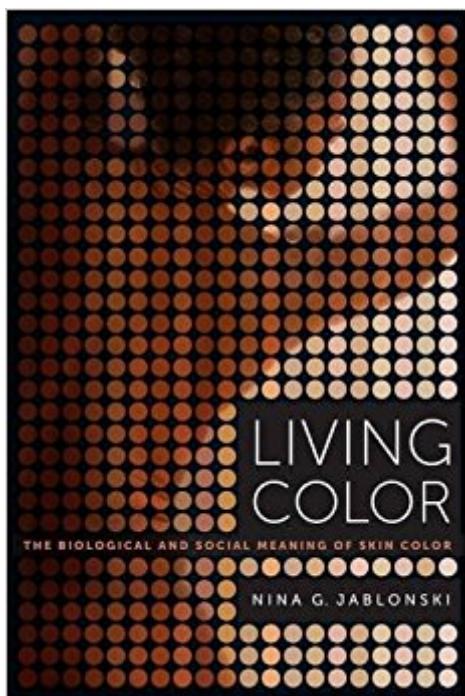


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Living Color: The Biological And Social Meaning Of Skin Color



Synopsis

Living Color is the first book to investigate the social history of skin color from prehistory to the present, showing how our body's most visible feature influences our social interactions in profound and complex ways. Nina Jablonski begins this fascinating and wide-ranging work with an explanation of the biology and evolution of skin pigmentation, tracing how skin color changed as humans moved around the globe, exploring the relationship between melanin and sunlight, and examining the consequences of mismatches between our skin color and our environment due to rapid migrations, vacations, and other life-style choices. Aided by plentiful illustrations, this book also explains why skin color has become a biological trait with great social meaning; a product of evolution perceived differently by different cultures. It considers how we form impressions of others, how we create and use stereotypes, and how prejudices about dark skin developed and have played out through history; including as justification for the transatlantic slave trade. Offering examples of how attitudes toward skin color differ in the United States, Brazil, India, and South Africa, Jablonski suggests that a knowledge of the evolution and social importance of skin color can help eliminate color-based discrimination and racism. Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

âœAccessible to general readers. . . . The book fascinates! Highly recommended.â • (D. C. Cook, Indiana University Choice 2013-04-01)"Clear [and] thorough, but not exhaustive or boring." (American Journal of Anthropology 2013-06-04)

“Among traits that differ between human populations, skin color is the most noticeable, the subject of the most comments, and the hardest to understand. In this fascinating book, Nina Jablonski negotiates this mine field and comes up with many surprises.â • –Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Collapse* "Nina Jablonski is a world-renowned expert on human pigmentation, and one of the leaders in the science of anthropology. In *Living Color* she has done a brilliant job of explaining the biological and cultural significance of our skin tones in nontechnical terms. *Living Color* should be required reading for every high school and college student." –Paul R. Ehrlich, author of *The Race Bomb* and *The Dominant Animal* “Rooted firmly in the science of human history, this groundbreaking book brings the biological and social meanings of skin color into dialogue with one another, creating an open, rich, and essential conversation about this fact of life that differentiates us from one another but that ultimately, and profoundly, unites us.â • –Henry Louis Gates Jr., author of *Faces of America* and *Tradition and the Black Atlantic*

Absolutely excellent and flawless. Nina Jablonski's "Living Color" should forever put to rest any arrogance, ignorance or self-serving arguments that breathe air into racism, racists of all colors, or any subtle justifications supporting or tolerating it. This should be a standard text in every college and junior-senior year of high school that wants to genuinely educate and enlighten its students about humanity. Dr. Jablonski has authored an indisputable book on the obvious irrelevance of race and so-called racial differences, with great photos, illustrations and clear details. This book greatly enhances her "Skin Deep" lectures and documentaries on YouTube. Nevertheless, until much of human nature and racially socialized people discards this human weakness, we'll have to occasionally suffer from every knuckle-dragging knucklehead that believes they have an ounce of superiority or entitlement over other humans. Even in this 21st century, we're still on a disastrous race-based journey to the bottom --- no matter how we disguise it through rhetoric, politics, politricks, policies, religion or one's own sense of (false) entitlement over other people. After reading *Living Color*, I concluded that any form of racism practiced or tolerated by anyone is actually the expression and clear evidence of one's own inferiority.

I enjoyed it. It was educational and the informative. I will definitely look into her other books. But it is always good to find the science that supports what you knew to be true.

It is a very rare phenomenon for a major scholar like Nina Jablonski to write both for an academic audience (see her 2006 book, *Skin: A Natural History*) and a general audience a few years later. The challenges are enormous: how to summarize vast amounts of research that move across many disciplines (evolutionary biology, human anatomy and physiology, paleontology, anthropology, nutrition, psychology, and culture -- to name just a few) without trivializing the insights of specialists OR numbing the mind of non-specialist readers. Anyone who wants to understand why skin color has acquired the meanings we give it should read both books, but I suspect that most readers will find the more recent book entirely sufficient. But "*Living Color*" is far, far more than sufficient: it is provocative without being polemical. Jablonski marshalls an astonishing academic literature that sheds light on the historical development of skin color -- why and how it developed -- and then illuminates the various ways that culture have attributed meaning to visual difference. So deeply was the instinct not just to "see" but to "evaluate" that the travel literature from early European explorers confirmed prejudices that they had brought to their voyages. "*Color*" thus became an integral feature of colonization. Being "color blind" was never an option. But everyone already knows this, right? What was new for me was how "*color*" was as a signifier within the same color group -- not just between groups. I didn't know about the differences between genders either. The adjectives that we have learned to name races are just that -- and very imprecise at that. (I am old enough to remember a Crayola named "flesh.") Who knew that Vitamin D plays such an important role in human development and health? I didn't. Where would I learn about the impact of "tanning salons" for cultures that value a particular hue or "skin whitening" for cultures that seek to avoid it? The book is lavishly illustrated and carefully indexed -- a rarity in books written for a general audience. It even has a first-rate bibliography. I cannot imagine a more helpful or humane introduction. The author is erudite but wears her learning lightly. The use of side boxes is a bonus for clarifying complex issues, and there is not a single illustration that I would omit. I do wish, however, that the publisher had reprinted all of the plates found in the 2006 volume in this book -- they are relevant here as well. Serious readers? Read both books, but if you have time for only one, I strongly recommend "*Living Color*."

I love this book. It is not too over your head but breaks a lot of things down. This is the type of book and information I have been looking for. I am very interested in Social Psychology especially racial relations. This is the first stop on my journey! Love it!

This product was informative and an easy read. Some points that the author wanted to make were

repeated too often. The author could have discussed the scale that dermatologists use to assess skin types as described several years ago by Tom Fitzpatrick to make the readers aware of how their doctor might evaluate their skin when they walk into the office.

eye opening

This author is a little strange but the information is interesting

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