



## An Analysis of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in the Displaced Black Characters in Selected Works of Caryl Phillips

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### Abstract

According to Dass-Brailsford, trauma originally “connotes a physical injury and parallels the psychic wounding that can potentially follow a traumatic episode”. It refers to either physical or psychological trauma. Physical trauma means physical illness or injury which puts a person’s life in jeopardy or causes a potentially irreparable damage to the body. Psychological traumas on the other hand are experiences that place a person’s life or bodily integrity in jeopardy. This paper will look into the impact of displacement due to slavery and the psychological traumas faced by the Black characters in selected works of Caryl Phillips. In modern medicine, diagnosis of psychological trauma follows a universally accepted system known as the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The diagnoses that are most relevant to psychological traumas are categorized under Trauma and Stress-Related Disorders in the DSM-5. This research intends to highlight the evidence of traumatic stress disorders or more specifically, PTSD that can be detected in some of the Black characters in Phillips’s novels, *Higher Ground* (1986), *Cambridge* (1992) and *Crossing the River* (1993). The selected characters will be analyzed using the criteria that exist in the latest revision on PTSD, the DSM-5. By applying the DSM-5, this paper will expose the traumas faced by these characters and their reactions towards the society as depicted in the selected novels.

**Keywords:** Blacks, Displacement, DSM-5, Medicine, Phillips, Psychology, Trauma, PTSD

### INTRODUCTION

Trauma originally “connotes a physical injury and parallels the psychic wounding that can potentially follow a traumatic episode” [1]. It can refer to either physical or psychological trauma. Physical trauma means physical illness or injury which puts a person’s life in jeopardy or causes a potentially irreparable damage to the body. Whereas psychological traumas refer to experiences that place a person’s life or bodily integrity in jeopardy [1]. This study looks into the impact of the displacement and the psychological traumas faced by the Black characters in selected works of Caryl Phillips. Then, it will highlight the evidence of PTSD suffered by the Black characters using the criteria in DSM-5 by giving a detailed interpretation of their characters and feelings as portrayed by Phillips. This study also intends to analyze the evidence of traumatic stress disorders or more specifically, PTSD that can be detected in the Black characters in Phillips’s selected novels. In modern medicine, the diagnosis of psychological trauma follows a universally accepted system known as the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The diagnoses that are most relevant to psychological traumas

are categorized under Trauma and Stress-Related Disorders in the DSM-5.

The author, Caryl Phillips is a descendant of slaves from the island of St. Kitts and is a Caribbean writer who has a very distinctive style of writing. His works are often concerned with humanity, displacement, ignorance, lack of belongingness and the identity crisis faced by the uprooted Black people. Phillips himself often describes writers as “people who are trying to organize their confusion” [2]. Three of his works have been chosen for this study and focus will be given to characters from the novels *Higher Ground* (1986), *Cambridge* (1992) and *Crossing the River* (1993).

The novel *Higher Ground* (1986) in its first part depicts the life of a native African who sells his fellow Blacks to white

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slave traders in Africa. The second part of this novel focuses on the life of a Black character, Rudi who is imprisoned for theft in the United States. The whole of part two is in the form of letters from the prisoner, Rudi, to his family members, who complains about the injustices done to the Blacks in the prison. This study will only look into the trauma faced by Rudi in this novel. The second novel, Cambridge is based on the entry in a personal diary of a daughter of a colonialist, Emily Cartwright and an omniscient voice. Through the entries in the diary, readers get to know about Olumide, a big sized slave, who is a learned man. Olumide is sold to an English master in England who hires Miss Spencer to train him up to become a missionary. From Tom and then Thomas, Olumide receives another Christian name - David Henderson. In England, Olumide marries a white woman called Anna. He is freed when his master dies and inherits some money. When his wife dies at childbirth, Olumide travels to Africa to spread Christianity. During the voyage, again he is put into slavery and sold to a plantation in the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies. Here, he is named Cambridge and is often bullied by the overseer, Mr. Brown. The third novel selected is Crossing the River that depicts the lives of three children sold into slavery. The children, Nash, Martha and Travis were sold into slavery, by their father on a Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1753. The story is told in four parts namely citing the whereabouts of the sold children who actually represent the displaced Blacks in general. The first part is about Edward Williams receiving a letter stating that his former slave (Nash Williams) who had undergone a rigorous Christian education had disappeared after seven long years of spreading the religion in St. Paul's River, Liberia. He arrives in Liberia looking for Nash and gets to know that Nash is dead. The second part of the novel is about a runaway slave named Martha, who is often sold and becomes insane. The third part of this novel is a journal (Crossing the River) of a slave trader who buys slaves from the West Coast of Africa. The final part (Somewhere in England) of this novel is a white woman's diary where the third African child sold into slavery, Travis, is being mentioned indirectly. Only two characters will be studied from this novel, Nash and Martha. In order to highlight the voicelessness of these Black characters, Phillips does not allow these characters to voice out their problems directly. Their indirect pleas are heard through different modes like diary, letters and newspaper or from a third person's point of view.

