



Camille Natale: June 28, 1950 - February 15, 2000

CAMILLE'S TEACHING CAREER

Camille Natale began her career in 1974 at Central Technical High School in downtown Toronto teaching English as a Second Language. After five years, Camille was transferred to Oakwood Collegiate where she taught E.S.L. and English until 1993. Camille spent her final years teaching at Oasis Alternative School, established to meet the needs of high-risk students. Camille's warm, accepting manner, infectious laughter, passion for teaching and unwavering faith in humanity made her a favorite of staff and students. Her curriculum was infused with issues of social justice and labour rights and she always devoted her time to students beyond the classroom including coaching track, hosting UNESCO, Oakwood's annual multi-cultural celebration, and acting as staff advisor to the Student Council. While teaching at OASIS Alternative School, Camille became very supportive of the Triangle Programme. Throughout her career, she made regular deputations at the Toronto Board, advocating for her students whose programme needs were being eroded by cutbacks. Not only did Camille provide encouragement and inspiration for her students as a classroom teacher and staff sponsor, she also made invaluable contributions to the broader community.

PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTIVIST

From the onset of her teaching career, Camille was at the helm of every public education battle, galvanizing her colleagues to take action. And in her fight, the passion she exuded was always fueled by a love for her students. In the seventies, Camille was a key member of KEEP, a committee that was instrumental in moving the Toronto Board of Education to develop formulae to generate adequate ESL staffing to meet the needs of immigrant youth. In the eighties, Camille became increasingly concerned about the corporate incursion into public education. She played a leading role, both as a researcher and orator, in exposing the corporate agenda. Dubbed the Maude Barlow

of District 15, Camille became a much sought after guest speaker at conferences, as well as a media personality. She was a participant in OSSTF press conferences on curricular issues, attended local as well as international symposiums, and helped organize rallies and pickets to fight the commercialization of our schools. At the local level, Camille was also a regular deputant at Toronto Board meetings, convincingly spreading her message of the perils of forming partnerships with the corporate sector, from Pepsi, to Ernst and Young to the Learning Partnership. Indeed, Camille was instrumental in convincing the former Toronto Board to sponsor the District-15 Work Experience Day, an alternative to Take Your Kids To Work sponsored by the Learning Partnership. Camille's contribution to exposing the full breadth of the corporate agenda was especially significant in the area of curriculum. In the nineties she began to write groundbreaking pieces on the corporate sector's ideological incursion into education through the curriculum. Camille's depth of research, her impassioned appeals on the floors of District Council, Provincial Council and AMPA (OSSTF's Annual Meeting of Provincial Assembly), and her work with members of other labour organizations have had a profound influence on our understanding of the insidiousness of the corporate agenda.

SOLIDARITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE ACTIVIST

Camille was a global thinker who acted locally. She imbued the former District-15, as well as the province, with her internationalism. In her earlier years as an educator, Camille was especially involved in Latin American solidarity work. Camille helped form the COSPES (Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of El Salvador) education sub-committee which consisted of high school students as well as teachers from both the secondary and elementary panel. At AMPA, Camille argued for closer ties with ANDES, the El Salvadorian teachers' union, educating hundreds of Ontarian teachers about the deplorable conditions of their colleagues in El Salvador. In the eighties, Camille began to focus on Nicaragua. An active member of CAN (Canadian Action for Nicaragua), Camille inspired AMPA delegates with her stories of the internationally acclaimed literacy work that the Sandinista government was accomplishing in Nicaragua. In fact, she was instrumental in encouraging the OSSTF provincial executive to send delegates to Nicaragua on a literacy tour in 1983. Upon her return, Camille addressed several audiences of educators, sharing what she had learned about literacy from the Nicaraguan people. Inspired by the courage and vision of the Nicaraguan people, Camille became an impassioned advocate for literacy programmes at the local level, as well. Camille was also dedicated to the cause for peace. While teaching at Oakwood Collegiate, she founded Oakwood Youth for Peace and encouraged her students and colleagues to support the peace movement. On the floor of AMPA, Camille spoke eloquently of the need for peace education. In the early nineties, Camille became a founding member of Educators Against the War, later known as Educators for Peace and Justice. She helped organize a District-15 endorsed teach-in on the Gulf War as well as subsequent Professional Development Days on peace and social justice issues. Because of Camille's commitment to social justice and her history of international solidarity work, she was invited to be a member of the province's International Committee in 1994. In recognition of her invaluable political contribution to OSSTF, Camille was the recipient of the Wendall Fulton Award in 2000, one month after she succumbed to her long battle with cancer.

CAMILLE'S LEGACY

In her twenty-six years of OSSTF activism, Camille was a source of inspiration and knowledge to countless numbers of people. She never allowed herself to be discouraged by political defeats, encouraging others not to lose heart, to fight the good fight. Every aspect of Camille's life - her relationships, her political actions, her teaching - was governed by a deep and abiding belief in the essential goodness of humanity and the power of love to redeem and transform.

Camille's legacy is with us forever.