
LIDIA CARDONA FUENTES

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Indexed Interview

Lidia Cardona Fuentes

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Indexed Interview

Lidia Cardona Fuentes

Digital Story

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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*, and I am interviewing Mrs. Lidia Cardona, a native of the town of San Sebastián, Puerto Rico and a practitioner of Spiritism. Today is July 27, 2019 and we are interviewing Mrs. Cardona at her house, in the Raholiza urban neighborhood of San Sebastián. Thank you very much for your participation in this project. Could you please tell me, before starting the interview, your full name and your date of birth?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:00:42] Lidia Cardona Fuentes and the date of birth is August 22, 1936.

Clara Román-Odio [00:00:50] Thank you! Let’s start the interview thinking about family values. From whom did you learn about Spiritism?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:01:01] Well, I was born and raised the first years of my life, up to eight years old, in the Guajataca neighborhood; where there was no electric light, no running water, no churches or chapels of any religion. And the only way for my father to raise his children within Christianity, as I believe was the case for many homes in the neighborhood, was through Spiritism. Because I remember that in my home we met once a week to pray. As dad said: “Today we are going to pray,” and all the children would gather. We were eleven brothers with my dad and my mom. I was the youngest of all and I remember mom sitting me in her lap, on the couch. I remember when we started to pray, but I don’t remember how it ended because I fell asleep. But, later on I learned what my dad taught us that, at least once per week, we had to take time to worship God and pray for those in need. I remember him reading a book called *The Gospel According to the Spiritists*, and he would read a part and explain it. He always emphasized values like honesty, respect, humility, and doing good to the neighbor. And after he analyzed that chapter and explained it, then we started praying and we read a book called

Collection of Prayers According to Spiritism, something like that. We read the prayers. The book had different kinds of prayers: one was for every day, another one for the wellbeing of the ill, there was also one for those in need. There was one that was for the souls who suffer and ask for prayers. There was one invocation. I learned about that and that helped me, eight years later, when we moved downtown. I began to go to the Presbyterian Church. That transition, from those prayers at home to an organized Church, already with some principles, objectives and values, was not difficult for me because I had already learned this at home and understood that it was the same. But here, in the Church, is called in one way and in my house in another way. However, at my parents' house they continued to pray one day per week. With my dad, I went to the Presbyterian Church and that continued as a practice, a tradition, a custom.

Clara Román-Odio [00:04:39] Did they regularly go to a spiritist center?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:04:44] Yes, Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:04:45] When did that start?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:04:47] After I got older, we went to Clara Cardona's center. Clara, because we also considered her to be from the family, because she was a well-loved and well-respected human being, and she loved us very much. Clara had a center and I started going there, since I was a young single woman. It was Sundays back then, and we met every 15 days.

Clara Román-Odio [00:05:20] Mrs. Clara ran that center, right?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:05:24] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:05:24] So what happened in those two or three hours?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:05:27] Well, the first thing was that Clara arrived at the center. There were already people there. She was always laughing, smiling, greeting and commanding: "this must be done this way;" "look for the water;" "Do this." Then, she would go to a little room, and lay down. When Clara came out of that room, her features were different. One could notice a change not only physically, but also in her gaze, in her way of being. She was more serious, more formal, and then, she started directing. Some sat at the table, either because they could contribute; my dad always sat down at the table because he was in charge of reading the prayers. And then, those who were mediums and perhaps the most needy. And then, the procedure was followed. The program, let's say, to read the prayers and explain them. There were people giving messages.

Clara Román-Odio [00:06:49] Those were the mediums?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:06:51] The mediums.

Clara Román-Odio [00:06:51] So was there a sequence, an order in that service?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:07:04] Yes, Yes. There was almost always an introduction. There were some people that got up and gave an exhortation to prepare the environment. Then, the prayers, and then Clara intervened. If there was a person with a very personal need, there was another room where she took them and there she helped them; and if more people who could help were also needed, she would call them, call the person: “come with me;” “come here.”

Clara Román-Odio [00:07:52] Are you a medium?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:07:56] No, no.

