

It Isn't Nice

Song written by Malvina Reynolds in 1964 supporting civil rights protests, with an alternate melody and arrangement a couple years later by another activist singer Barbara Dane performed with The Chambers Brothers.

Chords bolded above the lyrics, further notes on the music below. ***Sing along chorus*** bolded in italics. Barbara Dane version [here](#).

C **Am**
It isn't nice to block the doorway

F **G**
It isn't nice to go to jail

C **Am**
There are nicer ways to do it

F **G**
But the nice ways always fail

C **Am**
It isn't nice, it isn't nice
F **G**
You told us once, you told us twice

F **G**
But if that's freedom's price

C **Am**
We don't mind, we don't mind

F **G**
No, no, no, we don't mind

(instrumental) **C Am F G** x 2

It isn't nice to carry banners
Or to sit in on the floor
Or to shout our cry of freedom
In the hotel or the store

It isn't nice, it isn't nice
You told us once, you told us twice
But if that's freedom's price
We don't mind, we don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind

(instrumental)

Yes we tried negotiation
We tried the peaceful picket line
But they say didn't see us
Hell they might as well be blind

They say our new ways aren't nice
When you deal with hearts of ice
Well this is freedom's price
We don't mind, we don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind

(instrumental, solos)

How about those years of lynchings?
How about that knee to the neck?
Did you say that wasn't proper?
Did you even stop to check?

You were quiet just like mice
Now you say that we're not nice
But if that's freedom's price
We don't mind, we don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind

(instrumental)

It isn't nice to block the doorway
It isn't nice to go to jail
There are nicer ways to do it
But the nice ways always fail

It isn't nice, it isn't nice
You told us once, you told us twice
Well thank you copper for your advice
But if that's freedom's price
We don't mind, we don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind
We don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind
We don't mind
No, no, no, we don't mind

Notes on the music

We will be using the same chord progression throughout. First 8 bars of the progression at the intro, between verses, and repeated as needed for the solos. We add an extra 2 bars (as per most versions of the song) for an extra line in the last verse (on the F and G) and repeat the chorus as desired at the end.

Typical 18 bars:

C Am F G
1xxx2xxx3xxx4xxx
C Am F G
1xxx2xxx3xxx4xxx
C Am F G
1xxx2xxx3xxx4xxx
F G
1xxx2xxx
C Am F G
1xxx2xxx3xxx4xxx

Links:

More about the song with versions by Malvina Reynolds, Barbara Dane, Judy Collins, Pete Seeger and the Rivertown Kids from Beacon, NY, and Reggie Harris [here](#).