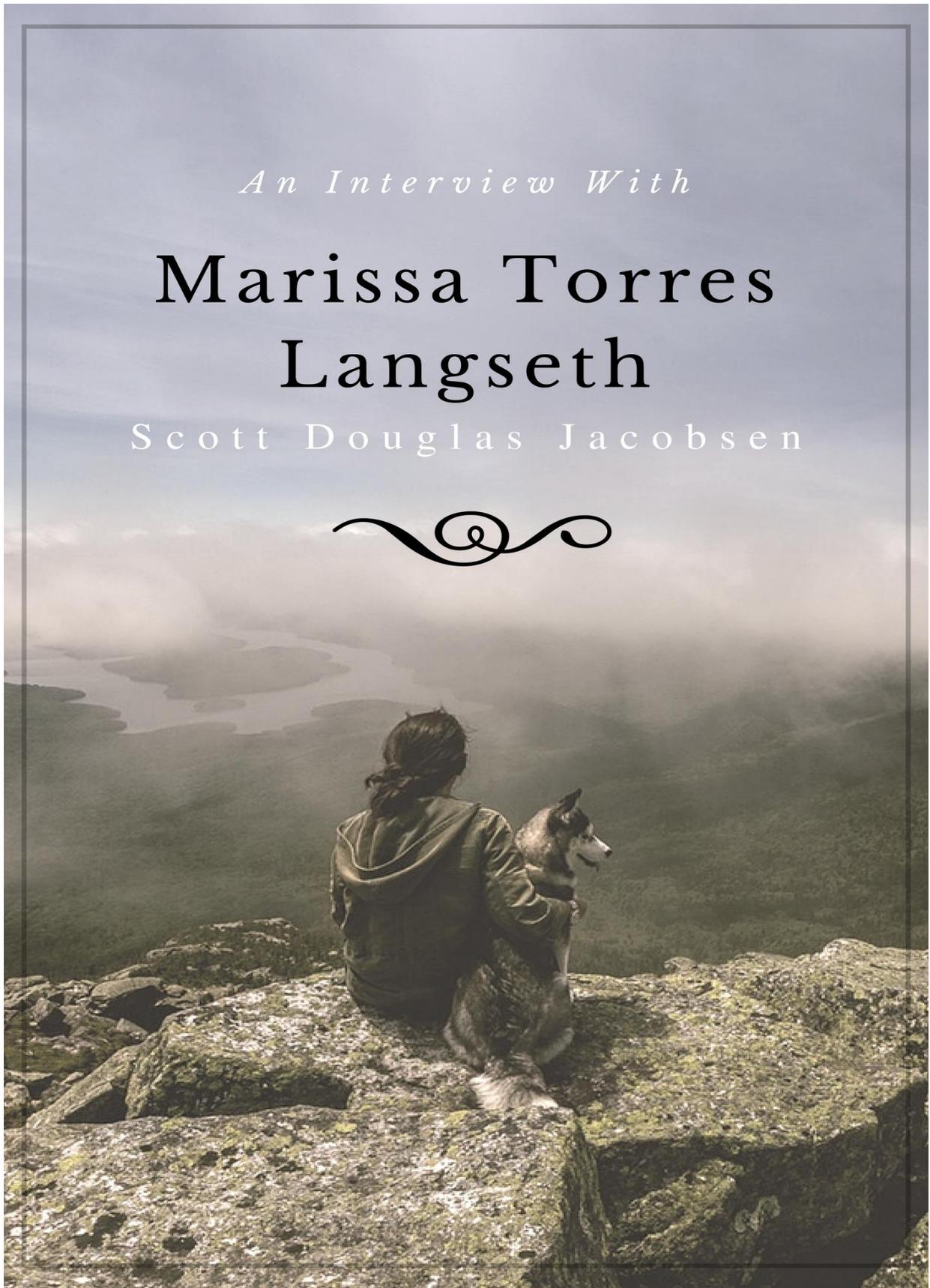


*An Interview With*

# Marissa Torres Langseth

Scott Douglas Jacobsen



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Sincerely,

**Marissa Torres Langseth, HAPI Founder**

I express gratitude to Marissa Torres Langseth for the variety of insights into the context of the humanist community in the Philippines and the connections for an upcoming book project on voices from the Filipino/Filipina humanist community.

Also, I acknowledge and am grateful for all the love in my life.

**Scott**

# Part One

## Abstract

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N. She discusses: PATAS; inspiration for its founding and titles'; HAPI; effective strategies for advancement of the humanist movement; books; wedding ceremony as a non-believer; irreligious ceremony; difficulties and problems of community; younger generations' difficulties; experience for men and women non-believers, the differences; notable education and social initiatives by HAPI; cynical use of political language to demonize non-believers; HAPI demographics; heroes and heroines; last talking to Paul Kurtz; Harris and Dawkins; women's rights and religion, and women and religion; acknowledgement of an issue; secondary citizenship; fears for younger generations of women and girls; Noam Chomsky's analysis of the media; denigration sourced in religion for women and girls; Margaret Atwood and the *Robber Bride* quote; those happy for Marissa's potential failure; contributing to HAPI; common narrative of lives threatened; and tragic story for someone who came out as a non-believer.**

*Keywords:* HAPI, humanism, Marissa Torres Langseth, PATAS, Philippines.

## **An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N.: Founder, PATAS; Founder, HAPI (Part One)**

**1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So let's start from the top. What was your family background regarding geography, culture, language, and religion?**

**Langseth:** I was born in San Antonio, Nueva Ecija. It's part of Luzon.

We are of course Catholics. We were poor. So, I was born poor and then at the age of 5 my father, who was a soldier then, was moved to Cebu.

Cebu is in the middle part of the Philippines; it's an island. And of course my mother is so religious, she goes to church almost every day. And this is why I see that religion is a poison. It's dangerous to society because people will go to church instead of working.

They would ask for food and money from the church. I mean from God not from the church.

We speak Tagalog in the Philippines. I speak different languages because I've been to so many places. Culturally speaking, religion is a big, huge part because it's like every Sunday, my mother would kick me to go to church.

She would buy new clothes for me so I could go to church. It's like she would force us to go to church even if there are no new clothes. She would force us. If you won't go, you have to be kicked several times and be woken up to go to church.

I didn't understand then but when I was in grade 5, when I discovered science, I began to ask the questions, "Why are we here? What is our purpose?" Nobody could answer me.

**2. Jacobsen: What were some pivotal moments in early life or past grade 5 that you can remember?**

**Langseth:** Pivotal moments, I would say in grade 5, it's science. When I was looking at the stars, I would imagine who made this. I was asking questions already in grade 5. And then in high school, I could not understand why I could not get gifts from Santa Claus when I was a good girl.

So, I did my experimentation, no my research. Why is it that Santa Claus doesn't give gifts to poor people? Now, I understand it's because their parents are poor. So, I applied that to God. Why is it that God does not bless the poor people? So, maybe, there is no God

**3. Jacobsen: What were some mystical or supernatural or transcendentalist beliefs that you had while growing up a “good girl”?**

**Langseth:** I didn't have any superstitious beliefs. I was one of those who was always going against the grain. For example, the number 13 is not bad for me. It's not bad. People believe that you should not eat because during Ramadan Muslims celebrate and they don't eat, right?

In the Philippines, we have a holy week. You're not supposed to eat for 3 days, or eat a little bit. I didn't follow that. I didn't get sick or have any issues. Because it was stupid not to eat.

**4. Jacobsen: What were some other early moments of moving towards an irreligious orientation or non-belief in God?**

**Langseth:** There was one time when a priest in the military, we lived in a military compound. There was one time when that priest was trying to rape me. Of course, I'm good in running, so I ran away.

Why is it that these supposedly good people would try to touch other women, other girls? The part that made me turn to irreligion was when I was in Saudi Arabia, when I worked in Saudi Arabia, I worked there as a registered nurse.

I saw the different culture in Saudi Arabia. They're Muslims there, and how they treat women. They're treated like animals, like secondary citizens. Men were eating in a restaurant and the women were outside waiting for them.

And in fact, it's just so different. So I said if there were a God, why is it that the people in Saudi Arabia are worshipping another God named Allah? And then the highlight of my irreligiosity is 9/11 in 2001.

I saw the 2nd plane surgically slash into the 2nd building. So I thought if there were a God, why can't he stop that?

**5. Jacobsen: What was the emotion running through you when you saw the plane hit the tower?**

**Langseth:** It was terrorism, of course. That if there were a God, why can't he stop these kinds of atrocities? Why can't he? So I said to myself, "People who would still believe in God at that time. It's just so unreal to believe at that time really."

Because it was preventable. That was not an act of nature. It's not like a typhoon or earthquake. It's preventable. It is a human invention, a person. I looked at that plane blow up the twin towers. If there were a powerful human being or a God, he could have stopped that, right?

**6. Jacobsen: Why move to New York of all places, the United States in general?**

**Langseth:** I was hired as a registered nurse in Cebu and they were hiring for New York City. That's why I'm here. In fact, it's the best place in the world. I've been to so many places and it's the best place. I retired here two years ago from my job.

**7. Jacobsen: Why did you pursue the post-masters in nursing?**

**Langseth:** I want freedom. I don't want to be dependent on anyone. When you are a nurse practitioner, when you have that post-master degree leading to being a nurse practitioner, you are free to practice.

You do not need a doctor to be on top of you or screaming at you and telling you what to do; you do it. There is what you call an equivalence. We're like doctors in a way. We're independent.

There's freedom to practice wherever you want, whatever specialty you want. And of course the pay is high compared to just a registered nurse.

**8. Jacobsen: Also, it's not a profession that will necessarily go out of demand too.**

**Langseth:** [Laughing] We are so much in demand, believe me. I still get a lot of calls and invites to apply to them. It's always in demand, especially since there is a shortage of doctors in the USA.

**9. Jacobsen: You founded the Philippine Atheism, Agnosticism and Secularism Inc. (PATAS)?**

**Langseth:** Yes, I started it in February, 2011, but it used to be the Philippine Atheist and Agnostic Society. They just changed that recently, the name.

**10. Jacobsen: What was the inspiration for founding it? Why those three labels: Atheism, Agnosticism and Secularism?**

**Langseth:** My inspiration was PATAS. PATAS means equality in Tagalog. That is why the first society I founded was named PATAS. I want people to see us as equals, not secondary citizens because we are atheists. Equality, not only because I stand for equality for all human beings, like LGBTs and people who are poor, they don't have human rights because they are poor.

That's the reason why I named it PATAS. Of course, it's no longer in existence, but it's still PATAS to them as they changed the S to secularism instead of society.

**11. Jacobsen: Also, you founded the Humanist Alliance Philippines International, or HAPI.**

**Langseth:** Yes, because when I left or when I decided to leave PATAS in November of 2013, I found myself waking up at night and I couldn't sleep. I said if I leave and don't do anything, this group will eventually die.

