

You're Practically British!

Maria Vasquez-Aguilar.

“You're practically British!”, is what some people say when they hear that I arrived so many years ago.

Unaware of how deep these 3 words can cut, how unrepresentative they feel. How far away from me.

Because I know who I am, of what I feel.

Of the many identities that make me.

I am a woman, a mother, a daughter, an aunt, a sister, a friend.

I am a trade unionist, a compañera, an activist, an organiser, a luchadora.

I am working class, I am Northern, a space I feel at home in, a humour that I share.

I am Latina, Morena, dancing whilst I cook and speaking Spanish to my son, teaching him of his ancestry so he may too find strength from the history and culture of nuestra gente.

I am a refugee, albeit with a British passport, painfully aware of my family and roots which remain 'over there'

Yes I am all these things, and many more - but despite all these years - British I have never felt, nor Chilean to be fair

Just me, just us.

Maria Vasquez-Aguilar

Exiled 1978, age 2