**Which Side Are You On?**

**Natalie Merchant**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcaPvCLue7g**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcaPvCLue7g)

Come all you good workers  
Good news to you I’ll tell  
Of how the good old union  
Has come in here to dwell   
  
Which side are you on boys?   
Which side are you on?   
  
My daddy was a miner  
He’s now in the air and sun  
He’ll be with you fellow workers  
Until the battle’s won   
  
Which side are you on boys?   
Which side are you on?   
  
They say in Harlan County  
There are no neutrals there  
You’ll either be a union man  
Or a thug for J. H. Claire   
  
Which side are you on boys?   
Which side are you on?   
  
Oh workers can you stand it?   
Oh tell me how you can  
Will you be a lousy scab  
Or will you be a man?   
  
Which side are you on boys?   
Which side are you on?   
  
Don’t scab for the bosses  
Don’t listen to their lies  
Poor folks ain’t got a chance  
Unless they organize   
  
Which side are you on boys?   
Which side are you on?

**Which Side Are You On?**

**"Which Side Are You On?"** is a song written by [Florence Reece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Reece) in 1931. She was the wife of a [union organizer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_organizer) for the [United Mine Workers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Mine_Workers) in [Harlan County, Kentucky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlan_County,_Kentucky). In 1931 the miners of that region were locked in a bitter and violent struggle with the mine owners. In an attempt to intimidate the Reece family, deputies hired by the mining company illegally entered and searched the Reece family home. Sam Reece had been warned in advance and escaped, but Florence and their children were terrorized in his place. That night, after the men had gone, Florence wrote the lyrics to "Which Side Are You On?" on a calendar that hung in the kitchen of her home. She took the melody from a traditional [Baptist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist) hymn, "Lay the Lily Low", or the traditional ballad "[Jack Munro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Monroe_(song))". Florence recorded the song and it can be heard on the CD *Coal Mining Women*.

Reece supported a second wave of miner strikes circa 1973, as recounted in the documentary [Harlan County USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlan_County_USA). She and others perform "Which Side Are You On?" a number of times throughout.