So, I need to do something because I love to be happy and I want to be happy. I'm always happy. I said, "I will name it HAPI because I want it to spread and I want to share my happiness." I'm a member of American Humanist Association, for a long time. I said, "How come nobody even have made a society called HAPI? It starts with H. It stands for Humanism."

Then I crowdsourced: what the name should be? But I already had something in my mind like humanist, like it was supposedly the Humanist Association of the Philippines. The P for Philippines, obviously, and the I for international.

They said alliance is better. This is why it became the Humanist Alliance Philippines International. But if you call it HAPI, it's a positive acronym. And there's a music, it's also happy. I purposively launched it in January, 2014, so that people will say HAPI New Years with HAPI. It's called strategy [Laughing].

**12. Jacobsen: What have been some of the more effective strategies for advancing the humanist movement?**

**Langseth:** Number 1, I was always looking out for someone who can manage children. Or who has children, so we can feed them. That is a come on, so that people will see that we are good: we are good without God. We feed children, because the children, are our future.

So, I found Jamie. She has 200 kids. This was effective. We started feeding them in December of 2014 because it took a long time to find them. We have to interview. In fact, I asked around and she came to us.

It's so funny. She came to us because she saw HAPI members during one of our stints. One of our LGBT stints. She spoke to them and these people at the stint. We were so nice and they gave her food. And that was the reason why she said, "When I go back to Manilla, I am going to look for HAPI."

At the time it was coincidence and blessing you might say. We were looking for somebody like her. Then we found the children, we started in September 2014 and then it was bi-monthly, every 2 months.

That was for me just a come on because I am visionary. My vision is to attract these kids, to feed them, to make them feel we are not evil people and then finally the highlight of this is when we introduce literacy projects.

Like, for them, how to read, how to do some science work, and introduce some technology, I donated a computer to them so that they can look up our website instead of going to church. And we are successful because Jamie, the person in charge of these children, is now agnostic.

Sometimes, she says she's atheist, but she's agnostic, because at this time she still goes back and forth. So, that is the highlight. We are for education. Because when I was a kid, that's what the pastors do. They call us.

I was in high school. After school, they would invite us to go to one house and feed us, give us food and then they talk about religion, of course, there. Their God, and this and that. So, this is the way, maybe, but ours is better because we don't impose.

It's up to them to listen to us or not, but it's genuine feeding of kids because these kids don't get enough nutrition because they're poor. It's the slum area. We went there last June.

The convention was also my ambition because that would be the culmination of my leadership in the Philippines because I was ready to retire. The second highlight is the book, the HAPI Book: *From Superstition to Reason* is now in Amazon, EBAY and Barnes and Noble. But we get very little royalties. It is also available in kindle.

**13. Jacobsen: Is there a plan to expand not only the number and type of books on associated topics but also to increase outreach through publication of ebook platforms such as Kindle?**

**Langseth:** That is the plan. However, again, I have retired, so that task has been passed on to the next leaders. The ebook and, maybe, Amazon, I don't know what their plan is, but I heard something like that. But who knows?

It took me 5 years to produce this book to be honest with you. It started in 2011 when I started with PATAS. I asked people to submit stories so they can have something. My inspiration for that was a book. I forgot the title. It's like '50 Stories of Atheism in the USA.'

I want to copy that, so we started collecting. But it's difficult for Filipinos to submit things, to submit articles. It will take them a month or two. The sense of urgency is not there. I am Westernized already.

I used to be like that, so I understand. That's our culture. I did an article now; they will give it to you after one month. If I need an article, I will give it to you tomorrow. Because that sense of urgency is already in me. I'm Westernized. I've been in the USA since 1990.

**Jacobsen: Also, you're a nurse and live in New York.**

**Langseth:** Yes.

**Jacobsen:** These are important factors about living in the United States.

**Langseth:** I used to work 3 jobs, 3.

**Jacobsen:** I believe it.

**Langseth:** While taking my masters, I got married on top of that. How lucky could I be? It varies a lot.

**14. Jacobsen:** What are some differences in the wedding ceremony that you as a woman take into account as a non-believer - with planning and getting ready?

**Langseth:** When I got married, I was still a closet atheist. So, I went through the motions. If you see in my primary, in my first FB page, I have some wedding pictures there. That's why I added you. That's my husband. I went through all the motions because I was closeted then.

**15. Jacobsen:** And if you were to do it over again in terms of having an irreligious ceremony, how would you do it?

**Langseth:** I would do it on the beach. In fact, we had our renewal of vows in a cruise ship in 2006. I would do something like that. It was the captain of the ship who renewed our vows. I would do something like that

**16. Jacobsen:** What are some of the difficulties as atheists and agnostics and secularists and humanists as a community? What are some of the problems of community that we have generally?

**Langseth:** Generally, they think that us atheists are not good people; we are demons, evil people. We eat children. But to be honest with you, I have not felt that way here in New York City. Maybe, because I am in a different city and my neighbours are all diverse.

My neighbour on the right. She is a non-devout Muslim. She accepted me. I told her, "I don't believe in God." She accepted me as a human being. The one in the front, they're Chinese. Of course, they don't believe in God, the Chinese.

So in my neighbourhood, I live in an upscale neighbourhood in Queens. You cannot see homeless people running around. We're not near a train station. Everyone has a job. Maybe, it's because it's my neighbourhood is why I did not feel any stigma, but in the Philippines it would be different.

In fact, Jamie told me she has to hide her being irreligious now. Of course, she goes to Church only upon pressure from her husband. But with me, I still go to church. It's not pressured from my husband.

I go with him because I love my husband and that is one form of showing him how much I love him and how much I respect him. And the pastor is friendly with me.

**Jacobsen: That always helps.**

**Langseth:** Yes [Laughing], they're nice people in the church. This is a Dutch Reform Church in Queens. It's an older population. They're nice. In fact, I even told them, "I don't believe." They said, "That's okay. You're here with us" [Laughing].

**17. Jacobsen: What about from the outside, while in the Philippines? For the younger generations, based on self-importance that you've been told just in conversations with them - as you're one of the organizations that have them, what have been their difficulties? What have been their trials and tribulations?**

**Langseth:** I have read in one of the forums that some of them when they put N/A or not applicable, none, or no religion in their application in their job application: they will not get hired. That's unfair. This is why I made PATAS because I want equality in everything.

If these people put atheist or no religion, they still should be hired based on their credentials, not because of their religion. And it's so frustrating when I see some job applications they would say religion, "Catholic only." That's just so discriminatory.

**18. Jacobsen: In some universities, they have covenants or faith pledges.**

**Langseth:** That's funny. Also, in the Philippines, they look for a certificate of confirmation, or baptism, and for the parents' certificate of marriage and certificate of how do you call that? Baptism. Would you believe that?

**19. Jacobsen: It's the easiest course to pass. Statistically, the experience of women non-believers will probably be a little different for men non-believers. Is this true and what are some of the differences that you can note?**

**Langseth:** Again, with me, I can't experience much because I'm in New York City, but, because when you're a woman in the Philippines; they think if you are irreligious, then you are a woman of ill-repute. That's how Filipinos think. They equate being religious to having moral values.

I have a nephew in Missouri. I didn't know that he was like me. But when I spoke to him, I asked him questions. He said, "If there were a God, he is useless. Because I prayed a long time for so many things. They did not come" [Laughing].

He's a kid. So, what do you expect? kids like him are open to the fact that instead of praying and asking via going to church. Why not work? So, you get what you want. There's a lot of irreligious people. My husband is also agnostic because he does not believe in life after death.

**20. Jacobsen: So if Christian, a very here-and-now Christian, what are some of the more notable educational and social initiatives that HAPI has done?**

**Langseth:** I have launched something as my retirement project: SHADE. Secular, Humanist, Advocacy, Development, Education, or SHADE, of course, it's HAPI SHADE. With that, we have two cities that are active.

One is in Cebu. I met them. It's called HAPI COMPRE in Cebu (Comprehensive Science High school). Would you believe that? I went to their school and presented something to their principal. One of the administrative personnel in their school as well. They accepted me so warmly.

I was like them. This is in the Philippines. This is in Cebu. HAPI COMPRE has 20 students who would help clean up the street. Their recent project was cleaning the street. Afterwards, 20 kids, they clean up the streets and then to show good will to the neighbourhood they would be fed with simple food, nothing fancy.

And then, of course, this is science school, so you expect these children to be intelligent. These people have chosen also during the general assembly. I was not in the general assembly in Cebu. That was in 2016, so that was last years. They said their questions were out of this world and these kids.

They are our future. They are future scientists. So, I was happy to make a special event for them while I was in Cebu. We had lunch. We had unlimited ice cream and chocolate from the USA. Guess what, I took them to my mini library in the 2nd floor.

They read most of the books there, maybe 95 percent. They're all irreligious books. That was my style. I said, "Who wants to read?" So, they went with me. They went up and the most read book was *From Superstition to Reason*, from HAPI There were 3 books about me.

One is, of course, our own HAPI book. Number 2 is *Godless Grace*. I was presented there as one of the contributing authors to *Humanist Paths* by AHA. I'm a member of AHA. They also got my story, so a lot of these kids. They have read about me.

Now, they realize I am godless. I tell them face-to-face. Their teacher is also a militant atheist and an open atheist. I ask him, "My God, these kids. They're going to read about you!" He said, "That's okay. They know all about me."

So, that was the highlight in Cebu. Then when I was in Bacolod, I cried because they launched a HAPI SHADE event with the school. It's called Jamie Elementary School. So, there are 2. We are not just in the street; we are in academia.

The first one was in the Lyceum Debate Society of the Philippines. So, we are going to academia, but I would prefer elementary and high schools because these children - I don't like to say, but they are – malleable.

I hate to use the word brainwash because we were all brainwashed when we were children. But what I'm saying is, we can always direct them or make them realize that there's an option to religion: it is Humanism.

So, these kids are the HAPI COMPRE. These kids are so bright. When I ask them what Humanism is all about, they know what it is from the word human. Of course, trust in human beings but they are still children, they still say believe in God.

Finally, when I straight face told them, “Humanism, we don't believe in supernatural beings.” They were not shocked. They were not shocked at all. So, I have an inclination to believe that we are Godless, or mostly Godless, but some are maybe apathetic to religion.

**21. Jacobsen: To reflect on the recent, one to two years in the United States, there has been cynical use of political language to demonize non-believers. Do you notice this too?**

**Langseth:** Honestly, I have not felt that. I have not felt being demonized. Although, there was one time only I would say when I was still working. I worked with one of the biggest insurance companies in the world. It's United Healthcare.

During the meetings, I told them that I was an atheist. I don't believe in God. They were not as friendly and as welcoming to me. But I didn't mind it because I'm confident about what I do and I don't depend on them.

For me, it did not affect me whether they are friendly or not. They didn't like me because when I told them I don't believe in God. But who cares? That's my attitude. In fact, with my patients when I talk to them, they say, “What? I pray for this one.”

I said, “We don't have to pray. We have to go to surgery. Sorry, I'm straightforward.” I didn't get any backlash. I never got sued for my atheism. There were no parents, no relatives. No patients have sued me for letting them know this is the best plan, the best option.

