

## Southern Man

(Neil Young)

[Hook]

Southern man better keep your head  
Don't forget what your good book said  
Southern change gonna come at last  
Now your crosses are burning fast  
Southern man

[Verse 1]

I saw cotton and I saw 'bacc  
Tall white mansions and little shacks  
Southern man, when will you pay them back?

[Chorus]

I heard screaming and bullwhips cracking  
How long? How long?

[Guitar Solo]

[Hook]

Southern man better keep your head  
Don't forget what your good book said  
Southern change gonna come at last  
Now your crosses are burning fast  
Southern man

[Verse 2]

Lily Belle, your hair is golden brown  
I've seen your black man coming 'round  
Swear by God, I'm gonna cut him down!

[Chorus]

I heard screaming and bullwhips cracking  
How long? How long?

[Guitar Solo Outro]

"Southern Man" is a song by Neil Young from his album *After the Gold Rush*. The album was released in 1970. An extended live version can be heard on the Crosby Stills Nash & Young album *4 Way Street*.

The lyrics of "Southern Man" are vivid, describing the racism towards blacks in the American South. In the song, Young tells the story of a white man (symbolically the entire white South) and how he mistreated his slaves. Young pleadingly asks when the South will make amends for the fortunes built through slavery when he sings:

I saw cotton and I saw black,  
tall white mansions and little shacks.  
Southern Man, when will you pay them back?

The song also mentions the practice of cross burning.

Young was very sensitive about the song's message as anti-racism and anti-violence. During his 1973 tour, he cancelled a show in Oakland, California because a fan was beaten and removed from the stage by a guard while the song was played.

Southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd wrote their song "Sweet Home Alabama" in response to "Southern Man" and "Alabama" from the 1972 album *Harvest* by Young, who has said that he is a fan of both "Sweet Home Alabama" and Ronnie Van Zant, the lead vocalist for Lynyrd Skynyrd. "They play like they mean it," Young said in 1976. "I'm proud to have my name in a song like theirs." Young has also been known to play "Sweet Home Alabama" in concert occasionally. To demonstrate this camaraderie, Van Zant frequently wore a Neil Young *Tonight's the Night* T-shirt while performing "Sweet Home Alabama". Crazy Horse bassist Billy Talbot can often be seen reciprocating by wearing a Jack Daniel's-styled Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirt (including at the *Live Rust* concert).

In his book *Waging Heavy Peace: A Hippie Dream*, Young stated that Lynyrd Skynyrd wrote "Sweet Home Alabama" not in response to "Southern Man", but rather to Young's song "Alabama". Young noted that Lynyrd Skynyrd's implied criticism was deserved because Young's lyrics to Alabama were condescending and accusatory.