## METHODOLOGY

The selected characters will be analyzed using the criteria that exist in the latest revision on PTSD, the DSM-5. Following an exposure to a traumatic event, the DSM-5 further elaborates on 4 other symptoms that continue to be the basis of PTSD diagnosis. The 4 clusters of symptoms include intrusive recollection of traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with traumatic event, negative cognitions and mood associated with traumatic event and

hyper arousal associated with traumatic event. By applying the DSM-5, this paper will expose the traumas faced by these Black characters like (i) intrusive recollection of traumatic event, (ii) avoidance of stimuli associated with traumatic event, (iii) negative cognitions and mood associated with traumatic event and finally (iv) hyper arousal associated with traumatic event. The characters selected are characters that are exposed to certain traumatic events that haunt them. In the novel, Higher Ground (1986), the character Rudi who is recording all the ramblings of his experiences in the prison will be discussed applying the DSM-5 diagnosis. In Cambridge (1992), the character of Olumide will be analyzed and Crossing the River (1993), the characters of Nash and Martha will be discussed. The characters will be studied using all the aforementioned PTSD criteria to see their reactions towards the society as portrayed in the selected novels. The DSM-5 consists of 8 criteria that include exposure to a traumatic event (Criteria A), intrusive recollection (Criteria B), avoidance (Criteria C), negative cognitions and mood (Criteria D) and hyper arousal (Criteria E). The other three components in DSM-5, which are F, G and H also assists in diagnosing PTSD. The selected characters will be studied based on these 8 criteria.

## RESULTS

This study aims to prove that the selected characters, Rudi from Higher Ground (1986), Olumide from Cambridge (1992), Nash and Martha from Crossing the River (1993) have suffered PTSD. The DSM-5 that consists of 8 criteria is applied on these four selected characters to show that the displacement and harsh life as slaves has contributed to PTSD. The characters were all exposed to traumatic events during their displacement and separation from their loved ones (Criteria A) and experienced intrusive recollection while enduring their lives as slaves (Criteria B). The characters also avoid facing the reality (Criteria C) and are always haunted by negative cognitions and mood (Criteria D). Some of the characters like Rudi and Olumide experience the hyper arousal where they become violent (Criteria E).

## DISCUSSION

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Psychological trauma was originally considered as an abnormal experience [3]. Later on, it was redefined when epidemiological evidence demonstrated that a majority of adults [4] and a substantial minority of children [5] who were facing psychological trauma were initially exposed to traumatic events. According to Ford [6], before World War 2 there wasn't any acknowledged diagnosis for the distress experienced by the people after being exposed to an extreme psychological stressor. Several conditions such as the "railway spine" and the "soldier's heart" which appeared to reflect post-traumatic stress was described in medical literature in the nineteenth century. In 1980, the American

Psychiatric Association (APA) added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) nosology classification scheme [7]. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders is used by clinicians and psychiatrists to diagnose psychiatric illnesses throughout the world. In the United States however, the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) is used instead. Although controversial when it was first introduced, the PTSD diagnosis has filled an important gap in psychiatric theory and practice.