Because that's how I always talked in my practice. I'm objective and don't take things personally. If they don't listen to me, that's fine, but they always take my advice. For example, if a patient needs to go to the hospital or needs surgery, they always follow. They always agree to my medical advice.

**22. Jacobsen: What are the demographics of HAPI?**

**Langseth:** It's mostly concentrated in Manila, Metro Manila. Because some islands, some of them are poor. They would need extra effort. They would need to put food on their table rather than do activism in Humanism.

Lately, we only have one or two active people there. In Cebu, we have many active people. In fact, some of them are not active because they always say, “I'm busy. I'm working.” Metro Manila has a lot.

Also, the distance of the commute is better. So, we have more in Metro Manila. This is why we have HAPI Con in Manila. That is one of the many reasons too. Although, it's more expensive, but the attendance is more when we do it in Metro Manila than in Cebu or other places.

**23. Jacobsen: Were some personal heroes or heroines presenting there for you? People who are giving a message about Humanism or speaking on a topic within a humanistic framework that you admire, or the person has gone through something and have come out stronger and you also admire them for that.**

**Langseth:** My hero is Richard Dawkins. In 2011, I went to a convention because of him in Cambridge, in Massachusetts. In my first FB page, you can see my page. A convention with Richard Dawkins. I have so many pictures.

And that was the reason why PATAS was effective because they saw I was serious in promoting PATAS in the Philippines. I went out of my way to go to this convention. Everything is from my pocket anyway. The seed money from PATAS and HAPI is from my pockets.

Anytime I go and attend conventions, it is from my pockets. I have never utilized any donations from them. In fact, I am the biggest donor when I started PATAS. They cannot move without my donation.

When I started HAPI, they cannot move without my donation. Finally, we got a little bit of wind and windfall, so we were able to have better events. Richard Dawkins inspired me. I would have met Christopher Hitchens, but he died before I met him.

I was going to meet him in Melbourne, Australia. I went there to see him. I was going to see him at the global atheist convention but he died before that convention. I have met Dan Barker. He's also one of my inspirations. Of course, Paul Kurtz at Columbia University.

**Jacobsen: Yes.**

**Langseth:** We were chatting before he died, would you believe that? He said Marissa I'm going to see you and we're arranging to see each other. He was going to New York City in Colombia for that convention and I said good, I'm going to see you. And the next day he died.

**24. Jacobsen: So you were one of the last people to talk to him?**

**Langseth:** Yes, we were chatting a lot. He's one of my idols. I've read a lot of his books about Humanism. I kept a few over here. Of course, I gave some away; I have a lot of these books. About neo-Humanism, this is the reason why I am promoting a lot about educating the kids, the young, because of him.

The true humanist, according to him, has compassion for educating the children. That's what I got it from him, Paul Kurtz. But Richard Dawkins made me militant. I read *The God Delusion*.

**25. Jacobsen: Was this around the time that you saw, or not long after seeing the towers hit, the books came out a little bit after? Some argue the movement started at that time with Harris and the Dawkins.**

**Langseth:** I don't remember which came first. I saw 9/11. I was angry. I bought that book, *God is Not Great* by Hitchens. That book changed me. I met Richard Dawkins in Cambridge on March the 11th.

**26. Jacobsen: Do you feel religion is friendly or unfriendly in general towards women and women's rights?**

**Langseth:** If we take the positive parts, like what my husband said, if we take the positive parts of religion or Bible or whatever it is, it's a good thing. However, there are too many things that are not right. It creates a lot of confusion, religion.

It has created a lot of confusion with me. When I was small, I would say if we go to Church for money, to ask God for money, what is it? It's like magic, we think it's like magic. Religion is poison in so many ways.

There are a lot of families who think that they can do evil things to their children because of religion. One example is my mother. My mother could not accept that my sister is a lesbian. So, she arranged for someone to kill my sister.

And that made me so angry with not only her, but with religion. Because she was too brainwashed. She was told by her priests and friends that it is a sin to be a lesbian. This is the reason why I'm empathetic to LGBT rights.

And I'm straight as can be. Because I don't want people to think that they're not human beings. A lot of the religious people in the Philippines dehumanize the LGBTs. You must have heard of a trans being killed and gay people being bashed.

**Jacobsen: Of course.**

**Langseth:** Even in New York, I've read of that too.

**27. Jacobsen: The follow up of that is the denialism of it. It happens. To have a conversation about something, there has to be an acknowledgement of the issue. There are many social mechanisms, sometimes political, to stop the conversation even starting, by stopping any acknowledgment of it: of the killing of trans, of the demonizing of gays, and so on.**

**Langseth:** Because they have not seen it, maybe, and have not felt it. I have felt it. That's my sister. Even now, there's still a lot of struggle with reproductive rights, especially in the Philippines. Unfortunately, it's because they see women as secondary citizens and not equal to them.

**28. Jacobsen: What do you mean by secondary?**

**Langseth:** Secondary citizens meaning there's no equality. The women are not equal to men. In fact, men have higher salaries in the USA than women. And how, you are just a woman. You

stay there, you produce children. You shouldn't have rights like me. And that is still ongoing, especially in the Philippines. Look at our president.

**Jacobsen: Both, the United States and Duterte.**

**Langseth:** Yes, they're like brothers.

**Jacobsen: Two peas in a pod.**

**Langseth:** Yes, two peas in a pod. But Duterte, it's because of their upbringing. Those men should be higher, it's like patriarchal society. Men are better than women. They were brainwashed like that. But it's still a struggle, unfortunately. It is still a struggle.

In fact, the reproductive health bill, it took them 10-15 years to pass that law. Until now, it's not being implemented. It's like pulling teeth.

**29. Jacobsen: What are your fears for the younger generations of women and girls?**

**Langseth:** My fear would be this culture of rape and women are like playthings and women are treated like sexual objects. I hate that with a passion. When I see ads displaying women, for example, coke ads or cigarette ads. They show women instead, what advertisement is that?

**30. Jacobsen: I agree with Noam Chomsky's analysis of the media. The theory in economics is to have a rational consumer making rational choices with their purchases through the money that they're using. However, there are funded marketing campaigns and organizations devoted to making irrational consumers making irrational choices.**

**So, you have these two things coming together, especially with representation and presentation of women's bodies - taking advantage of what seems like a natural phenomenon of attention to women's bodies more often than men's.**

**As with the ads, the ones that come to mind, or the prominent ones, are car ads. What does this beautiful woman have to do with this car? How does this increase its horsepower or gas efficiency, for instance?**

**Langseth:** [Laughing] There you go. As I'm a feminist, as you can see that, though, why do they use women? Because they know sex sells. The flesh of women sells. This is why they objectify women as just things, not human beings. T

This is my fear. It did not happen to me because I'm this way now. I'm going to be 60 in the next few years. But the next generation, if they do not stand up like real rationalists and real feminists, this will go on forever, especially in the Philippines.

The children are brainwashed like "you're just a woman, you're just a girl." It's so unfair.

**31. Jacobsen: Does this denigration source itself from religion, mainly?**

**Langseth:** That is 100% accurate because in religion the woman is supposed to be humble, should not talk, should not go against the will of the husband, should be submissive, should be subservient. And I'm the exact opposite. So, religion is poison.

That poisoned the whole society in the Philippines. Look at when before religion came to my country, there were pagans; they were worshipping the trees and the sun and the moon, at least they're not worshipping any God.

They think that it's nature that is God. That is even better. But when the Spaniards came, it's all different. They became slaves. They became slaves to religion. So that's how we got our religion. One hand the sword, the other hand the Bible. So which one will you choose?

**32. Jacobsen:** There was a good quote from Margaret Atwood, the Canadian author. From the *Robber Bride*, I pulled it up. May I be indulged to read it?

**Langseth:** Sure.

**Jacobsen:** “Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it's all a male fantasy: that you're strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. “

“Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you're unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur.”

**This stuff is deeply rooted; it's hard to extirpate. So, as a women's rights activist myself, it has to be tackled from many, many angles, having humanist organizations is one. But also working, as you're doing nobly, with the younger generation, it is also important, and part of that as Paul Kurtz would advocate for it, too.**

**Langseth:** We have to band together. This is why during the HAPI Con we invited Filipino Freethinker or Red Tani. In one of my pictures, there's a picture I presented our book. He's also a contributing author to that book.

I specifically, personally gave him one. So, he realizes, he is important to me as an ally to our cause. They are doing great. Education and they have meet ups. A little on the higher echelon, but they don't have an outreach movement like ours.

Like we go to the outskirts and teach children, they don't have that. But we are allies. The bigger we are, the stronger, because there is strength in numbers and diversity. We are diversified. That's why it's HAPI, its international.

We are not stationed in the Philippines. I am here. We have people in California. We have people in Belgium, in other places of the world, in Germany, so I saw to it that we have diversity. Because a homogenous society sometimes cannot survive like our Filipino culture.

If they're all Filipinos, they will not know that sense of urgency. Because I was a Filipino before. This is why I have made HAPI International. We have Americans in our group. I am a US citizen already, but I am a Filipino by heart.

We now have other citizens in the group because we can drive them. For example, I need an article for the website. I am retired, but I still run the website. I own the website. I own the domain. I paid for it, for the everything, so I demand two articles a month. That's all.

But sometimes they still fall short. So, I always light their butts [Laughing]. I need an article! This one is a good one, please do this. That's the only time they will move. So, Filipinos by heart, they're like Spaniards. Mañana habit, mañana saying later, I'll do that later.

I'll do that tomorrow, next week, next year. And this is why we are successful. And this is the reason why. Because we have different personalities in our group. I want everything done yesterday.

You might not like me, I'm a dictator sometimes, but look what I've done. They called me dictator before. They called me Hitler. They called me several names because I want everything done in a timely fashion.

For example, I would say I want this merchandise done, the HAPI T-Shirt next week. After one week, I'll be on your butt. I'll be following you up. This is why we are successful. Look at the other groups, they don't have community. I'm not comparing.

However, you can see the difference in a way. In a short time, HAPI is in the Philippines, we have done a lot. I want to showcase to you what we have done. Not me of course, I'm a facilitator. But we have done a lot more than any society, any irreligious society in the Philippines. In fact, the PATAS Con was the first atheist convention in South East Asia. I paid 80% of that.

**Jacobsen: Wow.**

**Langseth:** It's because I want it done. And they say I'm such a dictator.

**33. Jacobsen: And as I know with any organization, there will be many people in the Philippines who would be happy for you to fail.**

**Langseth:** Absolutely! Believe me. That's why I told you I get bashing from both sides. The theist side is much better bashing than the atheist side believe me. The atheists they put me to shame like who the fuck does she think she is?

Something like that. It's bad publicity. However, I see that bad publicity is still publicity, right? This is why I'm successful. Now, I need to retire. I wanted to retire since September, 2016. I planned that because I plan everything in my life, including my retirement.

