

YORK PEOPLE



Heather Cameron

Professor, girls' boxing advocate

Pulling No Punches

WHEN HEATHER CAMERON ISN'T BUSY BOXING, or running her favourite project Boxgirls International, a sports training program to improve the fitness of girls and young women and enhance their leadership qualities, chances are you'll find her with the gloves off in her other role – that of stellar academic and teacher. She was recently named Professor of the Year by the German Association of University Professors & Lecturers and is the first non-German scholar to receive this award, worth \$12,000.

Cameron (MA '94, PhD '02) studied social & political thought at York and now teaches educational science at the Freie Universität Berlin, one of Germany's leading research universities. She founded Boxgirls in 2005 in Berlin's inner-city district of Kreuzberg. Since then, Boxgirls has expanded to include projects in Nairobi, Kenya, and Capetown, South Africa.

"Boxgirls is a social profit organization that supports women and girls and uses boxing programs as a catalyst for social change," says Cameron. "Boxing improves girls' strength and resilience. It allows them to negotiate the urban environment better." Young women come to Boxgirls because they like the idea of learning self-defence and being trained by other women, as well as doing something "different" from regular sports. Some want to confront their own fear, she says. "It's true that at first some girls' parents aren't so keen on the boxing idea, but we invite them to our training facilities and they get to know us. Now some of the most skeptical parents are among our biggest supporters!" ■

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