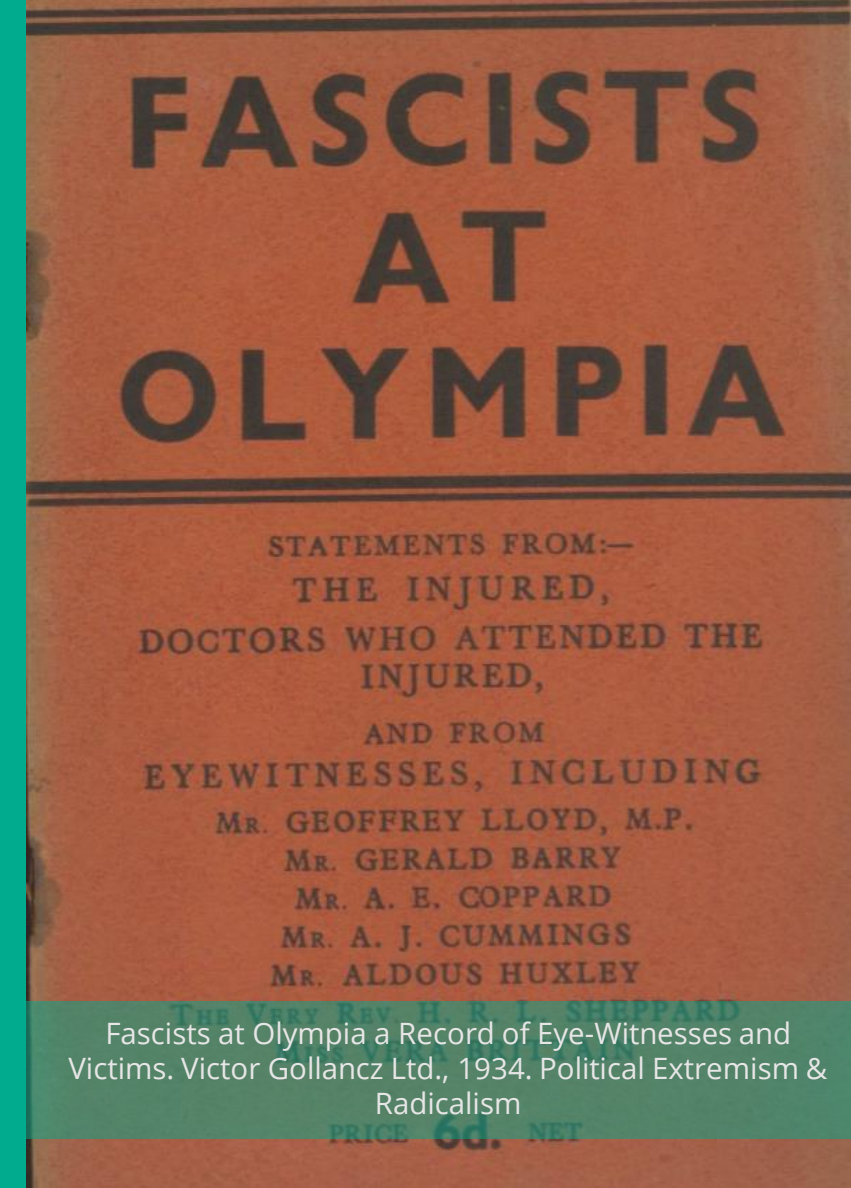


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# Political Extremism & Radicalism: Far-Right and Left Political Groups in US, Europe and Australia

Anna Sullivan | Searchlight case  
study



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# Anna Sullivan | Searchlight case study



Anna Sullivan was born circa 7<sup>th</sup> September 1939 and was sent away to Yorkshire during the Blitz. Her parents lived in the East End of London during the war. Her father was a firefighter before the Blitz and then became a member of the Communist Party and an active trade unionist, while her mother was Jewish and of Hungarian descent. Anna spent a lot of time at the family home listening to political discussions and activities and these memories are recalled in an interview she gave to the Searchlight Archive in 2015.

Her partner died when she was 28 so she decided to train to become a teacher, rather than to bring her 3 children up in poverty. As a teacher she joined the NUT and later a radical splinter group, which is when her 'political activism' began.

