



# WHAT COLOR IS YOUR SOUL?

HEALING THE ILLUSION OF OUR SEPARATENESS

NIAMBI JAHA-ECHOLS

FOREWORD BY LYNNCLAIRE DENNIS

## Praise for What Color Is Your Soul?

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*“Building a more just and equitable world is a matter of policy and a just distribution of power. It is also a challenge of the spirit. In What Color Is Your Soul? Niambi Jaha-Echols writes an artful meditation on the healing work that humans must do to overcome our brutal history and our deep divisions, especially those resulting from centuries of white supremacy. We must transform ourselves, collectively and individually, and this book offers a call to that work.”*

- John Biewen, host and producer, Scene on Radio podcast

*“In this wonderfully engaging book, Niambi Jaha-Echols offers her unique, expansive and well-supported perspective on racism in America. Not only how we found our way into our current situation but also encouragement to remove our blinders, accept personal responsibility and take fruitful action to bring mutual respect, understanding and harmony into our culture. Niambi weaves her personal story throughout the book giving it an air of authenticity and personal commitment. An exciting, thought-provoking, heart-opening journey - a great read!”*

- John S. Shealy, PhD, psychotherapist and life coach  
([www.BeMindful.org](http://www.BeMindful.org))

*“This book is amazing. There are many wonderful aspects to it, as analogies, personal experiences, and the use of pearls of wisdom in quotes are woven eloquently throughout. It’s an easy read and easy to digest, with something in it for everyone depending on where you are in your self-awareness.”*

- MaryAnne Howland, founder & CEO, Ibis Communications  
([www.ibiscommunications.com](http://www.ibiscommunications.com))

*“From the very beginning I was hooked. The ancestral story of Akna told a different tale than what many have come to believe. It is time for a conscious, global color conversation. “What Color is your Soul” is a Wake Up*

*Call for a society where Colorism is a daily, passive aggressive form of racism turned inside out. As stated by Ms. Jaha-Echols, "Colorism is baked into the very fibers of our cultural tapestries and is wrapped in our psyches. "What a TRUE Gift and breath of fresh air for a higher vibration conversation!"*

- Tonya R. Gonzalez, author, healer & teacher  
([www.tonyargonzalez.com](http://www.tonyargonzalez.com))

*"You have exceptional insight and knowledge about the subject matter and an inspiration for others of any cultural background. In a world of multiculturalism, there's still ignorance about culture, race, women, social norms. As a child growing up in the 60s near Detroit, I experienced a lot in the changing linear society they thought was truth, but then the civil rights days came, and helped to make a change in how American society viewed it's ever growing cultural and multiculturalism movements. I love your presentation in how you tell your story! Coming from the past and our Native ancestors, Collective nature of beings can still be taught to synthesize the needed connectiveness of the human soul from which we all came from. All of this is temporary and we should try to educate ourselves to correcting some really deep hurts in our connected souls to help the next generations, and you're doing it! Thank you."*

- Dr. Jiiniikwe Medicine Bird, Native music artist and actress

*"Niambi's book begins the journey of introspection, exploring stories that shape our perceptions and unite cultures. As our knowledge changes through the world wide web, our consciousness weaves together, remnants of family. This author unravels roots of dissension, planting seeds of respect that bloom as you read."*

- Nancy Basket, artist & storyteller ([www.nancybasket.com](http://www.nancybasket.com))

*"Being 'woke' or socially aware is really just the beginning, Niambi Jaha-Echols explains in What Color is Your Soul? What's required is heart-work, ancestral healing and continual vigilance to see beyond the illusion of separation that ghettoizes us into silos of difference."*

- Angelo John Lewis, Director of the Diversity and Spirituality Network and author of *Notes for a New Age*