Looking from a historical perspective, the significant change ushered in by the PTSD concept was the stipulation that the etiological agent was due to an external factor (i.e., a traumatic event) rather than an inherent individual weakness (i.e., a traumatic neurosis). The key to understanding the scientific basis and clinical expression of PTSD is the concept of “trauma”. The DSM-III diagnostic criteria for PTSD were revised in DSM-III-R (1987), DSM-IV (1994), and DSM-IV-TR (2000). A very similar syndrome is classified in ICD-10 (The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders: Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines) [8].

The latest revision on PTSD, the DSM-5 (2013), has made a number of notable evidence-based revisions to PTSD diagnostic criteria. The DSM-5 consists of 8 criteria that need to be satisfied in order to diagnose a patient as having PTSD. These include exposure to a traumatic event (Criteria A), intrusive recollection (Criteria B), avoidance (Criteria C), negative cognitions and mood (Criteria D) and hyperarousal (Criteria E). The other three components in DSM-5, which are F, G and H also assists in diagnosing PTSD. So, in order to diagnose a person of having PTSD, the patient must be carefully interviewed by the doctor in person and all the criteria as stated in the DSM-5 or ICD-10 must be met. Since this study is based on novels, the dialogues, narrations and mind set of the characters will be used to analyze them.

### **Displacement and PTSD in Black Characters in Selected Works of Caryl Phillips**

The colonization of the new world by the Europeans resulted in the expansion of slavery. As cheap labor was needed to cultivate the plantations in the West Indies and the Americas, the Europeans turned to Africa to solve their problems. Africans were captured as slaves and brought over to work in these places and this started the mass transportation of Blacks known as the Atlantic Slave Trade. About 12 million people were displaced from the year 1500s to 1800s in this process [9]. The three selected novels dwell with the issue of displacement and the effects on the characters. In these novels, Phillips shows how the colonizing cultures actually can distort the experience and realities and project the inferiority of the Black people. In an interview with Graham Swift, Caryl Phillips has commented on displacement as something that “engenders a great deal of

suffering, a great deal of confusion, a great deal of soul-searching” [10]. This statement shows that displaced characters in his novels usually appear very disturbed and it often leads to identity crisis. The concept of displacement itself is concerned with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. According to Ashcroft [11], the “alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image” which is resulted by displacement is also present in the characters in Phillips’s novels. He also points out that this crisis is prominent among the West Indian slaves. When these people are displaced in another place that is alien to them, they experience the placelessness, dislocation and have the potential of becoming spiritually a wasteland. These characters are dislocated in terms of their families, their culture, language and society. According to Cathy Caruth, colonialism and trauma are inter-related. She claims that trauma refers to “an injury inflicted to a body”. Colonization and slavery resulted so much of trauma to the people around the world and many writers have written about the trauma faced by these victims. However, in the case of black slaves and their descendants suffering from PTSD, this information is absent because, slavery ended years before the medical diagnosis of PTSD was introduced. Unlike the modern times, where a patient suffering from PTSD can be easily diagnosed and noticed by the society, these Black slaves suffered in silence and no one noticed them. However, Phillips being a sensitive and passionate writer seems to have described their trauma and this enables a scientific study to be done to show the presence of PTSD among the slaves in accordance to the criteria in DSM-5.

### **Criteria A- Stressor Criterion**

The first criterion in DSM-5, the “A” or stressor criterion refers to a person who has been exposed to a catastrophic event involving actual or threatened death or injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of him/herself or others (such as sexual violence). A traumatic event can be experienced by either direct or indirect means. In order to be studied under PTSD, the characters must first qualify into the “A” or stressor criterion. All the selected characters for this research seemed to satisfy the “A” or the stressor criterion indirectly or directly as they have been involved in many catastrophic events in their lives as slaves and descendent of slaves.

Rudi in *Higher Ground*, in the second part of the novel describes his experiences as a Black living in independent America where he is unhappy with the racism. The setting is in the 1960s, the era of Martin Luther King. Though slavery has long been over, he still feels the traces of it. He relates his feelings through letters to his mother and sister. In his sixth year of imprisonment, he writes to his mother saying that all the Blacks are not free even though they are outside the prison. Although not directly involved with the horrors of slavery, he still suffers from an indirect form of trauma as the people involved in slavery are of his own.

