

In her passionate song "Mississippi Goddam," Nina Simone desperately calls for action against the injustices experienced by African Americans living in the United States, and more specifically, the South. Hidden beneath the guise of a cheerful showtune, Simone adopts an exasperated tone as she lists the specific states that have discriminated against and mistreated African Americans. She sings, "Alabama's got me so upset Tennessee made me lose my rest And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam." Through the reference of these states, Nina addresses the recent bombing of a predominantly African American church in Alabama and the murder of a civil rights activist in Mississippi. By addressing these recent events and detailing how these tragedies make her feel, Simone becomes the voice of her oppressed minority. Additionally, by detailing the dismay fellow Americans have caused her, Simone emphasizes the cruelty of the situation while appealing to the emotions of her audience.

As the song continues, Simone's voice becomes increasingly haunting and the tempo speeds up. The tone of the song turns as she croons, "This is a show tune But the show hasn't been written for it, yet." This lyric demonstrates Simone's determination that change will occur and that African Americans will receive justice soon. Moreover, it addresses the irony of the situation as she sings such somber lyrics to the beat of a seemingly joyful tune. As the song continues, she goes on to detail the doom swallowing her as she observes African Americans being prosecuted and chased by the police. As she lists these grievances, the audience realizes the severity of the situation and the true meaning of the seemingly joyful song becomes evident. Simone sings, "Picking the cotton 'Do it slow' You're just plain rotten 'Do it slow'" The slow and grave manner in which the backup singers recite the phrase "Do it slow" emphasizes the government's reluctance to make a change for African Americans. This repetition also demonstrates how powerless the African American community felt while watching their fates be held in the hands of a careless society. To end the song, Simone sings the line, "You don't have to live next to me Just give me my equality" By using the word "just," the singer attempts to demonstrate the simplicity of her request while stating that she will mind her own business. Overall, Nina Simone's impassioned song "Mississippi Goddam" is a heart shattering cry for help that attempts to mobilize her audience to action.