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LIDIA ROMÁN CARDONA

El Espiritismo de las mujeres puertorriqueñas:  
De las extraordinarias pioneras a sus herederas  
contemporáneas

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### Indexed Interview

Lidia Román Cardona

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## Indexed Interview

### Lidia Román Cardona

#### Digital Story

**Clara Cardona's Spiritual and Political Mission** – [9:14 - 13:04; 16:49 - 17:00; 17:42 - 18:18; 22:58 - 25:38]

#### Other Themes

1. **Family Perspective** – [00:00 - 11:48]
2. **A Special Memory** – [13:08 - 16:48]
3. **Final Words** – [25:40 - 28:25]

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:00:00] I am Clara Román-Odio from the project *Spiritism by Puerto Rican Women: From Remarkable Pioneers to Contemporary Heirs*. I'm interviewing Mrs. Lidia Román Cardona, a native of San Sebastián, Puerto Rico. The youngest daughter of Clara Cardona Cardona, leader of the Spiritist Center in Guajataca for more than forty-five years and a Municipal Council member for twelve years. Today, it is July 29th, 2019, and we are interviewing Mrs. Román Cardona at her home in San Sebastián. Thank you very much for your participation in this project. Could you please tell me your full name and date of birth?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:00:52] Lidia Román Cardona. April 17th, 1940.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:01:00] Thank you! Well, I'd like to start by talking a little about the story of Clara Cardona Cardona. Could you please tell us the story of how Mrs. Clara received the gift of her guiding Spirit or how she met Kardec?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:01:20] At the age of fifteen she showed signs of being mentally incoherent and my grandparents decided to take her to the doctor because she was not not functioning well. She spent about four years, from fifteen to eighteen, at an aunt's house, where she had to stay because it was easier for the doctor to see her there every day. The doctor traveled every day through that field where there was no road, things were more difficult and he never managed to heal her. Until one day my dad walked by the front of the house and looked at her and said, "That pretty girl, what's wrong with her?" And she herself replied, "Do you find her pretty?" "Well, yes, I like her. Yes, I like her, what she lacks is food," said my dad. And every week he used to bring her Ovaltine because he worked at the Ramey Military Base. He was a soldier and worked there. And so, he observed her. Until one day the protective Spirit in her said to him, "Please go and bring her a glass of water." And he went and brought the glass of water and she told him to give it to her (she was not the one talking but was her protective Spirit). And he gave it to her and she took it. Then she became aware, and regained consciousness of who she was. She didn't know where she was. She didn't know why she was in a house that wasn't her home, her parents' house. She did not know what happened to her. She could not remember anything, nothing, nothing. And she cried and asked who was the man next to her. That's when

they brought her back to my grandmother's house. He kept visiting her at my grandmother's house until they fell in love.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:04:18] And what happened to your grandmother's relationship with Kardec, her spiritual guide? Did he manifest again?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:04:29] Yes. Through her daughter, Clara, that Spirit, who was a Spirit of immense light, asked my grandmother to share her daughter to enable her to do long term social/spiritual work. He assured her that he would support her household to make it successful. My grandmother's home. My grandmother's husband was bedridden and they had eight children. Because my grandmother had to take care of a bunch of little kids, my mom was the "head" of the house (she was a fifteen-year-old girl) so she [my grandmother] said yes and from there on this protector started working with the family giving instructions and guidance for them all to move forward. Well, my grandmother didn't say much...She stayed quiet. She never intervened with her daughter and accepted her guidance.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:05:50] Did she attend Church, your grandmother?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:05:56] Yes, the whole family was Catholic.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:06:01] So the family did not see a contradiction between being Catholic and accepting her daughter's spiritist work?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:06:13] I don't think that was a conflict for my grandmother, because by seeing the test that her daughter had overcome, that was more important than any conflict. She accepted and shrunked. And she continued accepting that because he [Kardec] devoted himself to my grandmother's family and to them.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:06:44] Regarding the experience of the spiritist center. Did you go to your mother's center in Guajataca?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:06:52] Yes, I attended the center.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:06:53] And what were the services there usually like?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:06:54] There was discipline there. First of all, everyone had to be there at nine in the morning. The table was a large, rectangular table, there were already some mediums chosen by him there, people chosen by him. Among the people at the table was the president, who read the *Collection*. They opened the center, they meditated; then they would read the prayers from the *Collection* [the president would] and the others would meditate. They meditated, prayed for themselves, and kept a temperate atmosphere there. Then, the people there began to take Spirits, people who were already affected and he [Kardec] gave them instructions. Whenever there was a person [a Spirit] who wanted things for the wrong reasons, who came to distort the spiritual field, he [Kardec] used to tell them to shut up, to sit down, that the things they were doing were not real, he scolded them. When a member of the center acted immorally,

