

In the Spotlight: Lourdes Medina

BY MARILYN LUBER, PH.D.



Lourdes (Lulu) Medina comes from the Republic of the Philippines, an archipelago of 7,107 islands bordered by the Philippine, Sulu, South China and Celebes Seas and the Luzon Strait. In 2013, the Philippines has become the world's 12th most populous nation, with a population of over 98 million. The Filipinos are from a diverse group of Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian speaking groups and include in their ancestry: Taiwanese aborigines, Chinese, Japanese, Malays, Indians, Arabs and later on Indians, Spaniards, Americans as well as other European groups. The Filipino people represent a vibrant amalgam of the world's peoples.

Lourdes Medina will be the host for the 2014 EMDR Asian Conference in Manila. She is hoping that members of the EMDR community from all over the world will join her in celebration of this 2nd EMDR Asian Conference.

Lulu, like her other countrymen and women, comes from a diverse cultural background. Her mother, Milagros Icasiano's, family is of Spanish blood while her father, Desiderio Coronel, is of Spanish and Chinese ancestry. The two met at the 400 year-old University of Santo Tomas (UST), the second oldest Catholic University in the world. Milagros was a professor at UST teaching Counseling and Education and was also a painter. Desiderio, was a medical doctor

and graduate of the same university and often enjoyed eating at the Icasiano family's restaurant just across from the university. He was so taken with Milagros that the story goes that he intentionally let his car stray into a ditch so she would take notice. This marked the beginning of a romance that led to marriage and a life-long love affair. Their family stayed in Manila and Lulu grew up in a protective and loving home with "the best parents one could ever have." They were a couple devoted to each other, always very caring and almost inseparable. Married for almost 60 years, their love grew even stronger which was such an inspiration for all of their children, inculcating close family ties between her and her five siblings (Lily, the accountant; Desiderio Jr. the engineer; Lota, the artist; Robert, the architect; and Leticia, a retired supervisor at the Canada Post).

When Lulu contracted the poliovirus at age 7, her father took three months off from his top post as Manila's City Health Officer, to aid her in her medical treatment. Since she could not walk, she often looked out of her window and saw all her friends laughing and playing. Lulu felt so helpless. During this time, she learned patience and resiliency as she had to learn how to walk again just like a baby. As a result of this supportive and loving environment, Lulu was used to a protected upbringing. It was only when she went to college that she had to learn to ride on public transportation for the first time. It took her a while before she was able to quell her fears and learn to do some of the basic rituals of daily life that her fellow city dwellers had learned much earlier in their lives.

Following in her parent's footsteps, Lulu enrolled in UST and studied Chemistry. She had thought she would follow in her father's footsteps and become a medical doctor, and she was awarded her degree in Chemistry in three years, rather than the usual 4-year course. She got married a year after graduation and she revised her life plan. She was about to settle down into being a homemaker, when her mother stepped in and impressed upon her the importance of a woman having a career. This is when Lulu started her teaching career at UST.

Always curious, Lulu decided to take courses in some different areas and ended up at the Center for Family Ministry (CeFam) as she thought that it would be interesting to learn about individual and family counseling. Growing up, her mother was a counselor and had always set an example for her. If she and her siblings broke a rule, her mother would talk and explain it to them in an open and approachable manner. She would clarify, validate, paraphrase and use reflective language to support her children and help them in the process of learning how to resolve their issues. Unknowingly, they learned the art and value of empathic communication skills from counseling from their mother so that it became natural to them. In thinking back, Lulu noted that even her friends in High School and college would approach her to talk about their problems. When she attended counseling seminars, it seemed like a natural progression that she fell in love with her courses and the work. She went on to get her Professional Diploma (PD) from CeFam. When she returned to UST, they gave her a grant to finish her MA in Pastoral Ministry, majoring in Individual and Family Counseling at the Jesuit University, Ateneo De Manila University.

In the beginning of the millennium, one of Lulu's family members had a major psychological crisis. As a result, the whole family underwent EMDR therapy through their family friend and mentor, Dr. Johnny Decatoria. He was the head of the Psychotrauma Clinic, which was the community service arm of the UST Graduate School. Afterwards, Dr. Decatoria introduced EMDR to Lulu and others in the clinic. Convinced of the efficacy of EMDR, she and two close friends and colleagues travelled to Hong Kong in 2004 for their EMDR training under Udi Oren and Gary Quinn. She has used EMDR ever since.

