

Darlene Marquez-Caramanzana documents stories of Filipina survivors of human rights violations

by [Gladys Mangiduyos](#) in the [May 11, 2016](#) issue

Darlene Marquez-Caramanzana, a United Methodist deaconess and National Council of Churches executive in the Philippines, received an award for her work documenting the stories of women survivors of human rights violations, including how those women fought for justice.

The University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies and the UPCWS Foundation Inc. gave Marquez-Caramanzana a Lourdes Lontok-Cruz Award for her thesis, "Women Confronting State-Instigated Violence: Experiences of Female Relatives of Victims of Human Rights Violations in the Philippines." She presented her thesis in a recent lecture series, Women in the Revolutionary Struggle, at the University of the Philippines.

For her research, she had interviewed women who are mothers, daughters, and wives of victims of extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

"All the women were deeply pained and suffered from anguish upon the victimization of their loved ones," Marquez-Caramanzana said. Yet she also "documented the empowerment and transformation process undergone by the female relatives and their subsequent actions to engage in seeking justice for victims."

In addition to the women survivors of violence, Marquez-Caramanzana interviewed human rights activists and workers who knew the women and reviewed cases of human rights violations. She stressed the need for opportunities for all of the women who gave firsthand accounts—whom she called her research partners—to confirm the accuracy of the details.

"This is because, in truth, women's stories have been maligned and rendered as untruths," she said. "My research partners have been maligned by the state and its institutions."

Marquez-Caramanzana is also the executive on ecumenical education and nurture for the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, work that she says “strengthened and further affirmed” her passion to honor each person’s dignity.

Because of the NCCP human rights program, she said, “I found myself listening to various stories and accounts of mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends of human rights advocates who have been killed, abducted, tortured, or illegally arrested. I heard them tell their stories to different audiences in different times and circumstances.”

While each woman’s life circumstances are unique, women’s struggle for liberation is not separate from that of the needy, the poor, and the afflicted, Marquez-Caramanzana said.

Her research convinced her “that my place in this world is to be in the service of the marginalized, the poor, and the oppressed—with women’s rights advocacy as one of the foci of my work and vocation,” she said.

Listening to women’s stories of surviving violence brought to the surface the suffering they experienced.

“I know deep within that they also experience tiredness, uncertainty, and rage,” she added. “But the capacity to overcome and be hopeful is exuded every time they speak of their struggles as mothers, wives, partners, and daughters.” —United Methodist News Service