But do not assume that you are all free. You are not. Most of you cannot see your chains. This is a serious error that some of us both inside and outside are fighting to correct. You do not see your chains, you do not hear them, but try leaping up the ladder a few rungs and you will sure as hell feel them.

He accuses his mother of having “slave mentality” because she called those Blacks who retaliated against the abusive whites as “trouble-makers” and Rudi finds his mother to be very submissive and complacent with the racist condition in America.

However, Olumide is a tragic character who has been exposed directly to traumatic events from a young age. Olumide has been sold into slavery at a young age after he was abducted from Africa.

When I imagine myself to have been not yet fifteen years of age, I was apprehended by a band of brigands and bound by means of a chain to hand and foot.

He was then taken into a slave ship as a cargo where he claims broke off his “tenderly formed links with his parents”. All the cruelty that he witnessed during the journey terrified him. The Black slaves were not allowed to converse in their native language and were “punishable by the lash”. This character suffered mentally when he saw the atrocities cast upon the Blacks by the White slavers. He says they were “treated with less regard than one might bestow upon the basest of animals” and acted towards them with “such savagery and brutal cruelty”. Olumide also witnesses how the Black women’s modesty was outraged by the White men on board. The slaves were closely chained to one another and often had to lie beside a dead man during the journey. Olumide describes his horrendous journey from Africa to Carolinas, North America and then to England where he was taught Christianity. Then after serving his Master for a long time, he was freed in England and travelled to Africa as a clergyman to spread Christianity. But unfortunately, due to his color, he was put into slavery again and ended up being sold into the Caribbean. He is one person who has completed the triangle of the Atlantic slave trade.

Martha and Nash also started their childhood as slaves and in Martha’s case, she was sold into slavery by her own father because his crops had failed.

A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children. I remember. I led them (two boys and a girl) along weary paths, until we reached the place where the mud flats are populated. I watched the huddled together and stared up at the fort, above flew a foreign flag.

Both of them were separated from their parents and suffered a lot being slaves in United States. Martha has been auctioned several times and had her name changed often. She is an old slave woman, a runaway who reminisces her past. Her daughter Eliza Mae and husband Lucas was

auctioned. She could not take the separation from her family members and is traumatized with auctions.

All the characters mentioned have indirectly or directly witnessed and experienced traumatic events in their lives. Besides directly experiencing a traumatic event, an indirect exposure to a traumatic event such as getting to know about the violent or accidental death or perpetration of sexual violence to a loved one can also be a cause of PTSD as in the case of Olumide and Rudi. On the other hand, repeated, indirect exposure (usually as part of one’s professional responsibilities) to the gruesome and horrific consequences of a traumatic event (e.g. police personnel, body handlers, etc.) is also considered traumatic. In the case of all the four characters, they have indeed witnessed the harsh treatment towards the Blacks in the ship and also on land.

It is important to note that there is little or no example given pertaining slavery as a traumatic event predisposing towards PTSD, but we know now from the countless studies done that slavery is definitely an event to be considered as traumatic in nature.

#### Criteria B- Intrusive Recollection

The “B” criteria or the intrusive recollection criterion includes symptoms that are the most unmistakable and readily identifiable symptoms of PTSD. For individuals with PTSD, the traumatic event remains for decades or sometimes, even for a lifetime. The memories of these events are capable of evoking panic, terror, dread, grief, or despair. These emotions manifest themselves during intrusive daytime images of the event, traumatic nightmares, and vivid reenactments known as PTSD flashbacks (which are dissociative episodes). Furthermore, any stimuli that are related with the traumatic event can trigger recollections of the original event and have the power to evoke mental images, emotional responses, and physiological reactions associated with the trauma. Researchers have used this phenomenon to reproduce PTSD symptoms in the laboratory by exposing affected individuals to auditory or visual trauma-related stimuli.