Because I want to pass the torch to the younger generation because I'm getting old. I'm not as healthy as before. I used to run. Now, I cannot run. I'm getting older. A lot of people are praying for my demise while I'm still alive. Until now, they're still praying for my demise.

**Jacobsen: To no effect, apparently.**

**Langseth:** I'm honest, I'm straightforward. I am a bully too.

**Jacobsen: That points to a substructure of the interactions you've had with the societies you've been in with the social privilege of religion.**

**Langseth:** Yes.

**Jacobsen: People talk nice about the dominant faiths, but when people talk direct, not aggressively, just direct, then it's taken as aggressive.**

**Langseth:** That's me. That's why they think I'm aggressive. I'm a dictator; I'm a bully. I said, "Yes, I have to be. Otherwise, there would be no PATAS. There would be no HAPI. We would still be the same people praising religion and praising Catholicism."

This is the reason I'm like this. If I was not tough, there would be no PATAS. There would be no atheistic society in the Philippines. They don't like it that I had this society, so what? And now I have HAPI, I have two.

However, the first one, again, they lost all their marbles. They even dissolved the website that I put up for them. I gave that to them for free. It was dissolved because there's no money. There's no funding. Because they don't know how to do it, how to raise funds, I am a donor.

I have people who follow me. They like what I do. They give 20 dollars, 50 dollars. It adds up. If you change them to pesos, that's a big amount. These people don't know how to do it. That's why I've been teaching them.

I've been teaching them fundraising. I am so flabbergasted because nobody has learned. Now, we don't have funds right now because we all spend it in the HAPI Con, which is fine. So, that means they need to do more fundraising.

They cannot rely on me now because I'm retired. I have retired both ways. I have retired from my job. I have retired from HAPI. But still, I will donate. In fact, when I went home to the Philippines, I donated a lot. I couldn't count anymore how many donations I have given to HAPI.

**34. Jacobsen: If people want to donate to help HAPI, and the humanist, atheist, agnostic, and secularist communities within the Philippines, how can they do so? How should they do so?**

**Langseth:** It's easy. We have a website. That's why we have the website. We have PayPal: donate via PayPal in the Philippines. That will go to the Philippines automatically. We have a HAPI bank because most of the Filipinos don't have PayPal.

They don't even know what PayPal is. So, they send their donation directly to the bank. We have PayPal for people who are abroad like me, like people in Europe. They go to our website. They read my articles, our articles and donate. We get a little here and there.

We have a few Americans who donate regularly, like 5 dollars, 10 dollars. That's fine. I met some of them. 99% of them are my friends who donate regularly. Some are overseas Filipino workers. We have a big donor from California.

She saw our article. She's a closet atheist. She saw our articles on the website and donated. I befriended her. Now, we're friends. She's been a great donor. He donated a projector, two projector sets. I gave her a book, our HAPI book. Another one is in Indiana.

I take care of our donors. They don't know how to take care of our donors. I take good care of them, even if I'm retired. I send them books, our HAPI book, because they want to read it. Because on the dedication page of our book, I mention their names.

That's how I took care of them because they've been with us since last year. That is one way to appreciate them and recognize their huge help to HAPI. I hope that they will continue to donate even if I have retired.

Of course, they are not happy. I have retired, but I have to or I'm going to be dead soon [Laughing]. I had death threats by the way. So, when I went to the Philippines for the HAPI Con, I hired two security guards. I paid them.

**35. Jacobsen: That's a common story. A common narrative of people having their lives threatened for in essence not believing in the mythology. What are you hoping for your legacy?**

**Langseth:** I'm hoping that my legacy will continue. What I'm doing right now, I am working to improve awareness of humanism, making HAPI a better place to join in. Maybe, better than what I have done, having more education, especially science, promotion of science; and in the future if I'm still alive, I want to build a secular school.

There is one guy in Cebu who also wishes that we build a secular school. This is why he's active with HAPI. He's looking forward to building a secular school with me. He is promoting my legacy, which is promoting to be good without God and to believe in you and me and humanity.

So, that's my legacy. Believe in you, to believe in me. We believe in each other, to believe in each other.

**36. Jacobsen: What's the most tragic story you've heard of coming from someone who came out as a non-believer?**

**Langseth:** I have experienced at least two people coming to me. They were young kids. They were thrown out. One was thrown out from his household. One disappeared, he reappeared and I asked him, "What happened to you?"

He said he was in rehab for a long time because his parents thought that he was crazy. This guy is in Cebu. He is gay. He used to be pantheist. He became atheist because of that. He was in rehab for a while.

Whenever he had the chance, he would send me an email saying, "Miss M, when I come out, I will be like you." Something like that. He is still in school. He is promoting the LGBT in Cebu. He promised me he is going to donate the books to the public library because his father is a politician in Cebu.

He has the teeth to do that. So, he promised he's going to help me. He's been following me since he was a teenager. Now, he's like in his 20s. We knew each other when he was in California, but, again, he was told to come home to the Philippines and do rehab because of what was going on.

In fact, I had a debate with his uncle who is a doctor saying that I am brainwashing his nephew not to believe in God.

**Jacobsen: It was the opposite.**

**Langseth:** I have another one who wants to commit suicide. He is gone. I told you. I have so many experiences with these young kids coming to me and now taken away because they're like me. One of them Gaston.

Now, he is forced to play the piano in a church. One time he sent me an email. He said he wanted to commit suicide because he is gay. He told me he is gay. I said, "That's wonderful. There's nothing wrong with you."

He said, "How come my family, they want to kill me because I'm gay?!" He wants to commit suicide. I said, "No, you should not commit suicide, hide your identity and go with the flow for now until you become self-sufficient and get away."

So, they forced him to go into a school. I forgot which school, some religious school and now he plays the piano for the church. And there's another one, at 12-years-old, I met him in 2011. His mother was even there when they attended the PATAS convention.

I made a good impression because we are good people. Suddenly, he disappeared. He said his mother did not like that he was going out with people like me. I said, "But I met her. She thought I was nice."

He said, "Yes, but then again, there was pressure from her mother's family." There you go. And that the whole neighbourhood told him that he should not become an atheist. So, he went back to school and he was threatened. He was told if you will not stop that foolishness we will send you to school. So, he has no choice.

# Part Two

## Abstract

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N. She discusses: becoming a nurse practitioner, disallowance of freedom of conscience, freedom of belief, freedom of movement for women; religious and secular superstitions in medical decisions; assumptions in medical determinations; the God of the gaps; presumption of a family dynamic in declarations at death; evidence for prayer in the medical literature and in practice; complication in terminology for an atheist and an irreligious individual, and secular superstitions; two streams of atheism; other superstitions brought into the formal medical world; conspiratorial mindsets about the FDA; one of the most egregious examples of complementary medicine inundating proper medicine and causing real damage to people's lives; fasting and health complications; symptoms of renal failure; other concerns with fasting, as a medical professional; and the ubiquitous belief in prayer.**

*Keywords:* HAPI, humanism, Marissa Torres Langseth, PATAS, Philippines.

### **An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N.: Founder, PATAS; Founder, HAPI (Part Two)**

#### **1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, why did you become a nurse practitioner, to clarify?**

**Marissa Torres Langseth:** To clarify, I became a nurse practitioner specializing in adult health because I wanted autonomy in my profession. I wanted to direct people in what to do. I'm confident I can do it and I did it. Of course, I retired two years ago as a nurse practitioner. I have never been sued.

No complaints with my diagnoses. So far, I did it all and the money was good. However, I need to rest.

#### **2. Jacobsen: For women coming from cultures or subcultures, this can be North America too, of course, that disallow freedom of conscience, freedom of belief, freedom of movement as one would like, would you recommend becoming a nurse practitioner for that independence?**

**Langseth:** Absolutely. In fact, I have recommended that all registered nurses become a nurse practitioner because it is different when you are already at that bracket. You function autonomously. You are like a doctor.

Not only that, but there is some form of respect that you don't get from being a registered nurse. I was a registered nurse for a long time. It was different. Our training is different. Our pay scale is much higher and we are regarded by a lot of doctors, especially the general practitioners, as equals.

For example, when my patient goes to the emergency room, I call them and talk to them as an equal, not as a second-class citizen or a nurse. I'm a nurse practitioner and these doctors, some of them, are arrogant. I've met a lot of them.

I put them in their place. Modesty aside, I can say I was a successful nurse practitioner during my time. Really, I love my job. I have helped a lot of families make decisions for themselves because part of our job was to empower families and patients to make decisions for themselves. when you go to the hospital, the doctor will tell you.

No, it should be that they provide options and the patient should choose what they want, not the doctors. Some doctors are stupid. They're arrogant, in fact, they don't want to be corrected and they don't want you to let them know that medicine.

Personally speaking, when I go to the doctor, I tell them, doctor, I'm a nurse practitioner, right away they treat you differently. They treat you like you're an equal.

**3. Jacobsen: In regards to the nursing profession in the medical world, does religious or even secular superstition ever play a part in medical decisions?**

**Langseth:** It's always a part of that because some of these religious people say, "I'll pray for you. I hope you become better. We'll pray for you." They always have that phrase about praying. For me, that's nonsense.

I always say, "How could prayers work? You're in the hospital." And again, I'm objective. I'm straightforward. If it were my patient, I don't tell them, "I'll pray for you." I always say, "I hope the drugs, the medications, the medical interventions, surgical interventions will work for you."

I've never said pray. However, I've heard a lot of doctors, especially the Muslim doctors, they always say, "Okay, we'll pray for you. We'll say good graces to you, to Allah." I still see some of them.

In fact, recently, there's a doctor who told a patient. I was right in front of him. He said, "I'm sorry but your mother was taken by God already." I said, "Doctor can't you say the patient did not make or died because of this?"

**4. Jacobsen: Why assume?**

**Langseth:** Yes, they use God to maybe finish the statement, so that they don't have to explain further. God took your family.

**5. Jacobsen: In philosophy, they have the idea of God of the gaps.**

**Langseth:** Yes.

**Jacobsen:** When you can't explain something in an argument with a premise or formalized argumentation structure, you say, "God did it," in essence.

**Langseth:** Exactly.

**Jacobsen:** I feel as though in that context it's another form of it, but for grief. So, in place of grief, you say, "God took him or her."

**Langseth:** I have no objection to that. In fact, it brings comfort to a lot of people, especially again we cannot explain so many things. Even with how much you like to in medicine and technology, we cannot explain. You're right. God of the gaps. We cannot explain. That's why they mention it.

And again, I don't know. I cannot say God took your mother. I cannot say that.

**6. Jacobsen:** It seems presumptuous because you don't know the full family dynamic, where everyone's at in regards to their faith. In some context, I could see an appropriateness for it, not only as a filler for grief but also based on shared religious doctrine and belief.

**But often, even statistically, you should not expect that or use it as a phrase in that a context.**

**Langseth:** It should not be. It's a little bit unprofessional when they say that. Like, "We'll pray for your mother." We'll pray for your mother? If you were to ask me, you should go to the hospital when you're sick; otherwise, don't go there.

It's the worst place you can be. We have bacteria resistance. Bacteria that will not respond to medications. It's the worst place you could be, really.

