

***Pursuit of Happiness and Justice  
by a Modern Female Sherlock Holmes:  
Merly Khouw ('76)***



For someone who has worked in both the public and private sectors of the financial industry for a number of years, I found Merly's adventurous pursuits truly inspiring.

Merly's passion in criminology began with reading Sherlock Holmes when she was very young. Captivated by his ingenuity in crime solving, the fascination led her to pursue a specialty and a career that was exceptionally non-conforming at her time. She started as an academic, moved on to be a consultant for a correctional institution in the U.S., and then a dramatic change in course to become a banker and later a World Bank criminologist.

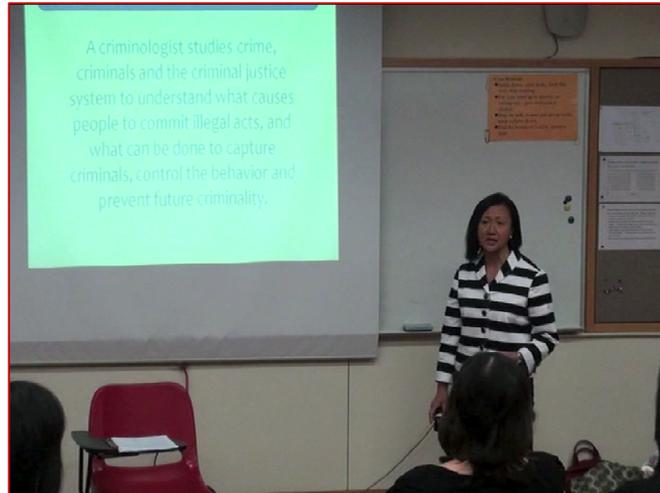
While most would agree that we are who we are because of what we experienced, learned, we are often preoccupied with "other" priorities rather than reflect on our upbringing at school.

Yet, Merly is reflective. Two episodes she shared – a literature class with Sister Agnes McKiernan and queuing up for lunch box with Madame Huang.

Sister Agnes's question - "What is the purpose of life?" - was the most stimulating thought introduced to Merly at school. The girls responded with sober philosophical answers but Sister Agnes's was simple and down-to-earth - "To be happy. Only things that make you truly happy would give you the drive to actualize their attainment." Maryknollers are always given the freedom and encouragement to go after their aspirations - to pursue the impossible, if that is what they are after. Individual goals should differ and so are pathways – there is no standard passage for all. The school has never tried to unnerve Merly

from pursuing the uncommon specialty in criminology - from fantasy with Sherlock Holmes to discovering modes of crime and human nature. Merly's path speaks volumes of what could be possible.

When asked what drives her to continue investigation work at the World Bank, Merly cited examples of abused use of World Bank funds granted to developing countries. Such abuses result in sub-standard infrastructure projects which in turn imperiled livelihood of the inhabitants. For example, bad roads scathe transportation efficiency, wreck delivery of necessity supplies for local communities, and put road users' safety at risk. Her strong sense of rights has an origin one day when she was queuing up for her lunch box. It was a long queue and she had been waiting a long time. Madame Huang came along and other girls invited Madame to the front of the queue. Merly thought it didn't feel right, and uttered "I queued up for a long time as well." Madame paused, responded "you're right", and went to the back of the queue. Maryknoll teachers, such as Madame Huang, role models of great integrity, had implanted in Merly values she upholds to this day.



Merly derives her happiness from eradicating injustice and serving the greater good. Her successful quest manifested the courage and tenacity needed to pursue dreams, no matter how far flung they may appear to be. The pursuit may have many ups and downs, and at times the goal dauntingly unreachable. But most of the time, they are blessings in disguise that lead to new lights. With persistence and conviction, we will in all certainty reach our destination, and embrace Happiness.

Merly, a reflective and happy Maryknoller.

**By Beatrice Luk and Lilian Chan ('00)**