he called them out, explained to them why what they did was wrong, told them what were the possible consequences of their actions, and he did not accept anyone acting wrongfully.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:08:59] Before the experiences at the center, before she opened the center of Guajataca, your mother practiced Spiritism, right?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:09:11] Oh, yes.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:09:11] In houses, could you talk a little about that?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:09:14] My mom lived in the Piedras Blancas neighborhood, in a house my dad made for her because that land was given to her by Grandpa, Grandpa Pepe, and they made the house and there is where my mom started receiving and healing people, healing them. What kind of people went there? Well, people who had diseases, people who were sick with...at that time there was a lot of tuberculosis and cancer and other types of diseases that now also exist. But whenever he had to send a patient (let's call them patients) to a doctor, to a clinic, he referred them. He used to tell them: "you have to do this because you have this, this and this." How did he examine that? He examined their sight and their urine, and then he gave them introductions. I saw people who were psychically ill, they were crazy, well people usually call them crazy but they weren't crazy. They just did not have normal behavior. He treated and cured those kinds of people. If a person showed weaknesses due to lack of nutrition, he also helped them and urged their parents to give them this, this and this. He prescribed, he made recipes through my mom. At that time there was a pharmacist in Lares called Lumen Méndez. Lumen Méndez was a spiritist too. When the people brought him prescriptions, Lumen Méndez knew they were my mom's or Kardec's prescriptions, so he prepared them.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:11:40] What kind of medicine did this pharmacist prepare?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:11:45] He used herbs. He also gave...he prepared some potions for colds, for women's pain when they had their period. He did all of that because everything Kardec prescribed was transcribed by my mom. Remember Kardec was a doctor. He was a doctor from France and that story seems to be forgotten. He told us that story. He lost his life, with his eight children and wife, on a pleasure trip.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:12:31] I would like to address a special memory, a memory of a spiritist experience that was transformative for you in relation to your mother and her guiding Spirit.

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:12:52] Oh, yes. I saw many people getting back on track, as a child. I can say that I saw mentally ill people be healed. I have a memory, a humorous memory, of my childhood. My mom used to host her patients at home and one time she told me that a well-known lady, Hernández, from San Sebastián was going to sleep with me. And how did that lady lose her mind? She lived in the U.S. Her husband had a cellar and fell in love with an employee. She had just given birth. She went to the cellar and made a scene there, and the cops arrested her; and her brother had to go to the U.S. to fetch her, and bring her home. They took her to my mom. This family was Evangelical, they belonged to the Presbyterian Church of San Sebastián and this lady was an artist. On the floor, in the countryside people used to use a floor