She was active in setting up the Anti Nazi League and was a member of the Socialist Workers Party. Later she was ousted from the SWP, who 'maligned' her claiming she was a 'squaddist' - (she explains this as meaning that "when people hit us, we hit them back")

She opposed the National Front and other racists and as a result had her house firebombed in 1987, this is just a fragment of her story.

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# Anna Sullivan | Bob Darke & Oswald Mosley 1934



Bob Darke was Anna's father and an active Communist Councillor. She recalls how he "got in by a massive vote as a Communist in the east of London because of his credentials as an anti-fascist." He left the Communist Party c.1952 and wrote a book in the same year - *The Communist Technique in Britain* about his disaffection with the Hackney Branch of the Communist Party.

Darke was involved at some of the most infamous places of activism including Cable Street, and also at Olympia for the British Union of Fascists rally in 1934. His recollections as recounted by Anna are striking - -

“

he told me this story when I was a child. And the comrades decided to infiltrate [the rally] Yes. And he said to me, "The stage was pitch-black, and suddenly, this enormous light came on, and Mosley stepped out onto this platform dressed from head to toe in black, with the boots, and the big, silver-buckled belt. And --" he said, "And everybody -- thousands of people --" it's scary. This is all happening before the Second World War started --"raised their hands in a Hitler salute." And so I said to him, "And what did you do, Daddy?" And he said, "Well, we heckled [laughter]." And I said, "You heckled?" And he said, "Well, yeah, it did -- it got very -- it did get very scary, because they were throwing the comrades off of the balconies."

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# Olympia Rally 1934 | Eyewitness statement

Bob Darke's recollection to Anna is corroborated in a collection of Eyewitness accounts one of which is below;

Mr Jacob Miller, Cliffe Field Road, Sheffield, June 13<sup>th</sup> speaks of his many sustained injuries caused by Fascists at Olympia

Miller was an economics student at Sheffield University and travelled to London as he was curious to hear what Mosley was going to say.

He became indignant and interjected during a speech, and as a result was thrown over a balcony and onto the floor, sustaining multiple injuries.

“ I was anxious to hear Sir Oswald's speech and at first I was fed up with the interruptions. But later I became indignant and when he said ' We are not intimidated by these interrupters,' I interjected, referring to the audience, ' We haven't been intimidated but we are being fooled.' ”

“ As soon as I had spoken, six Fascists rushed at me, *picked me up and threw me over the balcony into the body of the hall. This was a drop of about ten feet and I became unconscious for a few moments. Some more Fascists who were waiting below then got hold of me and took me outside the meeting to a yard.* ”

“ More stewards followed and when they threw me down again I was surrounded by at least 20 men. I was absolutely helpless and they immediately began to beat me up, smashing me about the head and body. ”

Fascists at Olympia a Record of Eye-Witnesses and Victims. Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1934. Political Extremism & Radicalism, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DYKEQ419427255/GDCS?u=webdemo&sid=GDCS&xid=f97c8d39>.

# Anna Sullivan | Bob Darke & Oswald Mosley 1949

After the war, Oswald Mosley's Fascist party rises up again and marches in London are encouraged. Bob Darke is mentioned by Mosley in UNION Incorporating ACTION, a British Union of Fascists newspaper, on Christmas Eve 1949.

It appears that Mosley took Darke's opposition seriously and saw him as an equal who was good at disrupting the 'Movement'. Two incidents, in Lewisham and Hackney, were particularly referenced as being times when the opposition against Fascist marches was strong.

Mosley writes that the 'near-riot at Hackney was a more serious affair' having been organized by Darke.

The near-riot at Hackney was a more serious affair, organized as it was by the local Communist councillor, Darke. Union Movement supporters assembling for the march were assaulted by large bodies of opponents, and it was very much to the credit of the Movement that the march was held, nevertheless, and that an attempt to occupy the site of the eventual meeting at Ridley Road was frustrated at the last moment. It was from the severe clashes between the police and opposition, on this occasion, that the unsubstantiated allegations of prejudice on the part of the police

"Mosley, Oswald. Sanctuary Press. December 24, 1949-April 29, 1950. MS The Hall-Hoag Collection of Dissenting and Extremist Printed Propaganda:

Extreme Right Organizations (ERO) 76.43/Hall Hoag 3533  
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GDCS&u=webdemo&id=GALE|DDWFX153102193&v=2.1&it=r&sid=GDCS&asid=608d3828>

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# Bob Darke Interview on YouTube 1979

Bob Darke appears in 'What fuels Racism? | East End London | Multi Cultural London | Our People | 1979.