**7. Jacobsen:** To clarify even further on the prayer example, what is the evidence for prayer or against it in the medical literature and in practice?

**Langseth:** There was a study. It was in Columbia Presbyterian, about praying. It was specifically for patients who have had open heart surgery if I'm not mistaken. I read the article a long time ago. According to the article or to the study, it did not help.

In fact, it made the patient's conditions worse. Especially when they told the patient that they're praying for them, they became anxious and even got worse instead of getting better. Of course, I have this notion that prayers don't work.

They don't work. That study not only confirmed my understanding. And this is true that praying for somebody and you're being prayed for, it makes them uncomfortable and worse in their condition. Although, there was no other study that I have read.

It was only one. But again, tested and proven, it won't work. For example, patients in the Philippines. They're poor. My classmates until now, would you believe that? Until now, my classmates in high school still go to quack doctors.

We call them abulerios. Doctors and them will recommend tea leaves or some drink from somewhere. Maybe, they will put charcoal in their wound. Of course, the wound becomes infected. So, I get upset and bothered by these classmates of mine.

That's why I always get into fights with them. Because I cannot help it. As a medical practitioner, I say, "Why are you going to people who don't know what medicine is? You will die or it will become worse."

In fact, one of my colleagues. He's one of my friends in the Philippines. He recently died. He posted on Facebook that he is sick. I said, "You are sick. Your blood sugar is high. Your blood level: you're high risk. You need to go to the hospital right now."

So, after a few days, I don't know if he listened to me. He was bed bound for a while. He said he was in an out of a doctor. I said, "You don't need to go to a doctor. You need to go to a hospital because it looks like you have the following."

Of course, I mentioned my diagnosis according to his symptoms. True enough he had undergone some form of surgery and he died. Even if he believed, he was also an atheist. But even if he believed in science, if he has all these complications, medicine will not work.

**8. Jacobsen: There's a complication there in terms of terminology for an atheist or someone who is irreligious. So, someone could be labeled as having no religious affiliation. That doesn't leave them unsusceptible to other forms of irrational belief about the world, especially medicine.**

**Langseth:** Even if some people are atheists, some of them still are stubborn. They don't want to see a doctor. They don't want to go to a hospital right away. It doesn't follow that if they're atheists, they believe in hardcore science or medicine.

Especially in the Philippines, they could be atheist but still because they don't have money and the means, they still go to these quack doctors for their fever. Unfortunately, in the Philippines, it's because of poverty. A lot of atheists, members in HAPI, they're poor.

They cannot afford medicine, so they still go to these quack doctors and boy do they get worse. They get worse, unfortunately.

**9. Jacobsen: Also, there are at least 2 streams of atheism. One is "this is the only life I have so I will do the best I can for others and myself. I'm embedded in a social network, so I best take care of my health."**

**For instance, "If I have children, I want to be there for them, and my grandchildren." Another stream is "this is the only life I have and nothing matters and the world is valueless and," therefore, they fall into some form of nihilism.**

**They don't care. They may not have even expressed this explicit belief. So, they don't go to the doctor. They don't care about their health. They don't care about decent behaviour either. Those are two streams that follow from some atheism.**

**Langseth:** Yes, I agree because I have met both types. I'm sad for the second type of atheism because they think life is only a delusion. They think life is unreal. This is why they don't care about others. They say they're atheist.

They pretend to be nice, but inside them and I've seen it also, but they don't care. Because they think life has no purpose and their values, their ethical values are bad also. And some people like that and I'm sad for them.

**10. Jacobsen: What about some of the other less known superstitious beliefs in medicine? Such as crystals, homeopathy, and so on, are these ever brought into the formal medical world as far from your experience?**

**Langseth:** We call them alternative treatment or complementary treatment to make it sound better. Like, for example, aromatherapy, massage, and touch therapy, I saw a lot of ads saying alternative medicine or complementary medicine.

Meaning you go there, you have this therapy. Yet, you still believe in taking medications. There is nothing wrong with that. But if you believe in that, like touch therapy and massage, then there's a problem. They can go together with a massage. You can relax. It's also relaxation techniques and aromatherapy makes your body relax.

I practice, not aromatherapy, but I like the smell of these types of plants and the massage technique. I love those because it also makes your body feel better afterward, so you can function better. But of course, if you're sick you go to a doctor, you go to the hospital.

Like Chinese medicine, acupuncture they say it works. Maybe to others, but I don't know, I haven't tried it. Homeopathy, maybe, it works to others, but I don't know. Of course, it isn't proven that it doesn't work.

It's even more expensive. But in a hospital or a nursing home where I work, we don't apply them. But we do ask our patients if they have that. For example, the plants and the additional things that they do at home or especially using like ginger plants or other herbs, we ask them.

We try to request them to stop while they are in the hospital. Although, we educate them because education helps a lot. We say that some of these plants are not good, or herbal capsules are not good because they do not undergo FDA experimentation.

They don't go through the FDA, so some could be lethal in a few drops because I've heard a lot of horror stories especially from the Philippines. They try to use, comfrey. It's a form of plant.

It's used and some of them have a lot of liver failure because of that plant. Again, it's difficult when we don't have regulations like FDA regulations. So, we try to educate our patients not to use them.

**11. Jacobsen: What are some responses that come from complementary medical practitioners, if I can call them that, who might have, for instance, a conspiratorial mindset about the FDA?**

**Langseth:** Would you believe it? We have a few nurse practitioners who believe in that. Who are still promoting alternative medicine and, of course, homeopathy; in fact, it's good you mentioned that. I have a close friend, he moved to Asheville, North Carolina.

He's a nurse practitioner, but he's also promoting homeopathy. So, I said, "My goodness, this guy is a wonderful guy, but he believes it works for his patients." So, I could not even talk to him about it, to be honest with you. With due respect to him, he's a nurse practitioner. He's a graduate of Columbia University. He's promoting homeopathy.

**12. Jacobsen: What do you consider one of the most egregious examples of complementary medicine inundating proper medicine and causing real damage to people's lives?**

**Langseth:** It's some form of manipulation in the neck instead of going to a real orthopaedic doctor. They go to these types of doctors. Chiropractor! Some of them they go to the chiropractor and I have heard of some people being paralyzed because of that.

Because some chiropractors, they're not careful. Some are good. I went to one or two, but there were instances when they missed a part and these people become paralyzed and that is dangerous.

So far with the herbal treatments, there are some that work like Warfarin. So, if these people are taking it, warfarin, or aspirin, they can also bleed to death. That is dangerous when you mix that. But I have not heard of a lot of instances like that case anyway.

**13. Jacobsen: What about things such as fasting – which for many of the faithful, of the formal religious – is an important part of their life, it is a part of an ascetic, religious life. You mentioned before that it didn't make sense to you because you preferred to eat.**

**What are some health complications that can possibly show up with fasting?**

**Langseth:** That's ridiculous in a way because fasting, especially fasting for three days, you can have GERD. You can have ulcers. You can have be dehydrated within 72 hours and it can cause kidney failure.

So, fasting is nonsense, stupid and ridiculous. Although, in Saudi Arabia, their fasting is different. They eat when the sun goes down. When the sun comes up, they fast. So, it's different. In the Roman Catholic faith, at the death of their Jesus Christ, they don't eat.

Because they think it's like some form of penitence. They're like showing respect to their Jesus Christ, which is bad. Imagine not eating for 3 days? Again, during my time, I don't observe that. I go to my room and eat and do what I want. T

There's so many health issues after fasting. In the Philippines I cannot understand, this is the 21st century and these people still fast. That is plain stupid. And then they complain when they have ulcers, when they have to go into the hospital for renal failure and dehydration.

**14. Jacobsen: What are some symptoms of renal failure?**

**Langseth:** Fasting can cause renal failure, GERD, and ulcers. One symptom is anuria. “A” means without and “nuria” is to pee. If you cannot urinate for 24 hours, that means you could have some renal failure. Of course, that stems from being dehydrated.

If you don’t drink from 72 hours, your kidney cannot produce urine and there’s no urine so you have anuria. You can be dizzy, weak and will collapse. Dizzy spells, you could collapse. Some people could die from that. And of course, there are so many medications that can cause renal failure too.

**15. Jacobsen: When you look at religious practices in general, what are some other ones that are of concern to you regarding health as a professional?**

**Langseth:** Number 1, when they don’t follow or when they don’t go to the doctor or hospital when they are sick, they think God or prayers will save them. That is dangerous. Number 2, they go to a quack doctor. Of course, they cannot afford.

That’s also one reason why they don’t go to the doctor, because they cannot afford it. There is a lot of poverty in the Philippines, so they don’t go. Of course, they think that Jesus will help them or their God will help them.

Especially if they have incurable forms of diseases like cancer, they think their God will help them. That’s dangerous. Instead of getting different viewpoints from medical practitioners, they go to their relatives and friends and they would say, “Okay, let us all pray for you, so you’ll get better.”

That is dangerous. Would you believe that it’s still being practiced in the Philippines?

**16. Jacobsen: I would because belief in prayer is everywhere. What about these televangelists who appear to be so popular in the United States? These people who go to televangelists are people who throw their diabetes medication up on the stage or their eyeglasses and they say, “Jesus cured my glaucoma and diabetes. Not only that, he took the tumor out of my gut.”**

**Langseth:** These are clowns. They pretend so much; it’s so obvious to me. I could not believe why people would find them useful. I find them nauseating every time I hear that, “Throw away your medication.” Believe me, I’ve seen it.

I’ve seen real people say that. When I was in the Philippines, I saw people from the Church. They go to the pastor and this pastor will pray for them when they’re sick. They’ll think they’re cured. I could not believe why they have spread.

In the USA, we have a lot of educated people. Why do they believe in that? It stems from ignorance about medicine; God of the gaps; people being lazy. They don’t read. They don’t read about new technology and science – being ignorant about so many things.

Then when you talk to them, they think that you are like my God, what are you talking about. But when you show them your credentials, they would believe you. I met a few during my tour in Switzerland. I met a few ignorant teachers.

They're from the Bible Belt and when they talk about that. I tell them, "No, that's not true!" And they look at me like I'm crazy and when I tell them my credentials, "Ah!" So, again, I'm straightforward.

In the 21st century, we should not have these televangelists. Why are they allowed to preach when there is hardcore science to prove that science can cure ailments? Or we have palliative measures if it cannot be cured? I could not understand people throwing money at these types of human beings.

That's why they're getting rich, rich. Jehovah's Witness is one of them. I've heard of a cult in Texas. There's the one that came to my mind are Jehovah's Witness. These are poor people trying to survive in their community.

I feel bad because they come knocking on our door. I would shoo them away. and I tell them, "I'm an atheist. I don't believe in your bullshit." One time they even said, "Good morning, ma'am!" I'm honest, I say, "Good morning." They say, "We would like to bless you."

I say, "Excuse me? You cannot bless me. You're only a human being. I'm an atheist, get out of here" [Laughing].

