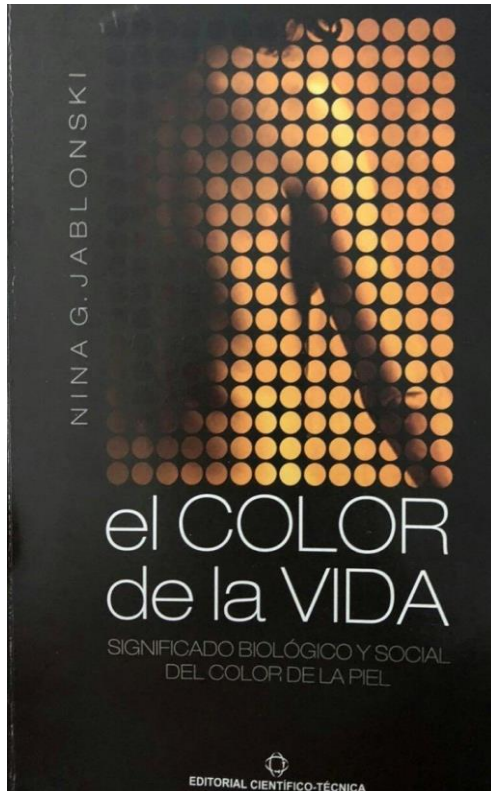


MENDIVE

REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

Translated from the original in Spanish



An essential book: *The color of life. Biological and social significance of skin color*

Un libro imprescindible: *El color de la vida. Significado biológico y social del color de la piel*

Um livro imprescindível: *A Cor da Vida. Significado biológico e social da cor da pele*

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Bibliographic record

Jablonski, Nina G. (2018). *The Color of Life .Biological and social meaning of the color of the skin.* La Habana: Scientific- Technical Editorial. ISBN: 978-959-05-1119-6

The book *The Color of Life*, written by Dr. C. Nina G. Jablonski, was one of the suggested works at the Book last fair in Havana, precisely because the issue the author addresses and the relevance of it at an international level.

Dr. C. Nina Jablonski is a researcher with an amazingly broad resume. At 53 years old she was the principal of the Anthropology Department at the University of Pennsylvania, she is an evolutive biologist and paleontologist. She received her degree in Anthropology from the University of Washington in 1981 and then she hold teaching positions at the University of Hong Kong (1981-1990) and the University of Western Australia (1990-1994). He has held the Irvine Presidency of Anthropology for the California Academy of Sciences since late 1994.

She is the author of several articles and books on primates and human evolution and conducts fieldwork in Asia and Africa. In 2002 she was elected member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; she is also a member of the Pale anthropology Society and the American Association of Anthropologists.

We are in the presence of the first book that investigates the social history of skin color from prehistory to the present; it shows how the most visible feature of our body influences our social interactions in profound and complex ways. Excellently illustrated, this article explains why skin color has become a biological trait with

great social significance, a product of the evolution perceived by culture. It considers how we form impressions of others, how we create and use stereotypes, how negative stereotypes on dark skin developed and develop throughout history.

This world-renowned expert in human pigmentation and one of the leaders in the science of anthropology, in this work she has done a brilliant job of explaining the biological and cultural importance of our skin tones in non-technical terms. The *color of life* should be required reading for every student, intending to contribute to training more humanistic of new generations, ending arrogance, ignorance or selfish arguments infusing air into racism, racists of all colors or any subtle justification that supports or tolerates it.

For all the aforementioned, we consider the reading and analysis of this text to be of a great importance, since the main topic addressed in it is related to racism as one of the forms of discrimination, which is maintained in the current societies despite the many attempts that humanity has made to eradicate it. It should be noted that progress has been made in reducing this phenomenon, but much remains to be done.

There are numerous international organizations that have promoted the cessation of any form of discrimination; an example of this is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, at the UNO, on December 21, 1963.

Nina Jablonski, in her studies, states that the different skin colors are simply the adaptation of our bodies to varied climates and levels of exposure to UV rays. The difference in skin pigmentation is proof of the evolution of the human being and is due to melanin, which

makes us reflect on the absurdity of racial discrimination.

The difference in skin color is simply the consequence of the difference in UV intensity across the globe. During the studies carried out by his team, several investigations were compared that allowed confirming one of the first most reliable theories about skin color and its implications for humans, where it was shown that the assimilation of folic acid by the human body has a high correlation with skin color and sunlight. In other words, humans who lived in the tropics developed dark skin to block the sun and protect their folic acid stores, while people who stayed further away from the equator developed light skin to better take advantage of the little sun and produce adequate amounts of vitamin D during the long winter months.

This is an example to explain to children from an early age how natural selection has acted on the human being, because of the curiosity that show about why humans have different colors of skin; It can be turned into an educational tool. The mechanism of evolution can be fully understood from the analysis of this text.

Our ancestors lost, gradually, the thicker layer of skin to allow bodily evaporative cooling through sweat, leaving bare skin directly exposed to the sun, so in the tropics, because natural selection, individuals generate dark pigmentation to protect themselves from the sun.

The doctor points out that man's adaptation to the natural environment is even more interesting when studying the mechanism of tanning. It has been shown that the information that the genes have about the exposure to which our ancestors were subjected also intervenes in the different skin tones, another factor that can be interesting for children applying it to themselves. We can teach the principles of evolution using our own body as an example

and, at the same time, alleviate the social stress that exists on skin color.



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