material called linoleum and she would take bread paper and make designs with flowers from this material. She would trace them with charcoal paper into the sheets, to the covers, and embroider them. She was an artist. But she was not well. She put on tacos like this, walked on the stones like a little bird. My mom told me I had to sleep with her and I said no, because “Mom that lady is crazy, how am I gonna sleep with her?” And she said, “my darling, I make you sleep with her so she feels that her daughter is the one next to her. You’re going to help her by bringing her daughter’s memories back.” And that’s how she was healed.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:15:38] How much time did Mrs. Hernández spend in Mrs. Clara’s house?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:15:45] About three years.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:15:46] What, in your opinion, was Mrs. Clara’s spiritist mission or the mission of her guiding Spirit?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:15:56] He did everything; and there was a peculiarity in him that he did not accept the involvement of another entity from another center, even if it was from the same line.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:16:11] Not to interfere, excuse me, with Clara?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:16:20] No, never with her, but I am talking about interference with the center.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:16:24] So then, what was the mission of this guiding Spirit through Mrs. Clara?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:16:31] To help humanity in the first place. Secondly, to take my mom to a place of obedience, acceptance, so she could go through the so-called karma, let’s say, and to overcome it.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:17:40] What was the spiritist mission of Mrs. Clara and her guiding Spirit? Why do they come together? For what purpose?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:19:13] He came to solve the problem of this family versus completing the karma of his own family. He lost his life at sea, with his children, his wife. After he joined my family —a family with a similar past— he worked to redeem the past. How? Covering needs, doing good, making people aware of cause and effect phenomena. Healing, feeding the poor, sharing food with the poor. And at the same time my mother was carrying the Catholic part of the Guajataca neighborhood. She picked up all the children, prepared them and because she had a very close relationship with Father Aponte, she took the children to him to baptize them. Because of her efforts nobody was left unbaptized in the neighborhood. She took care of pregnant women and took them to doctors. That is what they did, it was a complete work that included both material and spiritual life. He covered everything, everything, everything,

everything while my mom fulfilled her duty as a good Christian and even engaged in politics to help people.

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:21:24] The mayor of the municipality of San Sebastián was Don Cayo Estrada. Don Callo Estrada, had a lot of faith in my mother and, because of that, whatever Clarita said was done. The president of the Municipal Council lost his power right there. There is a very beautiful tale about a time when they sent money to build a road and street lighting because there was none of it in the rural areas of San Sebastián. And Don Cayo wanted my mom to send the money for this project to Guajataca and my mom said no. My mom told him to prioritize the neighborhoods that needed that money the most. And I'd tell you the last neighborhood that had street lighting was Clara's neighborhood. This is an example of her humane side, her humanist side. She... There are a lot of cases. One man told me after I returned to San Sebastián (I returned after I left) that once he was walking around the Guajataca neighborhood with his seven children starving. And my mom, and that was told by him, the man, that my mom stopped him, and said, "Hey, where are you going?" "To my mom's house because my kids have not eaten in a while. I will see if my mom can boil a few pieces of vegetables and feed them." She said, "Come in here, I'm going to give you... I want to talk to you." And he went into the house with the seven children and she said, "Sit down." She grabbed a chicken, killed it, peeled it, cut it into pieces, boiled it, and made soup for the children and him. And she served them and gave them soup twice. And when the kids were full and he was full too, she said, "Now you can go to your mom's house." That was her way to work, because she was the president of the neighborhood of Guajataca for many years and she baptized a lot of people there.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:24:04] What do you feel when you think about your spiritist experience? What do you feel in your heart?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:24:17] It hurts me because they have taken, I do not say everyone, but...My experience has been that some people have imposed their own perspective of the spiritual world and say that it cannot be touched, cannot be looked at. That God does not allow any kind of interactions with the spiritual world. All religions, without exception. "God does not allow that." "God does not like that." "What is religion?" "Religion is of God." And there's no heart there. There is heart when the person gets involved; when the person gives herself, in soul, life and heart, to serve God as Jesus did. Jesus's actions are the best example we can follow. On the other hand, we have people, even from my own family, that feel ashamed if we say that we are spiritists. That "If I do dare, people will characterize me as a spiritist and everything related to that." That is something I feel sorry for because the spiritual world, if it is practiced as Jesus did, is both a soul and a weapon. And there was an example of that in Puerto Rico in Don Luis Muñoz Marín who received guidance from the spiritual world. And he knew what was going to happen from here to there because of his connection with the spiritual world. That's why this Island grew as it grew. "Oh, but Puerto Rico surrendered to the U.S." He would do anything he could to raise the country. For Puerto Rico to be a country and not a "thing."

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:26:39] Is there anything I haven't asked, any message you'd like to share, before we finish the interview?

**Lidia Román Cardona** [00:26:49] I would really love to talk more, but really this is a topic on which we can spend centuries, years and it will not be over.

**Clara Román-Odio** [00:27:09] Thank you very much. Thank you!