To be honest with you, since I came out and was vocal about my atheism, a lot of people came out. Some of them said, "You inspired us to come out. Now because of you, we would not be able to come out."

It's because somebody has to stand up; somebody has to break that barrier and be called an atheist. There's nothing wrong with being an atheist. There is nothing wrong. When I created PATAS, I had the bragging rights to make PATAS because I founded that.

But as soon as I came out, I posted the picture of Richard Dawkins. That picture with Richard Dawkins launched PATAS. People were shocked that there's this Philippina on Facebook with Richard Dawkins.

There's nothing wrong with coming out! And this is the reason why being vocal and showing how good you are as a human being and an atheist will promote not only PATAS in the Philippines, but it will show to the world that we are good people. That has a lot of comments.

Of course, I got some bashing also, but that's fine. That's expected [Laughing]. As expected, the jealous people bashed me, but that's fine. What I'm saying is it's because of Facebook that I was able to create something that has not been created in the Philippines.

If not because of Facebook and social media, we will still be in the dark. We won't have these non-religious societies in the Philippines. I'm still stupid with computers, believe me. I'm not at all a computer guru.

But I taught myself to do Facebook and to help out on the website because I need to, as the founder. You're right that religion is eroding. We are the silent majority. Why? When I went to the Philippines for 2 months, the people I spoke to said that they went to church.

It's like for convenience. But as per my conversations with them, they don't believe in a God that will help them. It's no longer like that. Although the older population, the 80-years-olds, the 90-years-olds, they still go to church and ask for help.

But the younger generations, they have done better: Millennials. Millennials are the ones who will save us because they know now there is no supernatural being that will help us.

She will help us promote Humanism. Not atheism, but humanism; humanism is a positive word for atheism. This is why if you go to our website, I mention Humanism is the best gift of atheism. I got like 500 likes when that was posted in the Atheist Republic.

That means that a lot of people will agree with me. Humanism is better utilized than atheism. Atheism is an empty shell. It's a lack of belief. We don't believe, fine. Humanism is the action word. We do something. That's Humanism, like educating people and promoting equal rights.

It's not positive, but it's like you're doing something when you're a humanist. Like how I explained to these youngsters that I met when they had a party in my house, these elementary school or high school students.

I said, "Humanism means human and ism. Human means in you, in me, in humanity." That's all I told them. I didn't tell them there's no God. I didn't say that because some of them are still religious. But they are appreciative.

They believe because when they believe in humans, then they will try to help you. That's all I said. That was positive. We will continue that type of education. In fact, I was chatting recently to that lady in Bacolod, who launched her project about HAPI SHADE (Secular, Humanist, Advocacy, Development, Education).

She is launching that, but hers is different. She's getting the young. The young people, they're not in high school. They are 5- to 7-years-old. I met all of them because I was there when she launched that event.

In fact, I cried because I was so happy with what I saw. This is what you call "catch them while they're young." When you catch them young, you teach them these things. Yes, so catch them young, there are 70 of them.

She also got 70 volunteers, so it's like 1-to-1. Then we feed them. Her style is different. We were chatting, so I have this in my brain. Monday to Thursday, they do remedial classes. Remedial meaning "on top of": these children are poor.

They don't know how to read. They don't know how to do much. They are 5- or 7-years-old. So, they do remedial classes and on Friday feed them. So, it's one form of saying, "Hey, let's go to that class Monday to Thursday and then they give us goodies on Fridays."

She said she's going to do that for years, and do some assessments and evaluate whether it's working after a couple or a few years. So, I told her we need to find a lot of donors. I donated a hundred dollars. That's nothing to me.

We need to sustain that. In order to sustain that, we need an article to immortalize that on our website, so we get more donors who can understand what we're doing. A lot of the donors would like to see children talk science, technology, and philosophy rather than wasting their time praying, going to church.

I have met a lot of humanist types. Real humanism is a denial of any deity or any supernatural being; that's real Humanism to me. I'm a humanist. I don't believe in those bullshit deities or supernatural entities.

Some humanists, I've met a few of them. One, I was chatting with her. She said she still believes in something. I said that's fine. She's a freethinker. She's a humanist because she does this for human beings, to advance humanity. In fact, I have met a person in AHA when I attended that convention in 2011, when I asked if she believed in God.

Humanism does not mean you don't believe in God. That's what he said. So, I learned from him and not only that but from experience that when you're a humanist, then you're not an atheist. Some of them still believe in something.

Not necessarily Jesus or Allah, but they still believe in something. It's because they're not 100% convinced out of fear. Some of them out of respect for their tradition. Like the Filipinos, some of them they think they're Catholic humanists.

Okay, that's fine. The reason being that we have a huge umbrella of humanists in HAPI. Some of them are pure atheists and hardcore militant atheists like me and some of them are quite religious. However, some religious people have become agnostic or freethinkers because of what they've read in our forum.

One example is Jamie. Jamie was religious before and now she doesn't go. She always thinks, at this time, that she's agnostic. For us, that is a success already. We are successful and some of these people coming to us. They were religious at first.

Now, since they've joined us, they realize there's no use for praying. There's no use of going to Church, being a good person. And that is already a success for me. I can brag that I have converted a lot of people. Jamie is one of them.

A few people in Bacolod who were religious are freethinkers. So, in HAPI, we welcome all of them. We welcome anyone, as long as they don't have a bomb in their belt, that's fine. Some humanists, I don't know if they can still be called humanists.

Duterte is killing these drug addicts and drug lords. You are aware of that. Some these humanists in HAPI are giving them the go signal. I don't know. That's selective Humanism.

**Jacobsen: Can you clarify?**

**Langseth:** There are humanists in HAPI who believe that Duterte is doing a good thing and killing those drug addicts is fine. They would give a thumbs up to them. I don't know if you can still call them humanists.

But in euthanasia also, we have a right to die. For example, one of my specialties is palliative nursing, palliative care nursing. For example, if a patient is having pain every day and is bedbound, cannot move anymore and wasting, they have the right to go comfortably or to choose when and where to die.

For example, I have advised a lot of my patients' families that "why would we go through a lot of medical interventions when it's futile?" Why would you go through that? And that's also good humanism because on the positive note, it will stop the misery of the human being.

I hate to say this, but it will save Medicare dollars. But this is not economics, my job. When I was still working, it was to empower my patients, to empower the families. If their loved one is in constant pain, of course, we treat them with maximum treatments with opioids or other things like that, but some of them would rather die than go forward, than be like that forever.

And of course, the families, most of them, believe me, would agree. That is humane. Remember if you see a horse in the street and they are in pain, you want to kill them right? You want to shoot them, so they will be put out of their misery. Why can't we do that with human beings?

In a palliative and comfortable and respectful way, of course, if I was sick and in pain every day, I don't want to live like that: please, kill me. When I had a car accident, I was on leave, on medical leave for 2 months.

I told my husband, "Honey, kill me. I'm in pain every day, bury me in the backyard." I told him that. How much more with those people in the nursing home who are always in pain and bedridden and suffering? There's pain and suffering every day for years and years. How much more?

I could not imagine how they feel. People would rather die than be in pain. I read a survey. People would rather die than be in pain. This is why we have high incidents of drug addiction in America. Nobody wants to be in pain!

Yes, nobody wants to be in pain. Look at these doctors, I've overheard a lot of doctors mention, "What? We're like drug pushers over here. We treat patients with opioids right away and they come back and they're drug addicts."

Of course! Duh. When my husband had a fracture, I was keen on his medication because I don't want him to be addicted. The doctors would say, "How come you don't like this medication?" He said, "My wife is a nurse practitioner. I would rather listen to her than you."

Because they don't care, they prescribe Tylenol number 3, Vicodin, Percocet, or opioids generally. The whole time the patient is in the hospital. When they come out, they want to refill their opioids and then after a month or two they're drug addicts. I'm not surprised. I wrote an article about that.

Because nobody wants to be in pain. I'm in pain right now, I have some tendonitis from my vacation because I was carrying my bags, heavy bags. I have tendonitis in my right shoulder. It's little pain, but I cannot take it. How much more with people who are in severe pain?

I have seen my patients who do otherwise. Like they'd rather be in pain because that's what Jesus Christ wants them to have and be pain free when they die. So, when they're alive, I had a patient. My God, I could not forget her. She's a Jehovah's witness.

She was in severe pain. She had gangrene in both feet. That means, she's dying. I told her I was going to give her a patch to alleviate her pain. She said, "No, I want to be in pain because I want to experience what Jesus did during his life."

I said, "My lord, I cannot take this. What I did? I called her family. Her niece was open-minded." I said, "We need to treat your grandmother. She is in pain." So, she came and she saw the pain and suffering. I said, "Yes, okay, do whatever is good for her. She cannot decide anyway."

She's not only demented. She was in pain. Her religious belief is getting into me and into my practice. I ordered this. After a few days, she died comfortably, having a religious belief will make you suffer.

It will make people suffer. They believe that is part of life; that is part of the penance or their route to go to heaven, to be in pain. That's bullshit. I'm talking about religious attendance. My husband and I, we still go to Church.

The last time we were there. There were like 12 people. My husband told me when I was in the Philippines that he went to Church. There were only 9 of them and even the pastor was not there [Laughing]. It's sad. I said, "My goodness, what's wrong with this?" It's so sad.

Yes, we have a few of them. But you're right, it's changing. The landscape of religiosity is changing and that is a good thing for us.

# Part Three

## Abstract

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N. She discusses: controversial topics for non-belief in the Philippines and North America; jurisprudence and human nature; religious demographics of prisons; no life after death; justifications for the theistic and atheistic side; “cheap grace”; most violent criminals being men and human rights; and having the curtain pulled, so the afterlife can begin for believers; Marilyn vos Savant of *Parade Magazine* on Pascal’s Wager and religion; Richard Dawkins and the labelling of children; and the emphasis on women’s reproduction.**

*Keywords:* HAPI, humanism, Marissa Torres Langseth, PATAS, Philippines.

### **An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N.: Founder, PATAS; Founder, HAPI (Part Three)**

#### **1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, what are the most controversial topics with regards to non-belief in the Philippines and North America?**

**Marissa Torres Langseth:** I would say it’s about the death penalty. For me, it is inhumane. Everyone has the right to prove that they’re innocent. With the death penalty, if these people are killed, that means that’s it. That’s the cessation of life and that is contrary to the quality of life.

With the death penalty, if these people are found guilty, I hope they’re guilty, then they’re killed. So, there is no more chance for rehabilitation. However, 30 to 50 percent of these criminals are recidivists.

That’s the reason why there’s the death penalty. To be honest with you, sometimes I go, I lean on making them stop. But how do we make them stop? For example, that case in Connecticut. It was in 1997.

I was on vacation in Bermuda when there were two thugs. They escaped from prison. They robbed a house. I could not forget because they got into my skin; these people burned the other people alive.

Heinous. How could somebody do that? And of course they were captured, these two criminals. Of course, they were guilty before and now. But how can we do something to make these people stop? In Norway or places in Scandinavia, in some of the places, the prisons are being closed because they don’t have criminals.

