

**WORLDwrite** presents...

**The UK**

# **SOLIDARITY STORY**



[www.worldwrite.org.uk](http://www.worldwrite.org.uk)

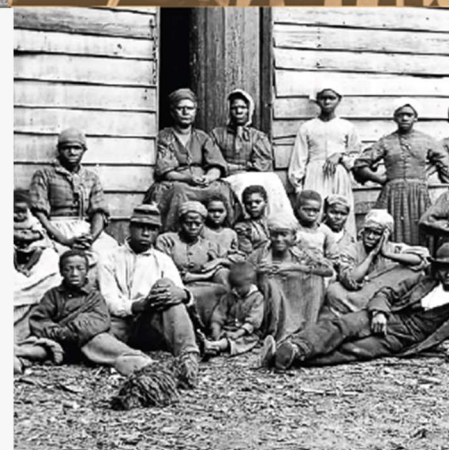
**A COMPELLING FEATURE DOCUMENTARY**



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**PRESS RELEASE: immediate**

**WORLDwrite's crowd-filmed documentary on the history of solidarity in the UK to be launched in Hackney**

WORLDwrite, known for its unique School of Citizen TV and myth busting documentaries, is launching its latest epic *The UK Solidarity Story* at the Castle Cinema in Hackney, East London on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April.

The film interweaves the inspiring stories of heroes and heroines who made the struggles of others their own together with archive material to reveal the context. With personal testimony from those who took solidarity action and astute historical and political analysis from leading scholars, the result is an epic feature-length documentary. Arranged in ten chapters, the film covers key moments from the past 160 years, from the Millworkers who starved in opposition to slavery to young Russians who side with Ukraine today. Crowd-funded and crowd-filmed, the film does credit to the collective nature of solidarity and creative power of collaboration.

Inspired by their experience filming messages of support for Ukraine, the charity's volunteer crews discovered that the meaning of solidarity and its historical precedents were little known. An investigative documentary, they decided, would be a great way to uncover the history of solidarity in the UK and to share it with the world. What, they asked, makes solidarity more than charity? What drives us to make common cause and support a struggle that does not directly affect us? Is it self-interest, altruism, ideology, a common enemy, geography, morality or all of these things that drive us to support others? And if class politics are no longer significant and ideas of 'difference' and 'stay in your lane' are all the rage, what does that mean for solidarity today?

Ceri Dingle, WORLDwrite's Director says: *"The film provides a great insight into the moments in history which saw people take sides with a cause greater than their own immediate concerns. The tales from history it provides are a stark contrast to today's divisive identity politics and elite contempt for our fellow man. The charity is grateful to the many volunteers who made this film possible and who, in the spirit of solidarity contributed to such a creative-collective effort"*.

Having joined WORLDwrite and its Citizen TV station WORLDbytes to shoot, research and present, over 100 volunteers have been the backbone of this latest production which, crowd-featured and crowd-filmed, does credit to the very essence of solidarity.

A small grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund has assisted this ambitious project alongside many generous individuals. The charity is also grateful to project partners at The National Archives.

The film will be available to screen from the end of April and the charity can provide speakers for an accompanying Q&A. The film's ten chapters will also be released online as more detailed stand-alone short films during the year ahead.

The film's trailer is available at <https://youtu.be/dFFSiFnRhqc?si=ByPve7lqB8RhaJkR>

A private press preview of the full film is available online at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svKMYOKEGKA>

For information and interviews contact: Ceri Dingle at [world.write@btconnect.com](mailto:world.write@btconnect.com) Tel: 07866 806 918

Notes to editors:

WORLDwrite is a registered charity no. 1060869. The charity has an open door policy and encourages all-comers to get involved and recognise there are no limits to what's possible.

WORLDwrite runs the award-winning online Citizen TV channel WORLDbytes that champions quality citizen reporting and provides free film training to make this possible.

For more general information, please visit [www.worldwrite.org.uk](http://www.worldwrite.org.uk)

## **Synopses**

### **Short Synopsis (50 words)**

This feature documentary reveals the inspiring stories of heroes and heroines who made the struggles of others their own. Crowd filmed by volunteers with first-hand accounts, expert testimony and interwoven with archive to reveal the context, this documentary brings to life tales which shine a light upon our common humanity.

