

## **Pink Houses**

(John Mellencamp)

There's a black man with a black  
cat Livin' in a black neighborhood  
He's got an Interstate runnin'  
through his front yard  
You know he thinks that he's got it  
so good And there's a woman in the  
kitchen Cleanin' up the evenin' slop  
And he looks at her and says  
"Hey darlin', I can remember  
when You could stop a clock."

Oh, but ain't that America for you  
and me Ain't that America  
somethin' to see baby Ain't that  
America home of the free  
Little pink houses for you and me

There's a young man in a t-shirt  
Listenin' to a rockin' rollin'  
station He's got greasy hair,  
greasy smile  
He says, "Lord this must be my  
destination." Cause they told me  
when I was younger "Boy you're  
gonna be president."  
But just like everything else those old  
crazy dreams  
Just kinda came and went

Oh, but ain't that America for you  
and me Ain't that America somethin'  
to see baby Ain't that America home  
of the free  
Little pink houses for you and me

Well there's people and more  
people What do they know know  
know  
Go to work in some high  
rise  
And vacation down at the Gulf of  
Mexico Ooh yeah  
And there's winners and there's  
losers But they ain't no big deal  
Cause the simple man baby pays for  
the thrills, the bills  
The pills that kill

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"Pink Houses" is a song written and performed by John Mellencamp. It was released on the 1983 album *Uh-Huh* on Riva Records. It reached No. 8 on the US Billboard Hot 100 in early 1984. "Pink Houses" was ranked No. 439 on Rolling Stone magazine's list of The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

Recorded in a farmhouse in Brownstown, Indiana, the song was inspired when Mellencamp was driving along an overpass on the way home to Bloomington, Indiana from the Indianapolis airport. There was an old black man sitting outside his little pink shotgun house with his cat in his arms, completely unperturbed by the traffic speeding along the highway in his front yard. "He waved, and I waved back," Mellencamp said in an interview with Rolling Stone. "That's how 'Pink Houses' started."

Mellencamp has stated many times since the release of "Pink Houses" that he's unhappy with the song's final verse. At an October 2014 press conference, he stated: "A long time ago, I wrote a song called 'Pink Houses.' Now when I hear that song, all I can think is: 'Why didn't I do a better job on the last verse?' If I had written it today, the last verse would've had more meaning."

The song also served as a scathing critique of Yuppies and Reaganomics and the overall "Greed is good" atmosphere of the time.

In 2004, the song was played at events for Senator John Edwards' presidential campaign. The song was also used at events for Edwards' 2008 presidential campaign.

"Pink Houses" along with "Our Country" was played by Senator John McCain at political events for his 2008 presidential campaign. Mellencamp contacted the McCain campaign pointing out Mellencamp's support for the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and questioning McCain's use of his music; in response, the McCain campaign ceased using Mellencamp's songs.

In January 2009, Mellencamp played "Pink Houses" at We Are One: The Obama Inaugural Celebration at the Lincoln Memorial.

In 2010, "Pink Houses" was used by the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) at events opposing same-sex marriage. At Mellencamp's instruction, his publicist sent a cease and desist letter to NOM stating that "Mr. Mellencamp's views on same sex marriage and equal rights for people of all sexual orientations are at odds with NOM's stated agenda" and requesting that NOM "find music from a source more in harmony with your views than Mr. Mellencamp in the future."