As a respected member of the Hackney Tenants Association he shares his thoughts about whether poverty and under investment fuel discrimination and racism within a community.

He also talks about what might lead people to vote for the National Front.

Anna recalls him in her Searchlight Interview; "I never really got over my father's death, particularly, because I was -- he was my closest friend, really ..."



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# Anna Sullivan | Activism - 1970s

As a member of the National Union of Teachers and then the splinter group 'Rank and File' she observed the emergence of the National Front and the British Movement become bigger and more active around Brick Lane, selling newspapers and petitioning.

During the 60s and 70s there had been an migration of the Bengali community who were targeted by right-wing activists. She started selling anti-fascist newsletters and papers at the same locations in London including Chapel Market. She and her colleagues and the Bengali community suffered many violent attacks which she shares in her interview.

Whilst working as a teacher at Highbury Quadrant School she joined forces with a group of women to escort Asian children on their way to and from school, and took them out on Saturdays to stop them being physically attacked.

They kept records of racial abuse to use as evidence in a court case and provide proof of violent physical actions which concluded in a fascist family being evicted from the estate.

“

They thought I was a bit mad, because I wasn't afraid of them...I think that's because my father taught me – he used to say to me. “You never give them not one inch of the pavement, because if they've got our streets, then, you know, everything will get much worse ”

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# Anna Sullivan | Grief 1983

A memorial for Hannah Darke in Searchlight Magazine in June 1983 is written by Anna on behalf of the Islington Anti Nazi League. She doesn't mention that Hannah is in fact her mother, but that all feel the 'pain of her leaving'.

One of the things we learn is that as a factory worker for most of her life, Hannah organised a Union in her workplace, was sacked and then reinstated, and a union practice established. She conveys very fond memories of her mother in her interview.

Anna recalls that just before her death Hannah Darke evokes her socialist experiences "the hunger marches, the first against Mosley, the battles at Ridley Road and Cable Street, and the War"

## Obituary Hannah Darke

The Islington Anti-Nazi League announce with deep sorrow the death of Hannah Darke. As the Islington ANL contain not only her daughter but her grand-children and friends it is not easy to write this memorial to her without feeling the pain of her leaving. That she died on the anniversary of Blair Peach's death is a tragic coincidence but fitting as far as she was concerned for she hated racism and fascism and wept for Blair, a man she did not know but whose cause she shared. In the '30s during the depression she helped to organise summer holiday camps for families of

the unemployed. As a factory worker for most of her working life she organised a Union in her workplace of mainly women workers and was sacked then reinstated and as the shop steward established Union practice in what had been a sweat shop. Her love for her family and her class was as unrelenting as her hatred of fascism and the economic deprivation that capitalism causes. Just before she died she talked at great length and in vivid detail about the hunger marches, the first against Mosley, the battles at Ridley Road and Cable Street, and the war. It was as if she was relating her life in cameo for the last time. She was a socialist in every sense and will never be forgotten by her family and all who knew and loved her.

*Anna Sullivan for Islington ANL*

Sullivan, Anna. "Obituary Hannah Darke." Searchlight Magazine, June 1983, p. 9. Political Extremism & Radicalism,  
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/QARJYA814703442/GDCS?u=webdemo&sid=GDCS&xid=6efb100b>



## Gale Primary Sources

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# Anna Sullivan | Firebombing July 1987

In the early hours of Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July Anna Sullivan's house was deliberately targeted with 4 milk bottles full of petrol. Her son, his girlfriend, Anna and the family dog escaped.

Police interviewed them the next day, witnessed anti-fascist leaflets and then said "Well you've brought it on yourself. What do you expect?" to which she replied "If you mean stopping 7 year old children being attacked by Alsatian dogs...I'm your woman you know..."