Clara Román-Odio [00:07:57] But have you seen people who are mediums at work?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:08:02] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:08:02] Could you talk about what that experience is like, how do you remember it?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:08:07] Well, Clara herself. I remember her saying: “this is happening and it should not, you have to stop this.” For example, in my case, I was studying and working with children. Well, she said to me: “no, keep going, you will be able to get there, you don’t have to hold on, keep going, you can.” And that filled one with strength. Not only spiritually but mentally and emotionally. One said: “I can.” With the sick, with the sick; if there was a patient who needed a doctor, she would say: “This is not something we can solve here, you need a doctor, you have to see a doctor.”

Clara Román-Odio [00:09:07] Have you fomented Spiritism in your children? Is this a widespread belief in your family?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:09:15] Yes, yes, because my husband practices it too. And he yes, he receives. And he and my children have all grown up in that environment, in their respective churches. But we do meet when a situation arises. They ask us to get together as a family, for example, in a case of illness. “Mom, look and see, pray for so-and-so.” Yes, they believe.

Clara Román-Odio [00:09:48] They believe.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:09:48] They don’t practice it, but they believe.

Clara Román-Odio [00:09:52] Was there a difference, that you observed, in the roles that women and men performed? Or how did you perceived the gender dynamics in that place, in that center?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:10:06] Well, I remember there were women who were spiritists; there was a Goyita, one named Goyita. There was also a lady called Lidia that I don’t remember

well, but my husband remembers Mrs. Lidia. But most of them were men, they were men. Some were very serious people, but yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:10:37] Who was sitting outside the table? There was a large table with mediums and there were places outside the table.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:10:45] Yes, yes, there were some chairs. Usually, the relatives of those who were at the table or people who came for the first time sat in those chairs. If it was necessary to sit them at the table Clara then would say: “[you] go to the bank so he/she sits here.”

Clara Román-Odio [00:11:08] And how many people frequented this center?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:11:11] I estimate that 20 to 25 people.

Clara Román-Odio [00:11:19] Every fifteen days?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:11:20] Yes. Every fifteen days. Or maybe more, maybe less.

Clara Román-Odio [00:11:26] Could you share any spiritist experience that has been immensely valuable to you or transformative for you?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:11:39] Well, we used to meet to pray with Clara when someone from the family was sick.

Clara Román-Odio [00:11:48] Did people heal?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:11:49] Yes, they did, they healed. And I, but personally I cannot say I had a very impressive experience, well not at that time. But, one day we had a situation with a granddaughter. They enrolled her in another school. The girl did not want to and that affected me personally because I felt, well, identified with the girl, because the girl was crying. So, we decided to sit down to pray. My husband and I sat down to pray specifically for the tranquility of the girl and to ask the Lord to put the appropriate obstacles to keep her in the same school if he thought that it was not prudent to enroll her in another school. And while we were praying it came to my mind, it is not that one sees it like this, but in my mind I saw my granddaughter in her uniform on her way to school and many little stars were surrounding her. And then, in my mind, they told me: “don’t cry for her, pray for these.” And then I saw a group of school children, younger than my granddaughter, wearing threadbare clothing, barefoot; “pray for this.” And that gave me security, tranquility, because I said: “you have to pray for those who don’t have someone to cry for them.”

Clara Román-Odio [00:13:40] Then, you are also a medium, because someone [a Spirit?] presented a vision to you and spoke to you.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:13:46] Well, that was the only experience I have had that I remember. I do know that they have helped me. Sometimes I say: “How could I do so many things in my life, study, work with four children and go out afloat?;” “How could I be the director of a middle school of fourteen hundred students when I was a very shy woman and it was a big school?” And sometimes I say: “Wow, the Lord helped me, he surrounded me with guardian angels,” as I say.

Clara Román-Odio [00:14:39] First of all, it seems that you see no contradiction between Spiritualism and Christianity ...

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:14:47] No, none.

Clara Román-Odio [00:14:47] ... from the very beginning. And on the other hand, it seems that it was an experience that empowered you, that gave you power ...

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:15:01] Yes, Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:15:01] ... to make the life that you have made.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:15:05] Yes, yes, thank the Lord.

Clara Román-Odio [00:15:07] What values or aspirations did Spiritism promote in you as a woman and as a citizen?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:15:19] Well, it gave me courage. It gave me faith, it made me feel that I am not alone. I have someone to help me get afloat. And yes, they are helping me. Before the interview, I spoke with Raquel, my sister, and sometimes I say: “Wow, how is it that I have had so much patience and tolerance and have been able to deal with all of this?” And well, I know that is the case because they are helping me, they are helping me.