### **Medium Synopsis (100 words)**

This film interweaves the inspiring stories of heroes and heroines who made the struggles of others their own with archive to reveal the context. With personal testimony from those who took solidarity action and astute historical and political analysis from leading scholars, the result is an epic feature-length documentary. Arranged in ten chapters, the film covers key moments from the past 160 years, from the Millworkers who starved in opposition to slavery to young Russians who side with Ukraine today. Crowd-funded and crowd-filmed, the film does credit to the collective nature of solidarity and creative power of working together.

### **Long Synopsis (250 words)**

Just as taking sides with our fellow man seemed to be going out of fashion and as a society we are more atomised than ever, groups across the UK started packing vans loaded with medical supplies for Ukraine, some individuals even signed up to fight, and thousands of families opened their doors to refugees. But what makes solidarity something more than charity? What does it mean? What drives us to make common cause and support a struggle that does not directly affect us? Is it self-interest, altruism, ideology, a common enemy, geography, our common humanity, morality or all of these things that drive us to support others? And if ideas of 'difference' and 'stay in your lane' are all the rage what does that mean for solidarity today? Volunteers filming with WORLDwrite decided upon an investigative documentary to examine these questions and to bring to light the inspiring historical moments when people have taken sides with their peers.

With personal testimony from those who took solidarity action, astute historical and political analysis from leading scholars interwoven with compelling archive, the result is an epic feature-length documentary. Arranged in ten chapters, the film covers key moments of the past 160 years, from the Millworkers who starved in opposition to slavery to young Russians who side with Ukraine today. It provides a powerful antidote to today's divisive identity politics.

Crowd-funded and crowd-filmed by over 100 volunteers, the film does credit to the collective nature of solidarity and creative power of working together.

## **Outline of the Ten Chapters**

Each of the ten chapters which feature in the film, will be released as fuller more detailed stand alone short films in the year ahead.

### **British Workers & the US Civil War**

#### **Chapter 1**

Although it was well-known at the time, historians since have tried to bury the record of Lancashire cotton weavers' support for slave emancipation. In 1863 Lancashire weavers stopped the British government from joining the American civil war on the side of the Confederacy-the slave-owners in the US. Fighting for the freedom of the slaves, British workers advanced their own rights too. Their solidarity laid the basis for reforms that gave working men the vote.

## **Suffragettes in Trousers**

### **Chapter 2**

At a time when only men had access to public life and a woman's place was decidedly in the home, it's hard to imagine that there were men who supported women's right to vote. But there were. Key influential figures took sides with the suffragettes and thousands of men joined demonstrations, marches and parades. It's rarely mentioned, but there they are, in the photos and footage of the day. Indeed, Sylvia Pankhurst understood that the advantages afforded men were minimal compared to the strength and power of fighting together, for universal suffrage and a better life for all.

## **British Volunteers & the Spanish Civil War**

### **Chapter 3**

The civil war in Spain is famously known for the thousands of volunteers it attracted from around the world who put their lives on the line to fight on the side of the republic against Franco's nationalists. From Britain, 2,550 volunteers went to fight, 540 were killed, the majority of the rest were wounded, many more than once. But what drove and motivated these brave fighters to fight on the side of their peers in another country? Today it is hard to think of a cause people would be prepared to die for. So, who were the British volunteers who took part and what can we learn from their heroic sacrifice?

## **The Battle of Bamber Bridge**

### **Chapter 4**

In 1943, the 1511 Quartermaster Truck Regiment, a logistics unit for the US Air Force, were based in Bamber Bridge in Lancashire. The British government went along with the racial segregation of the US army stationed in the UK. But residents of Bamber Bridge took sides with black American soldiers against their white military police. With interviews filmed in the Ye Olde Hobbe Inn where opposition to segregation came to a head, this is a lesser-known inspiring story of solidarity in the face of official racism.

## **Men for Women's Right to Choose**

### **Chapter 5**

An overwhelming three quarters of people in Britain, so that includes men, support a woman's right to make her own abortion decision. Yet, in the UK, abortion is still not legally available at the request of the woman concerned. In this brief history we learn of men who played a decisive role in abortion provision and why our reproductive biology does not determine whose side we are on.

## **Supporting the Grunwick Lions**

### **Chapter 6**

The Grunwick dispute, a two-year strike at a film processing plant in North London in 1976, became a cause célèbre and at its height involved thousands of trade unionists and police in confrontations. The mostly female, immigrant, East African Asian strikers – dubbed "strikers in saris" – were led by Jayaben Desai, whose membership of the union was later suspended following her hunger strike outside the Trades Union Congress (TUC) headquarters in November 1977. This was the first dispute where the majority of strikers were from an ethnic minority and received widespread support from the labour movement.