*“Reading the words that Niambi wrote is like going back in time and feeling the emotions that my ancestors felt and in particular the women of my lineage. As an Intuitive Healer, the level that we vibrate at is something I think about daily. I resonate with the way that Niambi speaks about vibration. She articulates it in a way that anyone could understand that our stories, beliefs, emotions, circumstances, situations and thoughts carry a vibration that creates our reality. Niambi’s words evoke emotion that fuels my soul to heal at the deepest level. It is only when I go within to heal, that I can begin to connect with a person on a soul level. Throughout reading What Color Is Your Soul, Niambi’s message as I read it is healing myself all the way back to my roots’ which requires me to go within and connect with what my soul is sharing with me. Reading Niambi’s book brings a deeper awareness to the healing, cross culturally that still needs to happen. As I heal the deeper parts of myself, I open up to a culture of people that I maybe I felt distant from in the past. Thank you for such a thought provoking, soul nourishing book Niambi.”*

*- Tracy Neely, healer, priestess, and mentor ([www.tracyneeley.com](http://www.tracyneeley.com))*

*“The book hit home in lots of ways. Starting with an eye opening story and perspective, What Color is Your Soul?, addresses the depth of what the color of our skin represents and why. With thoughtful, well written views spanning history and many beliefs, Niambi takes us through the difficult parts of our culture and into what can be done about it. Opening hearts and minds to the understanding of what issues we face every day is only the beginning, she provides the antidote too! By outlining how we can each develop our own ways of releasing ancestral patterns, Niambi leads us to a new way, to a new world, absent of racial inequality and unrest. There were parts of this book that made me uncomfortable because the truth of the words are, at times, deep and unsettling. Taking a raw look at the collective consciousness around race on our planet helped me see just how much we are all connected and how we can, together, make our Earth a better place.”*

*- Jason Antalek Akashaman, ([www.thespiritualhandyman.com](http://www.thespiritualhandyman.com))*

*“Earth herself is in motion to a new age, a new light, and is warming. We human Beings can feel this temperature within as well as*

*our parasitic evolution is riding heavy and swiftly with the weight of our 'Human Condition' and the speed of our technological advances. The global computer age has delivered volumes of real-time libraries of information to the doorsteps of almost every person in the world. The imagery and written and spoken word of knowledge once hidden, great cultural manipulations, false histories and reclaimed histories, and illusion of separateness in our human role on the planet can be studied in almost every language. With so much access and transparency in our era, the potential for increased personal and cultural awareness is vast. If we want to activate and integrate and realize into our evolution at the pace of our advances or to the approaching light of Earth's passage, we must do the real work, the unlearning, the new learning, and the authentic living of what we are becoming aware of now. Talking and tryouts and sending thoughts and prayers are not going to keep up with the river of life moving so wide and fast right now. Niambi Jaha-Echols is nudging us into the real work that comes from educated 'awareness' and it reminds us that after you open your 'woke' eyes in the morning, one actually has to get out of bed and move in the world. This means opening one's mind to other ways of life than one's own, that our dated beliefs may not be true. This means opening one's heart to feel the pain of what has been lost to ignorance and manipulation, dominance and suppression, and to the fears that have led to so much greed and destruction. When I do this work personally from within and apply it, it merges locally, culturally, and globally. This book reminds me that it happens in that order."*

- Aaron Ortega

*"I cried while reading this book as it presented me with the space to do some deep healing ... and not just for myself, my ancestors too. It's amazing, really, the narratives that run our lives that we aren't even aware of. This book, if you allow it, will help you become aware of the stories around race and culture that have become dominant beliefs and will shift your narrative to one that is empowering ...one that more accurately reflects the Truth of who we all are: One."*

- DeAnna Carpenter, singer, songwriter, She  
Who Builds ([www.dellesings.com](http://www.dellesings.com))

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*Dedicated to all the colorful souls who are  
beginning to remember.*

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# INTRODUCTION

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## THE GREAT FORGETTING

*Contrast functions as a clarifier. We just have to decide what we really value. Not from our heads or hearts, but from our souls.*

Our world is becoming increasingly divisive; communicating with each other across cultures and even lifestyles has become progressively challenging. The ability to build trust and mutual rapport with people from various cultural backgrounds is imperative. How do we accomplish that when there is a continual undercurrent of color-based fear in our society bubbling beneath the surface?

