

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Ayers Institute “My Why” Podcast
Episode 3 – April 2018
Title: *Carla Cushman*

SPEAKERS

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CC	Carla Cushman	Director of Master’s Degree Programs in Education and Associate Professor of Education at Union University School of Education in Hendersonville/Nashville, Tennessee

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INTRODUCTION:

RM: For some it is a decision made after a moment of epiphany. For others, they can't imagine a time when they wanted to be anything else. They are teachers. They are leaders. They are life changers. These are their stories.

CC: My name is Carla Cushman from Hendersonville, Tennessee and this is My Why.

There's nothing quite so satisfying for me as an educator as when those light bulbs come on. When students make connections to their learning, when students display real pride in their work and excitement at their success. Some of those moments fall in to play when someone comes back and says thank you. I just want to tell you that you made a difference in my life. And isn't that what we all want to do as educators to make a difference?

RM: Welcome to My Why: Stories of Inspiration from Educators. This podcast is presented by the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation and brought to you by the College of Education at Lipscomb University, where 21st century educators are prepared to involve, impact, and inspire.

My name is Rachel Milligan.

Today we are joined by Dr. Carla Cushman Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of Master's Programs at Union University in Hendersonville, Tennessee. She has also worked at the Tennessee Department of Education and in the K-12 world at the central office level, as a middle school principal, and as a teacher.

Carla, thank you for being here today.

CC: You're welcome.

EPISODE BODY:

RM: What is your earliest memory of being in school?

CC: My first-grade teacher was Ms. Maude Matthews; and we were all allowed to call her Ms. Maud. She was like a grandmother. I don't know how old she was, really. She really reminded me of a grandmother figure, and one of my grandmothers was a teacher. And Miss Maud loved her students and

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she made learning fun. Celebration was there, learning was there, praise, success. It just felt really good to be in her class.

RM: Why did you decide to become an educator yourself?

CC: I'm a fourth-generation educator. My grandmother was a second-grade teacher. My dad was a middle school principal and teacher and so from a young age, I remember sitting in the living room with all of the family there and the adults saying, "Oh she's going to make a wonderful teacher. She's going to be such a good teacher." You know all of that. And I remember as I went through adolescence I began rebelling against that idea, it was okay when I was young and little. "Oh this is great they think I'm going to be a wonderful teacher!"

But I ended up going forward with that degree in elementary education and my undergraduate work. And I stepped into the classroom and it was just a very natural step for me in terms of again through those teenage years even though I was rebelling in my mind about I don't want to be a teacher. I was still doing teacher-y things working with Vacation Bible Schools and helping the young children during their little church meetings and camps and that sort of thing. So, teaching was very present in my life from as far back as I can remember.

RM: Talk about your greatest triumph.

CC: Well last year, I had the opportunity to visit China. During that trip, I was given the privilege of speaking to a group of teachers and teacher leaders and school administrators and our focus was on leadership and teacher leadership and instructional coaching.

And to know that this instructional coaching journey that was put in my lap (I was not seeking any work around instructional coaching when it was put in my lap); it was just put there for me to unwrap. And to think back and see how that opportunity led me across the globe to talk to people who were hungry to learn more and more about instructional coaching and teacher leadership. It was just, I felt like I was on top of the world actually.

RM: What would you go back and tell yourself as a first-year educator?

CC: I would tell that young, naive woman, "Hold on. You are about to experience the ride of your life! This be an amazing journey: a journey with twists and turns, a journey with unexpected opportunities, a journey that will take you in all sorts of directions that you may not have even dreamed of going."

RM: I wonder how that translates into what you hope your students remember most about you.

CC: Well when I think about what I want my students to take from their experiences with me, is a very clear understanding that this teacher believed in me. This teacher supported my learning. This teacher provided feedback through questions and suggestions and ideas that allowed me to think and reflect and improve my work.

RM: Carla, I'm going to ask you to think for a minute and then sum up your My Why story in six words or less.

CC: Okay. I really think if I were to consider the My Why story I'd have to go back to something I've already said and that is: "To make a difference." I teach to make a difference.

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RM: Thank you Carla.

CONCLUSION:

RM: As we close today's episode we encourage our listeners to consider your own sources of motivation. What inspires you to do what you do? What is your why? Share your ideas on social media using @AyersInstitute and the #MyWhy. Also, check out the handout including some of Dr. Cushman's favorite resources, lessons learned, her six-word memoir, and other helpful information. This handout can be found on <http://eduTOOLBOX.org>.

And also, please connect with the Ayers Institute on Facebook and Twitter @AyersInstitute.

I'm Rachel Milligan producer and host for the My Why podcast. This episode was directed by Julia Osteen. Forest Doddington handles editing and technical production. This podcast is brought to you by Lipscomb University's College of Education.

Thank you for joining us for My Why: Stories of Inspiration from Educators. Look for other episodes of this podcast and other Ayers Institute Professional Learning Podcasts at <http://podcast.ayersinstitute.org>.