

Title: We Gonna III: Addressing Depression in the Africana Diaspora
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Abstract: How does one conceptualize depression and “disorder” for those living under conditions of political derangement? What does it mean for members of the Afro-Diaspora to be “depressed” when living under conditions of antiblack racism? The effects of colonialism and antiblack racism on the mental health of members of the Afro-diaspora have long confounded psychologists, psychiatrists, and laypeople. In particular, psychiatric diagnoses and treatments of depression struggle to account for the socio-political and historical causes of black ill-health. Depression is conventionally understood as a mood disorder that causes persistent and severe feelings of despondency and loss of interest in previously rewarding or enjoyable activities. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*, a diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder must consist of either depressed mood or disinterestedness along with five (or more) additional symptoms, such as significant weight loss or weight gain, insomnia or hypersomnia, daily agitation or fatigue, diminished ability to think, excessive feelings of worthlessness or guilt, as well as recurrent suicidal ideation. However, the DSM-V fails to connect such moods to forms of oppression, such as antiblack racism, nor does it provide a systematic analysis of how alleviating such problems might be integral to the treatment of mental illness. Drawing on themes in the work of existential phenomenologists such as Matthew Ratcliffe, W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon, I argue that Africana forms of depression are better explained as a pathological condition whose etiological causes stem from the ordinarily lived-experience of being black in a “disordered” world. This work will thus examine Africana depression through a phenomenological examination of how Afro-diasporic people experience their body, the world and consciousness when depressed.