Colorism is a form of racial discrimination based on the color and shade of a person's skin tone, with the preference favoring lighter skin tones. The colorism contrast has resulted in a cross-cultural tension and divide that is impossible to ignore. We have embedded beliefs that have been passed down generationally, all based on the color of our skin. So much energy has been poured into this way of thinking that it is hard to even imagine that there is any other way.

What if we started from a different vantage point? With colorism baked into the very fibers of our cultural tapestries and tightly wrapped around our psyches, is there hope for another alternative? What if we could really understand where we are as a society through this monochromatic black and white perspective and then choose a different value system?

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What if we were to distinguish ourselves from one another, not by the color of our skin, but rather the color of our souls?

Achieving that level of transformation would require us to shift our awareness to a higher consciousness, allowing us to see farther than skin deep. It starts with recognizing, acknowledging, and dissecting our sordid past that fuels our tumultuous present. If we can at the very least put all our cards on the table, maybe we can then step into a different dimensional perspective to explore new solutions. By examining what divides us, we can transform our divisions through spanning the spectrum between ‘black’ and ‘white’.

Both ‘black’ and ‘white’ are used throughout this book because it is familiar and most of us understand it. While it is inaccurate to many transcultural groups, it is often an accurate depiction of cultural mindsets where the opposition is seen through the lens of racism. They are umbrella terms that ultimately mask our rich and diverse ethnic and cultural heritage.

I suppose if you wanted to create one of the largest chasms and disconnections between two vast groups of people, it would be to call one group black and the other white while continuing to use the standard meanings and defining essences of both words. It is also interesting that black and white are the only colors whose validity is debated. If you were to strictly define them through the lens of physics, neither are technically colors because they do not have specific wavelengths even though they offer the most visual contrasts available to the naked eye.

Black has no hue and absorbs all light. It has long been associated with mystery, power, fear and evil. White includes all colors yet has no shade and has long been used to symbolize purity, goodness, and morality.

Assigning a label to any group – calling one side ‘black’ and the other ‘white’ – carves more than just a metaphorical chasm. It divides the issue into ‘right’ vs. ‘wrong,’ disconnecting the members of the group by forcing them to one side or the other. Labels that polarize and ignore the

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space between the two points discount the truth that black and white include and transcend all colors and hues.

*“The human family shares a quality that too often prevents us from experiencing the connection we long for; the desire to feel and know we belong.”* – Lynnclaire Dennis, author

Colorism as a concept came into play over 600 years ago with its seed blossoming into ideologies, systems, and the color identities that govern us today. If the division and power dynamics it has created in our modern society was the original vision and the long-term intention, then it has surely been effective.

As a result, we are finally realizing that we have all been hoodwinked. The hierarchical value system of colorism is not real and it never was. Our cultural differences are definitely real but the manufactured value that we have assessed to one cultural group over others is not.

How can we, in our lifetime, rebalance 600 years of inequity when so many are angry and afraid? How do we do this safely when so many are corded to a power structure run on the energy of hatred, bigotry, and terror? How can we shift a society that is rooted and vested in false values and flawed principles? It seems virtually impossible to begin again from a human perspective. I don't pretend to know all of the answers; however, I do know that we can and must make our voices heard about the direction civilization is moving in. Perhaps 600 years from now our children will look back, whispering through time, thanking us (their ancestors) for being catalysts for positive and loving change – if we indeed do the right thing.

The title of this book is *What Color Is Your Soul?* because I believe that is where we truly have to begin our societal surgery – on a soul level - from the inside out. Not starting at the heart – but going even deeper...to the soul. Similar to how doctors attack a disease by going to the cellular level or the root, we too must tackle our 'racial' differences from a different angle, perspective, and root – a 'soul-ular' root. We must start from the

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soul and work our way outward. That perspective has to be rooted in the knowledge and acceptance that we are more than the skin that we are in. We are spiritual beings. We are indestructible energy emanating from the same Universal Source.