So why is it in North America we have too many criminals and in the Philippines, the prisons are outpouring with criminals, with prisoners? That is difficult, to be honest with you. It blows my mind how to stop them.

And now with Duterte, he is trying to kill everyone. My problem with that is with the people who are not guilty. Even if they are guilty, they still have this right. However, in the course of life, it will become exponential because what about the people around them? It's not going to stop.

Because the family members will say, "Okay let's avenge the life, avenge the killing of my brother and so on and so forth. That's why it has got to stop, but I don't think I have the answer to that. Although, I don't like the death penalty.

If these people are like monsters like the case in Connecticut, how do we make them stop? Isolate them? Kill them? Even with the death penalty, it's not even effective. There are still a lot of criminals.

## **2. Jacobsen: It's a complex question about jurisprudence and human nature.**

**Langseth:** Exactly, and human rights, but is it their right to take somebody's life away?

**Jacobsen:** In some ways, if you violate a law – I'm not saying this is the way it is, but in some way, I can see the general principle apply where if you violate a law – or the right of another human being, then you revoke the equivalent right for yourself.

**So if you steal, then you revoke your right to not have your stuff stolen. Recompense for the theft, for instance. Or if you kill, you lose your rights as a citizen, as a legal person, in a lot of ways when you're in prison.**

**But then there are other questions that arise from the pipeline about: how much of this is hereditary? The openness and willingness to do harm to others or to only gain for oneself. So murder in the former example, theft in the latter.**

**Does this come from someone's genetic endowment or more from the environment? And if it's more the environment, then it raises questions about society. Or if it means more from hereditary means, then that raises questions about: how much then can we influence someone's internal moral compass?**

**And what can we do then to make a society structured in such a way to bring about a statistically more peaceful situation? But then when it comes to jurisprudence, we come from a tacitly bureaucratic country, America in your case and Canada in mine.**

**And in each, they have the idea of vengeance or it's a need to punish those that do wrong in a severe way, it shows in America, especially, and it shows in the Philippines. In the Scandinavian countries, which are much less religious, they don't show that as much.**

**Langseth:** Right. But you can kill in self-defense, for example, I will only kill if that guy is trying to kill me or if he's trying to rape me; something like that. But otherwise, that's beyond me. It's difficult.

I'm not a lawyer, but that most of these people can be rehabilitated. However, on the other hand, when we rehabilitate them, the percentage is low and this is the reason why we have the death penalty, but still, it's not stopping criminality.

**3. Jacobsen: If you look at the statistics of criminals, the demographics of prisons, there might be confounding factors with regards to religious services reaching out to prisoners, but most people in prisons are religious.**

**Langseth:** Yes, exactly, I was about to say that. Because, maybe, they believe that even if they kill, someone up there will say, "That's okay. You can pray 20, and so on. Then you'll be cleansed." That's the reason why it's easy. Even in the Bible Belt, most of them have guns.

Because they think they have the right to kill because their God is behind them.

**4. Jacobsen: There's the stereotype of the Southerner going into the local gas station with a gun afraid that Obama will come personally and take it away from them.**

**Langseth:** [Laughing] Yes, why is it that the most religious are the ones who will kill you right away? They also believe, most of them or 90% of them believe, in life after death. Even if they get killed with their guns, anyway, there's life after death.

I'll be better there. Or if they kill, they would say, "God will cleanse us anyway." So, it's not believed. Whereas an atheist would think that there's no life after death, so I don't want to kill and I don't want to be killed.

**5. Jacobsen: There are two justifications there. On the theistic side, there's the idea of impulsivity being excused by the belief in a hereafter. On the atheistic side, there's the excuse that life has no inherent meaning, therefore, human beings have no value.**

**Therefore, any violence or harm to them, except to oneself, has no meaning, so it doesn't matter. Both of those cases lead to terrible harm. But I've never heard an adequate explanation as to why so many prisoners are overwhelmingly religious.**

**Langseth:** Yes, they are. In Mexico, look at the killers, they have tattoos with Jesus Christ on their backs or crosses on their bodies – and they're killers.

**6. Jacobsen: It's "cheap grace" in their terms: "I am forgiven, no matter what."**

**Langseth:** They believe they will be forgiven. That's the issue there. This is why there's double morality in the Philippines. They think that they can do anything, do something and they'll be forgiven.

Look at these priests who are pedophiles, we have so many of them. I have heard a lot of horror stories. And this is because we'll be forgiven and pray, and give Hail Marys, and they'll be cleansed to start over again.

**7. Jacobsen: I mean everyone, whether or not they know the numbers, intuitively understand that most of the violent criminals, sexual or physical or so on, are men. But I don't see a common knowledge or wisdom that most of the criminals who are locked up are religious.**

**I don't know why there is that disjunction. I feel as if religion gets an easy off there.**

**Langseth:** Yes, that's what they believe in; that's it, yes.

**Jacobsen: And in terms of human rights, to the main theme of most controversial topics in the Philippines and North America, we were talking in the past about how the main issue in the United States appears to be, almost, a tacit despising of human rights because they in some way provide a buffer against religious privilege.**

**Langseth:** Yes, I worked in Saudi Arabia as a registered nurse. For them, life is nothing. It's like this. There was one nurse who gave a patient the wrong medication. Of course, the patient died and the family said, "Alhamdulillah." Life is nothing for them.

It's a culture of death. They are looking forward to their death, in Saudi Arabia, the religious Muslims. I've seen it. This is why there are no lawsuits in Saudi Arabia for negligence for nurses or doctors who give the wrong diagnosis.

There is no such thing as that, like nothing. Only in America or of course in Europe, maybe. But in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, if you kill the patient, it's Alhamdulillah. I've seen it all. I was in the ICU and this nurse forgot this patient's oxygen.

Of course, the patient died. The family came and said, "Alhamdulillah." Thanks be to God. That's the answer. If that happened in the USA, there will be litigation; the nurse will be sued as well as the hospital.

**Jacobsen: Yes, it's a litigious culture.**

**Langseth:** This is why it's so different. In Roman Catholicism, it's so different. They have this self-entitlement. They want everything done.

They want everything done even if the patient is already dying. You have to put in all the tubes in the world to keep them alive even if the patient is in pain and suffering. That's fine, as long as they're alive.

They prolong their agony. This is why I say the most religious suffer the most. But that is only in Christianity. In Islam, when they die, it's so different. But they both believe in life after death.

This is why we have some of the terrorists they say they go to heaven and get 72 virgins. They are looking forward to that.

**Jacobsen: The women less so.**

**Langseth:** Yes, yes. One of my friends infiltrated a Mosque. What's in the Mosque, they are lectured all about how you have to die because you go to heaven and have sex with 72 virgins. It's brainwashing. And that's why they look forward to their death.

**8. Jacobsen:** That goes to a theme. In one lens, these amount to mythologies. These mythologies are death-oriented. Anything death oriented will incorporate pain and suffering, and not in a Buddhist sense mind you.

**This is a way to become more holy. Your body is a sacrament through suffering. So, in a lot of ways, these are almost ways of life and ethics of death worship in some ways.**

**Langseth:** Yup.

**Jacobsen:** Because this is *King Lear* or *The Taming of the Shrew*, it's a play, before the curtain is pulled and you have action and the real world starts: the afterlife.

**Langseth:** Right. And until now, I could not understand. I cannot fathom sometimes why people can believe. Even if you explain to them that when the body dies, everything dies and there's no soul.

Even if there is a soul, the soul cannot touch you, cannot smell, cannot see. It's nothing; it's like air. They answer sometimes when I lecture to them about this. That it is fine; it's better to believe than not to believe.

**Jacobsen:** That translates into "I've stopped thinking."

**Langseth:** Yes. But then Pascal's Wager, they are too afraid to not believe. It's better to believe than not to believe, to them.

**9. Jacobsen:** Marilyn vos Savant writes for *Parade Magazine*, does a column called *Ask Marilyn*. Some questioner asked her about Pascal's Wager. She made the point that basically said one then, within context, should automatically devote themselves to the religion that provides the greatest promise in the hereafter. That's the silly implication.

**Langseth:** Right, it's a waste of time. It's a waste of time praying and going to these churches. It's a waste of time.

**Jacobsen:** It can be a waste of life.

**Langseth:** Yes, waste of life, you're right because time is life. You cannot get it back.

**10. Jacobsen:** Unless, of course, it's an adult who has made the decision to partake in this and get meaning out of it. At the same time, most of it is implicated in kids from a young age.

**Richard Dawkins pointed it out that you do not have Catholic children; you have children of Catholic parents. But the assumption is such that you will have the label of Catholic children or Sunni children or Shia children, and so on.**

**And it gives another familial privilege, in this case, to the religious, to foist their beliefs on children prior to the development of critical faculties. Everyone can pay lip service to the idea that “I will provide a broad-based education to my child about all the religions of the world.”**

**However, this doesn’t necessarily translate into an objective presentation of world religions as sets of ideas and beliefs or a survey of those beliefs rather than “we have the true, true religion in our family.”**

**Langseth:** This is why in the Philippines is 80% Roman Catholic, because we’re all Catholics. A lot of those Filipinos no. They learn that having religion means you can get money from that.

Catholicism is the number 1 religion. The first person who fought with the Spaniards was Lapu Lapu. He killed Magellan. Why is it that still people believe in Christianity? Why are they still going into the cult?

It’s because they are good at threatening people. Indoctrination of fear.

**Jacobsen: It goes to your point earlier about how in many ways: religions are political systems.**

**Langseth:** Yes, exactly. If the family is Catholic, the children are automatically Catholic.

**11. Jacobsen: Yes, there’s an argument to be made too. Because if you look at statistics of birth rates, if that is the norm, the global historical norm, a child of X religion parents will be labeled X religion, then the religions with the highest birth rates will have the most adherence in the next generation, statistically.**

**And so it’s quite deliberate as to the reason for the strong emphasis on bigger families, on control of women’s reproduction and the control of women. If you are a leader and you control the men who control the women, especially women’s reproduction, then you control legacy.**

**Langseth:** Of course, yes, absolutely, that’s happening in the Philippines. That’s why they don’t like this RH bill. No matter how much the people want it, the priests are against that because it will kill the legacy.

And with Islam, they have 4 wives so they can procreate. 50 children at a time, at one time, with 4 women. It’s marketing and promotion. They are good at that.

# Part Four

## Abstract

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N. She discusses: Societies and women's dress; fear for women Millennials; the Humanist party; policies and platform recommendations of the party; normalization of humanism and ordinary humanists; demonization of the non-believer population in America in general; humanism and politics; non-religious invocations; emotionally potent lies; risk of social suicide; and social ostracism.**

*Keywords:* HAPI, humanism, Marissa Torres Langseth, PATAS, Philippines.

