

I AIN'T GOT NO HOME

(Woody Guthrie) (1938)
Tune: "This World Is Not My Home"



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On his visits to the migrant camps that autumn [1938], Woody found that one of the more popular songs was a bouncy, jolly Baptist hymn called "This World Is Not My Home," which had been made popular by the Carter Family....

There was something about the song that bothered Woody. It was a mild annoyance at first, but it developed into a grating, pulsing anger as the weeks passed and he couldn't wipe either the tune or the idea from his mind. He was hearing the words in a different way than he'd ever heard them before. He was beginning to understand that the effect of this song was to tell the migrants to wait, and be meek, and [be rewarded in the next life](#). It was telling them to accept the hovels and the hunger and the disease. It was telling them not to strike, and not to fight back. He was outraged by the idea that such an innocent-sounding song could be so insidious. An alternative set of words exploded out of him, and stood the song on its head....

Not only was "I Ain't Got No Home" a clever parody of the fundamentalist sensibility and a fine song in its own right, it also represented a clear turning point in Woody's life. It was a rejection of the passive Eastern spiritualism that had fascinated hi, since Pampa (and also

a rebuke to his old idols, the Carter Family). It was, in a way, a call to arms -- at the very least, an attack on inaction.

Joe Klein, Woody Guthrie: A Life, London, 1981, pp. 117-118.

**Lyrics as recorded by Woody Guthrie, RCA Studios, Camden, NJ, Apr 26, 1940, released on "[Dust Bowl Ballads](#)," transcribed by Manfred Helfert.
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I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round,
Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town.
And the police make it hard wherever I may go
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
A hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;
Rich man took my home and drove me from my door
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Was a-farmin' on the shares, and always I was poor;
My crops I lay into the banker's store.
My wife took down and died upon the cabin floor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Now as I look around, it's mighty plain to see
This world is such a great and a funny place to be;
Oh, the gamblin' man is rich an' the workin' man is poor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.



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