Many books referencing spirituality or even mention of the soul speak from a specific religious tradition. That is not my objective here. It's been said, *Spirituality is the goal and religion is a path*. My hope is to ignite the fire and draw attention to the goal. Each individual will have to find their own path to stoke their internal fire and keep it burning. Hopefully, it will lead us on a path that helps us remember that we are all interconnected and together we can find a new way to heal our collective wounds.

When we begin at the Soul – devoid of any religious dogma, or as much as we can – it will take us potentially to spaces between our words that we have never explored and new thoughts and ideas we may have never considered. By exploring a different route, our conversations will potentially give birth to new solutions. If we want to experience each other differently we have to first see each other differently. Interestingly enough the most difficult optical illusion to see are the ones that are in black and white.

We are alive at a time when our intentions have the ability to impact mass consciousness in both challenging and inspiring ways. On a human level, our color-oriented conversations have often been filled with discord as well as a resounding agreement that the division it has created must shift. Social strife has always been present, but now more than ever we are hitting a fevered pitch the world over. There is an explosion of information generated around the topics of privilege, discrimination, unconscious bias, prejudice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. This is a global conversation due in large part to the Internet, cable news, and social media where anyone can create a soapbox to present feelings, attitudes, deeply harbored emotions, fears, frustrations, and beliefs. On one hand, this is an exciting beginning because it holds the potential for

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honest dialogues. On the other hand, it continues to expose how toxic our interactions and beliefs are, especially when vetted through hyper-partisan, colorized, and polarized lenses.

The audience for this book changed over 20 years ago when technology shifted the pace of how we move within a global society. Thankfully our perspectives are evolving in positive ways as we realize how many of our long-held beliefs that were etched in proverbial stone were just flat out wrong. Today, we know our solar system is a speck in a vast universe that defies instruments and imagination. Genetics has exposed the fallacy of the dogmatic belief that the human family is made up of different races. Humans have somewhere between 19,000 – 20,000 genes with only about 100 involved in determining skin color. It is time to look at why, how, and who allowed this tiny percentage to shape self-perception and our opinion of others.

It is challenging to come together to address ‘race’ because we have always attempted to discuss it from the perspective of ‘racism’ and the system we have inherited. When we start there it is easy to lay the false foundation that we are different races – unconsciously playing into that false narrative that only further exaggerates our differences. It heightens our fear and mistrust and highlights our painful historic past. We then tackle the problem while in excruciating pain or deep denial.

When spoken the word ‘race’ divides us. Its vibration moves divisive feelings and attitudes that sets up all manner of chaos and competition. When we stop referring to ethnicities and cultures as different ‘races,’ we melt the mental barriers that have so long kept us at odds with one another.

Science has presented us with the knowledge we need at precisely the time we need it to understand the inner knowing that underscores our spiritual perspective. Both are essential to address and heal our personal and collective pain. Knowing we are all vibrational beings experiencing the duality of our humanity and spirituality has helped me to sustain a profound sense of inner sanity. This lets me celebrate the richness of

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relationships, realizing we are so much more than the multi-colored skin suits we get to wear. Beyond a shadow of a doubt there is more to this than we are seeing, reacting, and responding to - and that alone gives me hope.

In terms of color and racism, sometimes it feels like we are in the audience watching a clever sleight of hand game with our attention being drawn and focused on the wrong thing. Is there an unseen practical application to our spiritual growth and development that we are just not seeing? What can we excavate from our painful experiences that will aid in our spiritual growth and development?

What if our time on Earth is a course in the Universe – a spiritual school – and we are all here to learn lessons? As we sort it all out, it would be beneficial to see it from every angle possible. There may be some critical information that we are overlooking.

*It has been very difficult for us as a society to walk  
through the pain of our disconnection.*

In many ways, we are stuck in a millennial time loop, running in circles on a track created where we're just the newest generation of runners. The longer and faster we run, the more we realize how small the track is, as we experience our interconnectedness. We are living in times where emotions run so loud that for many it's becoming difficult to sleep or even pretend to sleep. We are individually and collectively waking up. It is challenging not to see and feel when everybody is living out loud with such visceral emotional charge. Even with all of that, we still can't seem to get to the next phase.