Clara Román-Odio [00:15:59] Don't you ever feel lonely then?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:16:00] No no no no.

Clara Román-Odio [00:16:02] Never.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:16:02] No, no. Oh Jesus is always with me!

Clara Román-Odio [00:16:08] How has it changed, if at all? How has your spiritist belief or practice matured?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:16:18] Well, sometimes I do an analysis, a comparison, of what I learned within Spiritism and what I learned within my Church. And I say: “but there is no, there

is no difference.” For example, I went to some prayer circles with a group from the Church and one time one of the brothers from the Church got up (it was because of my husband’s little nephew) and he got up and started walking around that boy and put his hands on him. He didn’t say anything, but he put his hands on him and one of the sisters in the Church said: “that’s the Holy Spirit working.” And that made me think about the center of Clara because I saw Clara doing that and we said that it was Kardec, Clara’s [spiritual] guide, “Kardec is working.” But in the Church, it is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who works with the living and with the dead. Well, I said: “In the Church they say that it is the Holy Spirit who moves people.” Because in the Church there are people who move, who sing, who dance, who do things. I say: “Wow, this is what happened there.” So I do see a similarity. But of course, each one gives it a different name.

Clara Román-Odio [00:18:15] You say that your husband is a medium.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:18:20] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:18:20] And you told me about his experience of seeing, that he saw. What type of medium is Mr. Salvador?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:18:31] Well he, he sees.

Clara Román-Odio [00:18:38] And what does he see?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:18:41] For example, when the children...when the children went to study, he would say to me: “I saw Ricky, the youngest, walking in the courtyards, on the school grounds.” And Ricky studied at school. “I see Tito in a jacket in front of a desk and so on.”

Clara Román-Odio [00:19:08] He is a seer.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:19:08] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:19:08] It is a seer medium.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:19:11] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:19:14] How do you feel when you think about the experience of being at that table or when you went to the center every fifteen days or when you met with your husband to pray? Or when he sat in the private room with Mrs. Clara? What feelings do those memories evoke?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:19:43] It gave me a lot of security, a lot of security. Much strength, much hope, much hope.

Clara Román-Odio [00:19:54] Could we talk a little about how Spiritism, in your opinion, has impacted the social body of the town? I am thinking of social charity, the type of work that is

done outside the center that is done in the communities. Do you know of that experience?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:20:20] Well, if you mean going somewhere else and praying yes, yes. We had gone, especially my husband, who is the one that has the gift.

Clara Román-Odio [00:20:33] Did you go to other houses?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:20:33] To other houses to pray, yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:20:36] And did your parents go too?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:20:40] No, not them. My dad did not go because of his health condition, but if it was someone from the family and it was easy for them to get there, then they would go there to pray.

Clara Román-Odio [00:20:52] Do you think it is valuable to make the experience of Spiritism public?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:20:59] I think that you have to teach others that it is not a thing, as some believe, that this is Santerism, that this is a thing of ignorant people, that is what people believed before. Because no, no, I think that is a manifestation of the spiritual progress that a person has. We grow physically, emotionally, and also spiritually, we grow.

Clara Román-Odio [00:21:38] So do you see this communication with the spiritual world as a way to grow?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:21:44] Yes, I think so, we grow.

Clara Román-Odio [00:21:48] Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to share?

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:21:52] Yes, I remember that we also went to the house of a neighbor of my mother, she was a different one from Clara's. She sat at the table and wrote, and she said everything she wrote and everything was very accurate. But when you saw what she wrote you couldn't read it because it was something like hieroglyphs, something that you couldn't read. But it was through writing, and it was Juana Jiménez. It was Juana, yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:22:35] There are different types.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:22:37] Yes, there are different types ...

Clara Román-Odio [00:22:39] Of mediums.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:22:40] Yes.

Clara Román-Odio [00:22:42] Well, I really appreciate your time. The interview was beautiful and all these memories are beautiful too. I deeply appreciate your time.

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:22:54] You're welcome.

Clara Román-Odio [00:22:54] Thank you!

Lidia Cardona Fuentes [00:22:56] I wish I could contribute more.

Clara Román-Odio [00:22:59] This is fantastic. Thank you!