Two years after becoming EMDR trained, she became the consultant at the Psychotrauma Clinic taking over from her mentor, Johnny Decatoria who had to leave for abroad. Instead of sending the clinic staff/volunteers out of the country to receive their EMDR training, she

instead invited Trainers and Facilitators to come to Manila. Judith Boel, Zona Scheiner and Peggy Moore all came from the United States. There are now two dozen clinicians trained in EMDR Part 2 and more than two dozen trained in Part 1. As this area of the world is prone to man-made and natural disasters, Lulu and her colleagues have conducted a traumatology workshop before the EMDR trainings. Participants are primed for the EMDR training by receiving an overview of Francine Shapiro's textbook, so that when they begin the training they have received already the basic framework of EMDR and are familiar with it. Thanks to Zona Scheiner and EMDR HAP the Filipino practitioners received a gift of EMDR-related books for their library.

Over the past ten years, Lulu has been part of the UST Psychotrauma Clinic, the community service arm of the UST Graduate School. If there is a disaster, the team responds and delivers needed psychosocial services; a debriefing, stabilization techniques and EMDR. The group has responded to the many tragedies that Filipinos experienced (sea mishaps, explosions (at Glorietta and Serendra), children caught in war-torn Mindanao, bank hold-ups, kidnappings, torture victims).

Lulu has a private practice called "Porta Coeli (Door to Heaven) Center for Pastoral Counseling and Psychotrauma Management" where she and her colleagues practice EMDR. She has shared that in the conduct of EMDR, during the desensitization phase, after the emotions are let out, patients verbalize that they see colors ranging from black to gray, yellow to blue and ultimately white (blinding light) like, "a sparkling star" and they become so calm and peaceful. From experience, she had learned this as a cue that the patients are now ready for the Installation Phase, and true enough, as patients say their positive cognitions they report that the white light becomes brighter and bigger and directly goes to the part of their body most affected (as identified in the body scan) giving a sensation of pure relief, warmth and peace and farther moves till it envelopes the whole body. This phenomenon has occurred again and again in her practice and Lulu seeks to research further on this and as well wonders if others have experienced this with their clients.

In May of this year, Lulu completed her requirements at UST for the Ph.D. in Guidance and Counseling, with the encouragement of her husband who believed in the power of EMDR. Her dissertation was entitled "Posttraumatic Growth Experience of Adult Female Survivors of Childhood Incest through EMDR." She worked with 15 adult female survivors who were molested between the years of 6-11. Over the course of their EMDR work, these victims changed stance from victim to survivor resulting in an increase in their self-esteem and new choices and possibilities in their lives. Most of them reported that their faith had helped them see the wisdom of the trauma they experienced.

Lulu is one of a handful in her country who is a Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress from the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (AAETS). She also has Diplomate status from the same organization as well as the National Center for Crisis Management (NCCM) based in New York.

Lulu was one of the pioneers at the UST Graduate School Psychotrauma Clinic and in her stint as consultant, every year, the clinic received recognition for its excellent community service. The clinic's volunteerism spirit in delivering its psychosocial services free of charge was so overwhelming that they received yearly recognition from the university and ultimately received the prestigious "Hall of Fame" award during their annual faculty's recognition celebration, "DANGAL NG UST" Awards.

Currently, Lulu is an Associate Professor at UST in the Graduate School and also at the College of Education where she teaches Psychotrauma Management, Counseling, Psychology, Chemistry and Special Education courses. She is a member of the international Pi Lambda Theta, an international association of women educators with the main aim of empowering women through education.

She is currently the President of the EMDRPHILIPPINES Association and has been responsible for promoting and bringing EMDR HAP and EMDR Institute trainings to her country in 2006 and 2008. As a result of this work, victims of traumatic events all over the country have benefited from EMDR treatment.

Her hope and dream is to retire in two years from teaching undergraduates and focus on working with graduate students, practicing and training as many of her countrymen with EMDR and helping heal the traumatized. She wants to go on a pilgrimage with her husband to the Holy Land and as well make more visits to Australia to be with her daughter and her family as well as spend more time with her two other sons and their families. She would also like to engage in cooking, reading and listening to music that she loves.

In July 2010, during the 1st EMDR Asia Conference in Bali, Indonesia, she was elected to be a Board Member for EMDRASIA. She is the Chair of the Organizing Committee for the 2nd EMDR Asia International Conference in Manila on January 9-10, 2014. With this in mind, Lulu invites the EMDR Community:

"Come and join us heal individuals and nations as we share expertise and celebrate solidarity during the 2nd EMDRASIA International Conference. Savor the warmth and hospitality of the Filipino! Surely, it's more fun in the Philippines! Mabuhay!"

How can we resist her gracious invitation? ❖