## **Straight Support for Gay Rights**

### **Chapter 7**

The UK Gay Liberation Front was founded (GLF) in 1970. Age of consent equality however, did not come until 2001 in England, Scotland and Wales, and 2009 in Northern Ireland. The fight for equality, however, continued. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, introduced by the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher, banned local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality' and

prohibited councils from funding educational materials and projects perceived to 'promote homosexuality'. Section 28 was repealed in 2003. Straight support for gay rights, we learn, was uneven.

## **Workers Against Racism**

### **Chapter 8**

Historically, taking sides with migrant workers, organising against racist attacks and police brutality was rare. There were groups like Workers Against Racism which fought many deportation threats on the grounds that British immigration laws were racist and divisive. The George Roucou story is salutary. Roucou was a shop steward in the building workers' union UCATT in Manchester. Workers Against Racism helped to organise a campaign culminating in a one-day stoppage and demonstration by his fellow workers on 6 February 1987. The level of support spurred the Home Office appeal panel to reverse Roucou's deportation order. This is a remarkable story because these were white building workers who it would be assumed today are irredeemably racist.

## **On the Miners' Side**

### **Chapter 9**

The miners' strike of 1984–1985 is regarded as the most bitter industrial dispute in British history. Thousands of people collected food and money, joined picket lines and demonstrations, organised meetings and travelled to mining areas. Britain was divided between those who supported the miners and those who didn't. The NUM was divided over the action, which began in Yorkshire, and many mineworkers, especially in Nottinghamshire, worked through the dispute. Violent confrontations between pickets and police characterised the year-long strike, which ended in a decisive victory for the Conservative government and allowed the closure of most of Britain's collieries. Some have argued it has no real parallel – in size, duration and impact, and that its defeat brought to an end class politics in the UK.

## **Victory to Ukraine**

### **Chapter 10**

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. In March thousands took to the streets in London and across the globe in support of Ukraine and against the invasion. Governments imposed sanctions yet fears of escalation started to be vocalised and some argued solidarity should not include military support or weapons, which was precisely what Ukrainians were arguing for. In this chapter we learn of Russian students in the UK taking sides with Ukraine and the difference between virtue signalling, charity and taking sides.

## **Production Information**

Title: The UK Solidarity Story

Format: Shot in 4K with SD Archive (Available as an MPEG4 .MOV)

Aspect ratio: 16:9 with 4:3 archive

Length: 1hour 55 minutes

Editing: AVID Media Composer

Completion: April 2024

Country of production: UK

Classification: E

This film was produced by and belongs to the UK based education charity WORLDwrite

Charity Registration Number: 1060869

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## CREDITS

The making of this film was a truly collective effort – crowd-funded, crowd-featured and crowd-filmed.

### **Directed and edited by**

Ceri Dingle F.R.S.A

### **Key Contributors who feature in the film**

<b>Alan Rice</b>	Professor Alan Rice is Director of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) Research Centre in Migration, Diaspora and Exile and Co-Director of the Institute for Black Atlantic Research
<b>Alex Fergusson</b>	NAFO Fella, North Atlantic Fella Organisation
<b>Alka Sehgal Cuthbert</b>	Dr Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is Director of Don't Divide Us
<b>Anna Drobysh</b>	Anna is a Russian Expat
<b>Cheryl Hudson</b>	Dr Cheryl Hudson is Lecturer in U.S. Political History at the University of Liverpool
<b>Clinton Smith</b>	Clinton is Chair of the Preston Black History Group
<b>Daria Leshchenko</b>	Daria is a Russian Expat
<b>David Burroughs</b>	David is a former political activist
<b>Denis Russell</b>	Denis is a retired history teacher and former trade union activist
<b>Don Milligan</b>	Don is a writer, author and former radical gay rights activist
<b>Elina Ishkanova</b>	Elina is a Russian Expat & WORLDwrite volunteer
<b>Ellie Lee</b>	Ellie is Professor of Family and Parenting Research, Director, Centre for Parenting Culture Studies at the University of Kent
<b>James Heartfield</b>	James is an author and lecturer. He has kindly allowed the charity to reprint his pamphlet British Workers & the US Civil War to support the film.
<b>Janet Roberts</b>	Nevison area miners' wives self-help group
<b>Jennie Bristow</b>	Dr Jennie Bristow is an author and Course Director for Sociology / Sociology and Social Policy at Canterbury Christ Church University
<b>Jim Butcher</b>	Jim is a Researcher & lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University
<b>Jim Jump</b>	Jim is Chair of the International Brigade Memorial Trust
<b>Joanna Williams</b>	Joanna is an author and founder/director of Cieo, a think-tank for a new era.
<b>Marlene Sidaway</b>	Marlene is a British television, film and theatre actress
<b>Michael Crowley</b>	Michael is an author, dramatist & Artistic director of The British Multitude Theatre Company
<b>Mike Arnott</b>	Mike is Scotland secretary, International Brigades Memorial Trust.
<b>Norman Lewis</b>	Norman is a former W.A.R organiser & Visting Research Fellow at MCC Brussels
<b>Ruth Levitas</b>	Ruth is Emeritus Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Bristol
<b>Stacie Johnson</b>	Stacie is a former brownie & miners' strike supporter.