All the four Black characters from the three selected novels suffer from these symptoms. Although the characters are physically present, how they feel towards the episodes and how they reacted are derived from careful analysis of what little evidences these characters have left behind. Looking into Rudi’s behavior which can only be analyzed through his letters to various people, it is obvious that he is suffering from PTSD. There are many incidences that show that this character has the intrusive recollection which is a part of the B criteria of PTSD. In Higher Ground the ill treatment in prison towards Black prisoners makes Rudi to recall the lives of the Blacks where generally they are addressed as niggers. Rudi points out the following:

Just remember this; they have called us nigger, then Negro, then colored, and now black; do you imagine they will ever call us Americans?

They are also called as ‘spades’, darkies and ‘spearchuckers’ in Higher Ground. Rudi keeps reminiscing the past where the Blacks were treated badly. In one of his letters to Laverne, August, 1967, Rudi talks about the contribution of the Blacks to America’s economy by inventing all kind of things but claims that there is nothing culturally significant about it. Other things that he rambles about are “negro theatrical entertainment from cakewalking through ragtime to minstrelling” (102).

Olumide in Cambridge reminisces his past in the last part of the novel. This character who has always been silent finally speaks out his mind. The atrocities he faced throughout his life from the day he was put into slavery and until his arrival in the Caribbean Island makes him react in a harsh way towards the overseer. He recalls his last moments in Africa after being captured when he realized that he will never see his motherland again where he says:

It is not an exaggeration to proclaim that at this moment instinct of nature suffused our being with an overwhelming love for our land and family, whom we did not expect to see again. Our history was truly broken.

Olumide does not react to the abuse in the plantation in the Caribbean and often chose to remain quiet. He always felt that he was an English gentleman who had through knowledge of the bible. From Black Tom he was baptized to David Henderson, a clergy man. He claims “truly I was now an Englishman, albeit a little smudgy of complexion. Africa spoke to me only of a history I had cast aside”. This phrase shows that he does not want to be known or related to the Blacks whom he sees as pagans.

Another character from Crossing the River who shares similar fate is Nash Williams. Nash, who is an ex-slave, is trained to be a clergyman and is sent back to Liberia, Africa. He suffers from PTSD as well. In one of his letters to his Master, he complains that “unskilled people who come from America have no chance to make a living” in Monrovia. Nash finds difficulty in managing his life as a preacher among the pagan Africans. After his wife and son die due to African fever, Nash recollects the life in America as “a land of milk and honey, where people are not easily satisfied”. He also states that he is addressed as Mr. Williams in Monrovia and not “boy” as in America. However, he could not sustain his identity as a Christian for long in Liberia. With no monetary help coming from his former master, Edward Williams, he decides to suspend his faith in Christianity and switch to his ancestral religion. In one of his letters to his former owner, he says the following:

Having no means to return to America, and being therefore bound to an African existence, I must suspend my faith and I therefore freely choose to live the life of the African.

In the same novel, Martha, also finds it hard to establish an identity as she’s often sold and renamed. When her last owners tried to instill Christianity in her, she refused to neither accept the teaching nor assimilate herself to the new environment. Finally, she runs away from her owners when she learns that they were going to sell her off. However, the fellow Blacks abandoned her halfway as she was slowing them down from escaping. She recollects the tortures she endured as a slave since arriving in America and asks why she was forsaken by her father and sold into slavery.

Her journey had been a long one. But now the sun had set. Her course was run. Father, why hast thou forsaken me? Martha too suffers from PTSD.

### Criteria C- Avoidance Criterion

The “C” criteria or the avoidance criterion comprise of behavioral strategies that PTSD patients use in order to reduce the probability that they will expose themselves to a trauma related stimuli. These patients additionally use these strategies in an attempt to minimize the intensity of their psychological response if they are exposed to such stimuli. The behavioral strategies include avoiding any situation or thought which is likely to elicit distressing traumatic memories.

The Black characters also succumb to the DSM-5’s third major criteria which is avoidance. All of them try to avoid facing the reality. Rudi who is imprisoned for robbery refuses to admit that his actions were wrong. He justifies his action by blaming the white people for oppressing the Blacks in America. Instead of repenting his guilt, he keeps on rambling about other matters and justifies his offence. He feels he is a victim of indirect effect of slavery since he is a descendent of a slave. So, he feels that he was imprisoned just because of his color. He compares the life in prison as being in the plantation. In his letter to his mother, he writes the following:

The plantation is wide and stretches beyond the horizon. The days are hard and long. We toil from ‘can’t see’ in the morning to ‘can’t see’ at night. The master is cruel, but nobody ‘knows’ him better than his slaves.