Several suspects were named, including a family of racists who she helped remove from the estate in which she worked, the Griffin wing of the National Front, by Patrick Harrington or by members of Blood and Honour. Nobody was ever arrested or convicted.



Anna Sullivan in the ruins of her front room after the bomb attack.

## Nazi terrorists strike in London

In the early hours of Tuesday 28th July the home of Islington anti-fascist activist Anna Sullivan was hit by four fire bombs. More by luck than judgement her attackers failed to hit their target, Anna Sullivan herself.

Only a week or so before the attack Anna Sullivan had moved her husband from the front of the house to a room of safety. She had recently been the key witness when Douglas Lindsay had won an action in the courts against a local family for racist harassment.

Anna Sullivan believes the men have been a mix of the neo-fascist and the

that he is by no means unconnected with the terrorist approach to politics. As early as the late 1960s issue of Newright he carried a cover story entitled "The Two Faces of Frank Matthews". The same one of his attempts to appear responsible during the neo-Nazi presence at the North London Polytechnic and the main issue was raised.

One of the key pieces of evidence that linked this trio just that there was a recording of Douglas and Lindsay had made of two other young men, Lindsay had been targeted by the men for a campaign of beatings and physical attacks. Also mentioning a list of target addresses the men were to be used to target the

connections to "British right" politics came when he was reported as the secretary of the Wandsworth branch of the NF in 1981 when that branch was also running Mr G. Agnew, one of the original authors involved after the appearance of the NF.

By the time Harrington started his work at the North London Polytechnic he had shifted from one regional and one connection at Newham Magistrates Court for public order offences.

Mr Harrington's increased approval of more public disorder is getting the wind up a number of his fellow members. In early July while drinking in the Black Horse pub, one of the oldest public houses in East London, he was attacked by another

"Nazi Terrorists Strike in London." Searchlight Magazine, Sept. 1987, p. 5+. Political Extremism & Radicalism, <http://tinyurl.com/tinyurl/BUBPv4>

# Anna Sullivan | Firebombing July 1987

As a result of the firebombing Anna, whose house wasn't insured, was helped by Red Action members and readers of Searchlight magazine who arranged collections on her behalf.

She writes to Searchlight Magazine to thank her supporters saying "I have been forced to move and leave behind parts of my life that disappeared in flames. However I have been overwhelmed by the financial support I have received and the letters of solidarity and friendship,"

Anna developed ME as a result, and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. In her interview she recalls "I relived it every single night at 3:00 in the morning, which is when it happened, the explosion, and all the windows exploding..." She retired from 'activities' in 1989,



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# Anna Sullivan | Reflecting on Current Affairs 2015

In the interview that Anna gave to Searchlight in August 2015, she is asked her opinion on current issues like politics, the rise (and fall) of the BNP, UKIP and the English Defence League.

She answers that she is more worried about what is happening in Europe, although bad things are happening in the UK, with the rise of neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and that it is a reflection on what happened in the '20s and '30s.

She asks rhetorically “where’s it all going to end?”

“

It's very frightening, and I don't know how it will all end. You know, ... we need, really, a really big European anti-Nazi league again of some sort. I mean, I know that in France, there's quite a big anti-racist grouping, but look what's happening in France, you know. Jewish people are leaving France by the hundreds and thousands, because the anti-Semitic attacks there are horrendous. You know, where's it all going to end? ”

Gale Primary Sources

Start at the source.

# Anna Sullivan | Oral Histories

## Listen to the full audio interviews recalling memories from and about Anna Sullivan in the archive

- Searchlight Interview with Anna Sullivan." *Searchlight Oral Histories Collection*, 17 Aug. 2015. *Political Extremism & Radicalism*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6gLEi6>
- "Searchlight Interview with Anonymous Subject 13." *Searchlight Oral Histories Collection*, 10 Sept. 2015. *Political Extremism & Radicalism*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/BUBzC5>
- "Searchlight Interview with David Landau, August 7, 2015." *Searchlight Oral Histories Collection*, 7 Aug. 2015. *Political Extremism & Radicalism*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/BUALm5>