### **WORLDwrite Volunteers who feature as presenters & interviewers**

Anandita Pelia, Avgi Fasouli, Dan Clayton, Edward Vear, Eva Iyobo-Hamilton, James McGuirk, Katherine Hawksworth, Lily Bower-kail, Louise Guthrie, Luca Moretto, Rose Simonds, Sofia Rosero, Stephan De Barros Olaio, Vedant Kanchan, Vincent Burke, Zakariya Irfan

### **WORLDwrite Volunteer Key Camera Crew**

Alexander Edoh, Andrew Hirst, Dan Clayton, Edward Vear, Elina Ishkhanova  
 Eva Iyobo-Hamilton, Godwin Edoh, James McGuirk, Jasmine King,  
 Katherine Hawksworth, Lily Bower-Kail, Louise Guthrie, Luca Moretto, Maxwell Francis  
 Rebecca Lloyd, Ritu Shankar, Sayantan Bhowal, Sofia Rosero, Stephan De Barros Olaio, Vincent Burke

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Alexandre Gruffat	Kylah Saddler
Anandita Pelia	Lada
Andre O'Garro	Lily Bower-Kail
Andy Hirst	Lily Waiton
Anne-Sarah Huet	Louise Guthrie
Avgi Fasouli	Luca Moretto
Catherine Weeks	Lucy Brinkley
Chloe Morgan	Marianne Sedley
Christopher Oldroyd	Maxwell Francis
Dan Clayton	Maya Powell
Edward Vear	Milana Berhe
Eleanor Veness	Michael Oduwale
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Elise Ward	Neel Shah
Eva Iyobo-Hamilton	Oscar MacDonald
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Freddie Beacon	Ritu Shankar
Godwin Edoh	Rob Bashforth
Hleb Voukau	Rose Simonds
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James McGuirk	Simon McKeon
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Joseph Nyambura	Vedant Kanchan
Kate Abley	Vincent Burke
Kalelah Benjamin	Wakana Kato
Kaleria Andrienko	Walid Rharbal
	Zakariya Irfan
	Zuzanna Pedrasik

### **Graphics**

Louise Guthrie, Anandita Pelia, Jasmine King, Alexander Edoh

### **Photography**

Zakariya Irfan

### **With special thanks for their help, location and assistance**

Danny Lyons, Ye Olde Hob Inn Bamber Bridge, Tony's Garage Bolton, Queens Park Café Bolton,  
 Science & Industry Museum Manchester, International Brigades Memorial Trust

### **Archive images & footage**

All images & footage used in this film have been carefully researched, are mostly unattributed, predominantly in the public domain & constitute fair use & educational use.

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Alamy, All American News, AP media, BBC, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Channel 4, Coal Not Dole archive, Dreamstime, Grunwick 40, International Brigade Memorial Trust, Klive Humberstone, Libcom.org, Library of Congress, Marx Memorial Library, Mike Wild, mixedmuseum.org.uk, Perlinger Archives, Preston Black History Group, Queens Park Cafe Bolton, Richard Baxel, Thames Television, The Bristol Herald, The LM Archives, The National Archives, TUC Library Collections at London Metropolitan University, TV Eye  
Warhistoryonline.org, Wikimedia, Workers Liberty

### **Music**

With huge thanks for kind permission to use their music

Cotton Lords songs by Faustus  
NA-MARA Paul Mc Namara & Roberto Garcia  
Ukrainian Singer Inesa Semianiv

Photographs are available on request for press purposes