symbols on the mudcloth vary and each design holds a story of their own depending on who made the cloth. Although this is not our original land we now share in the deep troubling and rich history of this soil.

On the second flag instead of mudcloth for my people, I used the RBG flag. The red, black and green flag was adopted by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at a conference in New York City in 1920. For several years leading up to that point, Marcus Garvey, the UNIA's leader, talked about the need for a black liberation flag.

The history, lineage, pain and joy of these three cultures are inseparable, woven together in such a beautiful and complex way. Whether all of us like it or not, we share so many things and our commonalities will forever and always strengthen us more than our differences ever will.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African proverb

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