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## Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam”



Singer-songwriter Nina Simone’s music crossed many musical boundaries, encompassing elements of Jazz, Blues, Folk, Rhythm and Blues, and Gospel. As did many artists in the 1960s, Simone used her music to protest the treatment of African Americans, nowhere more forcefully than in the 1964 release “Mississippi Goddam.”

“Mississippi Goddam” reflects directly on two pivotal events in Mississippi: the assassination of Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers and the killing of four girls in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church bombing. The title of the song led to its banning in several states, and Simone later told an interviewer that though the song became closely associated with the Civil Rights movement, it hurt her career.

### Excerpt from Lyrics

*Don't tell me  
I tell you  
Me and my people just about due  
I've been there so I know  
They keep on saying "Go slow!"...*

*You don't have to live next to me  
Just give me my equality  
Everybody knows about Mississippi  
Everybody knows about Alabama  
Everybody knows about Mississippi goddam*

### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the overall mood of the song?
2. Why do you think Simone chose such a strong title for the song? Do you think the title is justified? Why or why not?
3. How effective do you think this song is in expressing the frustrations of African Americans during the Civil Rights movement?