When his father visited him in prison, he scolds his father for dressing in his Sunday’s best suit. Please come back and visit, but come back as strong natural African man you are, Joe, not as some knock-kneed, shoe-shuffling clown right out of a minstrel troupe. It makes them happy to see you trying to be somebody else in your Sunday best.

Rudi feels that when a Black wears the Sunday’s best suit, it often reminds the Whites of the minstrel shows that Black entertainers use to act as Black fools to entertain the White audience. Rudi also blames the judiciary system of America and his lawyers whom he feels are very incompetent as they could not free him. In one of his letter to his lawyer, Miss Lucilla Hodges, he complains that the authorities want him

to “serve natural life for attempting to steal forty dollars”. Even till the end, he refuses to admit his mistake.

On the other hand, Olumide in Cambridge who is forced into slavery in the horrendous plantation in Caribbean finds solace by reading the bible. He does not react to the ill treatment of the whites on the plantation. Even when his wife Christiania is abused by the overseer, he feigns ignorance. Even when he is whipped, he does not react to it. He avoids this stressed situation by reading his bible. Emily Cartright in one of her entries in the diary mentions Emily that Olumide goes back to his reading of bible to avoid any arguments.

Nash who is sent to Liberia unaided to spread Christianity by his former Master still loves him passionately. He does not want to come to sense that Liberia was just a dumping ground for excess Blacks in America. Nash is stranded without aid from his former Master. He tries to avoid the real problem in Liberia by taking solace in the religious teaching. In one of his letters to his Master whom he addresses as father, he says the following:

The burden you placed upon us of repeating the Ten Commandments, which we considered a form of punishment, has proved of the utmost importance in meeting the pain of these trying times. As a father you cared for us, and we hope that the Lord will reward you for your kindness.

He avoids thinking into the racism practiced by the Whites and the purpose behind the formation of Liberia by the American Colonization Society. Another character from this novel is Martha who lives in delusion to forget the reality of slavery surrounding her.

#### Criteria D- Negative Cognitions

The next DSM-5's criteria is negative cognitions and mood which is Criteria D. Symptoms included in the “D” or negative cognitions and mood criterion reflect persistent alterations in beliefs or mood that have developed after exposure to the traumatic event. Individuals with PTSD often have incorrect cognitions about the causes or consequences of the traumatic event which drives them to point the finger at themselves or others. A related erroneous appraisal is the belief that one is inadequate, weak, or permanently changed for the worse since exposure to the traumatic event or that one's assumptions regarding the future have been permanently altered as a result of the event (e.g., “nothing good can happen to me,” “nobody can be trusted, “the world is entirely dangerous,” people will always try to control me”, “I am bad”).

Rudi never felt that he had committed a crime. He justifies it by blaming others. He also feels that nothing can change his fate and that he will rot in prison forever. He does not show any repentance in his letters, instead he claims that the prison authorities are being racists and tries to justify his

crime. Rudi is a fine example of PTSD where he retaliates due to the four centuries of oppression. He is very rebellious and vindictive.

I wonder if the pigs are trying to torment me. If so they will not succeed. I have learned to walk without emotional crutches. If I never hear from either of you again it will not hurt me. I will recognize it as part of the price I pay for being born a slave in America. But I will collect dues.

Olumide when exposed to Christianity in England by his teacher Miss Spencer, he readily accepted that the Blacks belonged to a cursed race. Miss Spencer uses the biblical knowledge to relate the Blacks with “Noah's son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark” which resulted the birth of devilish dark Chus, the father of all Black people. This made him accept the tortures bestowed upon him and believed that he is bad.

