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1/8: I Am Afraid; Artist's Statement

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STELLA NALL

1/8: I AM AFRAID

COVER ARTIST'S STATEMENT

1/8: I AM AFRAID is a self-portrait which discusses the painful and confusing feelings that I am often confronted with as a mixed-race indigenous woman. 1/8 is what is recorded as my blood quantum for Apsáalooke. It is the fraction that means that I am considered a First Descendant rather than an enrolled member of the Crow Tribe, and it is a fraction which many of our people are afraid of because it is symbolic of the final tie to any officially recognized claims to Crow identity.

The white line which cuts through the print is symbolic of my recorded blood quantum. It is fractionated into eight sections and one of them is beaded because that is the amount of my blood that is seen as Crow. The beads were gifted to me by my mother, and I depicted myself reaching through the beaded section to symbolize my efforts to maintain connection with the parts of myself and my community that feel integral to my cultural identity.

I chose to use the elk's teeth as a symbol of Apsáalooke connection because they are historically important to our people and are important in my life. They adorn traditional regalia of Crow women and also bring me

comfort because they are familiar and remind me of some of the happiest memories of my childhood: wearing the Elk's tooth dress made for me by my mother, visiting my family and dancing at Powwows. I included the badger because I am trying to learn Apsáalooke, and it is the first animal name that I learned in the language (awachia).

A lot of my recent work deals with the blood quantum because there are a lot of misconceptions surrounding it, and I am trying to draw attention to the issue and educate people about it. As a First Descendant, I am not allowed to vote on enrollment methods or any tribal issues. I feel that the best way I can share my voice regarding these matters is through my art. I am trying to educate my tribe and anyone else who isn't aware of it about the racist origins and the misconceptions about indigeneity that are enforced and perpetuated through the blood quantum. Many tribes across the U.S. have switched back to traditional enrollment methods, and I am hoping that someday my tribe will too.



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