

THE BALLAD OF JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN  
(Eric Bibb)

Well, I reckon now's a good time  
To tell you 'bout a good man  
Who tried to help the world  
Finally understand –  
That it's so wrong to judge another  
By the color of their skin –  
That good man's name – John Howard Griffin

John was a white man  
Who just had to know  
How it feels to be a black man  
In the land of Jim Crow –  
So, he underwent treatments  
To turn his skin dark brown  
Then he headed down South –  
To take a look around

“It's a crazy idea!”, folks said  
“You'll get yourself killed!”  
But John found a doctor  
Who prescribed special pills –  
An' he laid under a sunlamp  
Cotton pads on his eyes  
'Til one day, in the mirror  
He saw a man he didn't recognize

He knew he'd meet some hard times  
But he really got a shock –

Life as a black man  
Was harder than a rock –  
Couldn't find a job  
Not even a restroom to use  
Talkin' 'bout that Jim Crow –  
Jim Crow blues

Well, John wrote a book, "Black Like Me"  
Mighta heard about it – seen him on TV  
But in his hometown in Texas  
They burnt his effigy – had to move to Mexico  
To protect his family

A few years later, back in the land of the free  
While John was on a road trip in Mississippi  
His car broke down an' as he wondered what to do next  
Some locals showed up an' beat him half to death

They beat John with chains for educatin' the nation  
Bein' a truth sayer is a dangerous occupation  
Some cheered his dedication to a world free of hatred  
Others cursed the man, yellin' "You're a got-damn  
traitor!"

So, I reckon it's a good time  
To remember "Black Like Me"  
Written by a good man  
Who believed in equality  
Believed it's wrong to judge another  
By the color of their skin –  
That good man's name was John Howard Griffin