The same situation can be seen in the character of Nash in Crossing the River. Nash accepts the religion full heartedly and feels that only religion can save the pagan Africans. That was the reason why he readily went to spread the religion in Liberia. He justifies the ill treatment cast upon the Blacks. While Martha felt that nobody can be trusted anymore. She refuses to have any trust even in the Good Samaritan who saves her from the cold harsh weather due of her color. Martha starts hallucinating and finds it difficult to accept the religion of her new master. She could not find solace in religion and was unable to sympathize with the sufferings of the son of god when set against her own private misery. Her only goal was to become free. She hallucinates rejoining her daughter Eliza-Mae, her husband and children. She finally dies without reaching her freedom in the East.

#### Criteria E- Alterations in Arousal or Reactivity Criterion

The next PTSD Symptoms included in the “E” or alterations in arousal or reactivity criterion. Symptoms such as hyper vigilance and startle are characteristic of PTSD. The hyper vigilance in PTSD may sometimes become very intensified as to appear like frank paranoia. The startle response has a unique neurobiological substrate and may actually be the most pathognomonic PTSD symptom. Irritable and angry outbursts are expressed as aggressive behavior. Lastly, reckless and self-destructive behavior such as impulsive acts, unsafe sex, reckless driving and suicidal behavior are newly included in DSM-5. Other symptoms in this criterion include problems with concentrating and sleep disturbance.

Rudi in Higher Ground suffers from sleep disorders. His letters to his family members and lawyers reflect his anger towards the system and the white people. However, the exposure to Christianity to the characters like Nash (Crossing the River) and Olumide in Cambridge makes them readily accept that the Blacks are a cursed race. The desperateness of a slave is shown in Olumide (Cambridge),

the Christian slave who is patient with Christiania's behavior, suddenly loses control and murders the overseer.

He struck me once with his crop, and I took it from him, and in the resultant struggle the life left his body. I then fell to my knees and prayed to my God to forgive me for my wretched condition.

It is also the same case with Nash who is portrayed as a very obedient man suddenly suspends his believe in Christianity when he finds no help coming from his 'father' to aid his mission in Liberia. Nash tries his best to spread his master's religion but finally fails. Due to lack of support from his master and the Society, Nash discarded the mantle of civilization and goes deliberately native. He retaliates by converting to his ancestor's religion. He no longer wanted to abide by rules set by his father's religion. The desperateness and aggressiveness are evident in this character. Aggressive behavior is also evident in the character of Martha. Martha decides to run away when her Master informs her that she will be sold again. The excerpt below shows how she becomes aggressive and runs away.

For where, she was not sure (don't care where), being concerned only with heading west (going west), away from the big river (away from Hell), and avoiding nigger traders who would gladly sell her back over the border and into Missouri.

#### Criteria F, G and H

However, the "F" or duration criterion specifies that symptoms must persist for at least one month before PTSD may be diagnosed and anything lesser, would change the diagnosis to acute stress disorder (ASD). This can be easily detected in all the characters in Phillips's selected novels as they are all Blacks and were slaves who went through the ordeal more than a month. For example, Rudi who is a descendent of slave who was in prison for seven years which means medically he qualifies to be diagnosed with PTSD. The "G" or functional significance criterion specifies that the survivor must experience significant social, occupational, or other distress as a result of these symptoms while the "H" or exclusion criterion specifies that the symptoms are not due to medication, substance use, or other illness. Martha, Olumide and Nash too have manifested these symptoms

#### CONCLUSION

PTSD is often found in the works of many African American who are descendants of Black slaves. They can merely imagine and relate the experiences of their ancestors who were displaced in the United States of America and other parts of the world. However, for this study, analyzing these selected works give the firsthand information on the condition of the Black slaves and how they would have suffered from PTSD. One has to remember that these are mere interpretations of the individual character as portrayed

by the author, Caryl Phillips. In modern medicine, patients are required to be physically present in order for a diagnosis on PTSD to be made. The novels selected have fictitious characters that represent the Blacks who were once brought in as slaves. Phillips's novels are more of a documentation of history which was disguised in the form of fiction. By using his mastery of the language and the creativity of a master story teller, he has brought to life the horror of slavery and enabled a medical study on trauma to be conducted on these fictitious characters. From the surface, it will look as though a story is being told. But for a sensitive reader who is willing to dive into the hearts and minds of the characters will experience the horror of slavery and the trauma that they would have faced at that time.

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