Things tend to stagnate because there is an unconscious acceptance of allowing things to 'somehow work themselves out.' This is the nature of racism, bigotry or any such bias. While many are ashamed of its cruel and horrific terror tactics, inaction makes us all complicit in maintaining the status quo. We have to actively heal.

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The last thing we need or want is a regurgitation of the collective history we all know. In these pages I offer an examination of the present moment through a spiritual lens and the infinite possibilities afforded to us as we define and create a new narrative. It can happen if we are willing to see one another as equal members of the human family, with the clear intention to heal and grow beyond the past and its pain.

*Our wounds run deep and we keep treating them as if  
they were surface skin abrasions.*

The presence of racism has infected the collective human body like a virus. The fact that it's normalized and permeates every facet of our society means it defies Band-Aids. The longer it is ignored, the worse it becomes. No magic pill will heal it nor will it disappear on its own.

It is time to reframe why we come together and how we dialogue about the nature of human interactions and relationships. The starting point has to be realizing how our biases emerge from systemic attitudes, many of which are unconscious, inherited from our families, school and social circles. Once bias is revealed, the easier it is to shift our attitudes and move towards positive change, mending our relationships and doing some karmic cleanup! This helps us find our way towards common ground, that place on which we can lay a stable foundation to support the vision we build together.

Building a vision, like building a home, requires many diverse competencies. Would you feel safe in a home where the plumber did the electrical wiring? Would you trust the strength of the walls if an interior decorator was responsible for hanging the drywall? In a healthy system, everyone plays a role based on her natural and cultivated talents. Uniqueness is at the heart of a new story, a remembering of the original story where our sameness honors our differences. Doing so elevates respect and increases trust. By remembering our painful past, we can build a healthy future without inducing pain or wading hip deep in denial.

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Part One of *“What Color Is Your Soul?”* is titled “The Challenge” because it presents a perspective that is intended to invoke a new way of seeing each other. While it may be an emotional or spiritual challenge, reading it with an open heart eradicates fear and opens the possibility of realizing there is more than one path. Part Two is titled “An Antidote,” a potential first step on the path to helping us to remember we are interconnected. Such conscious remembering opens new ways of healing our personal and collective wounds.

This approach may not be for everyone. Some are so attached to their pain or denial that it drowns out everything else. It may seem too simplistic and naïve for some and too esoteric for others. But for those who are ready to look at our colorism through a different prism, then together let’s begin.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Niambi Jaha-Echols is an Author, Inspirational Speaker, Cultural Agility Strategist, Spiritual Activist and has spent the past 30 years working as a Transformation Advocate. She is the Principal and Lead Consultant for Cross-Cultural Agility, LLC where she trains, coaches and consults individuals and corporations on issues supporting cultural intelligence and new pathways to inclusion.

Niambi's passion is helping others to transform their mindsets and personal stuck points so that they can deepen their connections to all of humanity.

She is the Founder of The Butterfly Movement, which utilizes the symbolism of the caterpillar/butterfly metamorphosis to foster emotional and spiritual transformation in women and girls. Niambi is a co-contributor to the book "African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education" published by SUNY Press and is also the author of "Project Butterfly" and "Inspiring the Souls of Our Girls."

She has been featured in Essence and Ebony Magazines, MSN.com and Oprah's Angel Network for her work with teen girls. She is a faculty member of Expert Online Training, is a member of the National Diversity Council and serves as a Professional Advisor to graduate students at DePaul University's School for New Learning. She is also a Program Faculty member of Art of Living Retreat Center in Boone, NC.

What excites her is when she can provide tools to help others gain a foothold in their struggles to understand the ways that racism,

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unconscious bias, privilege, and prejudice operate in our minds - notably when she can support authentic relationships constructed out of the raw ingredients of cross-cultural differences.

Niambi, her husband and teenaged son lives in traditional Occaneechi territory - now known as Chapel Hill, NC.