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N.: Founder, PATAS; Founder, HAPI (Part Four)**

**1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If you look at the lists of restrictions on women, it's quite obvious. I mean just read the text by implication if you're being mild about it. 'Thy ox, thy ass, thy wife, thy manservant, thy maidservant' and so on, right there, you have a wife as property in one of the Ten Commandments.**

**But then also in terms of what is considered appropriate dress for women, as if society at large has a say in how a woman should dress, right?**

**Langseth:** Yes, I couldn't understand that before. Why are the men allowed to control women's bodies? It's because of religion. A woman is supposed to be subservient and submissive to their husbands. That's what religion taught them.

**2. Jacobsen: And my fear, even within my own generation, the Millennial, the women coming out of these traditions with very comprehensive worldviews in practice, in theory, in perspective.**

**Even if coming now to the label of secular or free thinker and so on, will harbour the same self-doubt and idea, that they are to be of service to the men in their lives, especially in intimate settings such as probably one of the most important decisions a person can make in their life, their partner, their marriage partner or spouse.**

**This stuff takes a long time to decode and unwind.**

**Langseth:** Yes, it will take centuries, maybe. But it's happening now. I don't think I can see it in my lifetime, but if you promote humanism with me and all of us promoting this, that we are all equal.

There are human rights and all of these humanistic values and ethical values, the next generation, maybe not yours, will be a lot better. But we'll never know.

### **3. Jacobsen: Are there any topics that you would like to explore?**

**Langseth:** I'm excited about this Humanist party. If we have humanist constituents in the Philippines, we will be known better. They will see us better even if we lose the first few years. This is where my excitement is coming from right now, to be honest with you.

### **4. Jacobsen: What are some of its policies and platform recommendations?**

**Langseth:** It's all about human rights, LGBT rights, and women's rights. Of course, there is democracy in the Philippines, but now it's becoming a dictatorship by Duterte. We're more about the promotion of reason and critical thinking like we are educating our children.

If each person in the Philippines is a critical thinker and will not even mention religion, we are better off. And of course, the Churches will close down because nobody will go there anymore. Everybody will go to the library.

This is why we have libraries. I have a library in my house in the Philippines for HAPI. But I'm excited that if this will push through, there will be more awareness in the Philippines of our humanist constituencies.

Not even popularity, it will open a lot of minds and this platform will become bigger. It will become bigger than what we have now and they will no longer be afraid to come out. This is what I'm hoping for.

### **5. Jacobsen: So, is it a process of normalization of humanism and ordinary humanists?**

**Langseth:** Yes, something like that. But I hope this will push through; we have a plan already. Because as long as we are always under the radar, if we are hiding all the time, like our HAPI Con, it was small.

Few people knew about it. Even if they knew, they were afraid to attend because they think it's a sin to be a humanist or to get out of their religion. And if we have a party and it's open, out in the open, people will become bolder to come out. And I am sure one of these days, this will happen. The first few Years we will lose but that's fine. We will win eventually.

### **6. Jacobsen: In America, there is a lot of demonization of the humanist population, the non-believer population in general.**

**Langseth:** Yes, in general, in fact, I have met a candidate somewhere in the South. He became my friend. He is running not as a congressman, but in the municipal elections or something like this.

He said he is an atheist, but he cannot tell them he is an atheist. He said he told everyone he's a humanist. And when you ask what is a humanist, it's like a vague explanation.

**7. Jacobsen:** Yes, it's like when you're talking to the kids. It's like the "human-" and the "-ism," thinking, "I believe in people." Another thinking, "Oh, I believe in people too." That's exactly what it is.

**Langseth:** Yes, something like that [Laughing]. Because he's afraid that he will not win if he comes out as an atheist. This is pervasive.

**Jacobsen:** Yes, it's the same in America. Statistically, there has to be a lot of atheists in political office.

**Langseth:** I'm sure.

**8. Jacobsen:** I've been in contact with one politician. It's a woman. She's an atheist. And she did an invocation. It was an irreligious statement of 'let's all get together and be together.'

A latter middle age, white, overweight Southern accented man got up and made the statement that the policy says that this is going to be an opening prayer to a *God* – emphasis on God – and he then began his opening prayer to overturn the invocation by stating that 'God, we ask your forgiveness for our pride, et cetera.'

It was passive aggressive. I thought he was a prima donna about it. In America, the main activists for women's reproductive rights in light of the Trump administration like, for instance, the Global Gag order, have been women.

Because it more directly impacts them. Women seem more acutely aware of it. My hope is that at least in the non-belief sector of America that people won't have to be so closeted. That it will be a dual-gender phenomenon, I hope.

**Langseth:** Yes, it's like cats. Herding cats is a daunting task. I said that to myself a long time ago in 2011 when I made PATAS. But if we have loud voices, it will become louder even if we are cats.

That's what I'm saying. If you're standing for what is good, even if we are cats and we become more vocal, they can hear us. Maybe, they will hear us. I have some successes because I am vocal.

In 2010, we had a high school reunion in Cebu, Philippines. I told them, "I am an atheist. I do not like prayers. I will not tolerate any prayers in front of me." True enough, I got my wish. There were no prayers. Only flag raising and singing of our national anthem.

There were no prayers. Ask me why.

**Jacobsen:** Why?

**Langseth:** Because I paid, mostly [Laughing]. Which means that you are powerful when having knowledge plus money. If you can afford it, right? Look at that, I spent 2,000 dollars on that reunion in 2010. My husband was even with me.

There were no prayers because I told them there are no prayers, I don't believe in prayers. And that's a high school reunion. 80% of my classmates; they're still religious. But they respected my wishes because I'm the one paying for the thing.

So, that you are powerful when you have the means. I would not be able to do this thing if I didn't have the means. Look at PATAS, when it was launched, the launch was in an open space. We call it Lunetta Park, which is in Manila.

What they did was they went to Lunetta Park with a banner saying, "Philippines Atheist and Agnostic Society," PATAS in short. We had books because I sent them a lot of books. Richard Dawkins books and Hitchens' books and Sagan's books, a lot of lovely books that are not religious.

Because you cannot find these books in Manila, in the Philippines. I told them I could not sleep when they launched when they had that launching in Lunetta Park because I was afraid they would get killed.

**Jacobsen: That is a legitimate fear for many people, so many non-believers.**

**Langseth:** Would you believe nobody got killed?

**Jacobsen: I will happily believe that.**

**Langseth:** I sent them a lot of funding for their dinner and for their nice things so they'll stay there for a while. They said, of course, a lot of people asked them what is atheism? What is that? What is that all about? Because a lot of people in the Philippines are ignorant about atheism and about Humanism.

**9. Jacobsen: And why is that? Because some pastors, preachers, and priests are telling emotionally potent lies about the character and inherent nature of people who do not believe in their doctrines.**

**Langseth:** Right, these charlatans are everywhere.

**Jacobsen: Yes, a man in a dress getting mad at transgenders or trans people.**

**Langseth:** Yes, and in fact, I always get into debates online because I am vocal. We had one of the earlier debate forums. It was "Is there a God or not?" And I was one of the admins.

This was before I made PATAS. My goodness, Filipinos were killing me online. "You're a devil woman," "you're a bride of Satan," "you're a whore," and so on. It was based on "Why are you doing this?" And some of them are my friends.

At least 1/3rd of my friends unfriended me.

**10. Jacobsen: That's the thing. It's social suicide to reject the dominant culture, the dominant mythology in a lot of cases.**

**Langseth:** Right, and of course, when someone in our forum says, "I lost my friends because of this. I say that's not new to me. I lost about 1/3rd of them. And some of them are close to me. Some of them are in New York City."

**Jacobsen: Do you ever run into them?**

**Langseth:** Yes, they blocked me.

**11. Jacobsen: It's not only social ostracism from a secular point of view, but it's probably from their point of view preventing Satan from entering their lives? Not necessarily you, but the influence of the dark one?**

**Langseth:** [Laughing] My God, I'll tell you something. I recently reconnected with a co-worker in the Philippines. His name is Bello. You reminded me of this. When I reconnected with him, he read about me in my information.

So, he read that I made this and did that. He said, "You are the anti-Christ." Because according to his religion, there is an anti-Christ coming from America. And he said that must be me!

**Jacobsen: Of course, not only are you *the* anti-Christ, but the anti-Christ coming from America; of course, Jesus Christ is coming from toast.**

**Langseth:** [Laughing] coming from toast! And this man, I knew him personally because we used to work together! It's funny; he believed I am the anti-Christ from America. He even blocked me.

He sent me a threatening note before he blocked me. Before that, we were debating too. He was debating me. Of course, he cannot reconvert me. Because he can't reconvert me, he blocked me. He mentioned that his church knows about me now.

They're following me already [Laughing]. I was laughing.

**Jacobsen: I'm hearing the *Jaws* terror music when they're following you.**

**Langseth:** Yes! This man, I knew him from before. It's so ironic because this man is not even clean as a person. He loves women. He's married, but he likes women. He flirts with a lot of women. Now, he's telling me that I am the bad one. That I am the evil one.

# Part Five

## Abstract

**An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N. She discusses: Arizona chapter of the Temple of Satan in the United States; differences of belief and punishment; reversing the reality as a thought experiment; irreligion and politics; the next steps for the humanist community and the Humanist party in the Philippines; being misunderstood; Atheist Republic consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; offending religious feelings; tacit theocracy and democracy; politics and gender/sex in the Philippines; Canadian beliefs in the supernatural; women dying without reproductive health rights implemented; birth rate; women as less than equal; expected challenges of an early politics party; dogma and catma; religion with men in power; compounded chauvinism of the religion; some women being used and not seeing it; the priest; the need to be tough as an irreligious leader; the use of humour; and the return to unquestioned authority.**

*Keywords:* HAPI, humanism, Marissa Torres Langseth, PATAS, Philippines.

### **An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., M.S.N.: Founder, PATAS; Founder, HAPI (Part Five)**

**1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I was talking to the Arizona chapter of the Temple of Satan in the United States.**

**Marissa Torres Langseth:** Really? There's a temple, okay.

**Jacobsen:** They have a set of beliefs. They follow them. I take them seriously. So, Michelle Short is the chapter leader and Stuart De Haan, or Stu, is the spokesperson. When I talked to them, they made an important and clear point to me about American culture.

**In particular, the American Christian community such as the Evangelical community in relation to the larger culture. One of the things was when the Evangelical Christians don't get 100% of their way 100% of the time, then they play the victim.**

**But they not only play the victim, they are the ones generally bullying others. So, they become the bully-victim. So, it's a certain pathology. I agree with the observation. I see that you say you offended me and, therefore, I'm going to somehow demonize you or throw epithets at you.**

**The extreme example (from Islamists) "you hurt my feelings, so I'm going to shoot up the cartoonists." You are now the perpetrators of open violence and the victims are the ones that are blamed.**

**But a larger phenomenon that I can generalize is that Christians in America get so much of their way so much of the time, down to the Pledge of Allegiance, that when they don't get their way in even a single state or municipality within a state, they react.**

**Sometimes violently, other times judicially, or sometimes socially by bullying whether in person or online, as you've experienced both apparently.**

**Langseth:** Yes, it's funny. I'm laughing at these people really. I don't get affected anymore. I used to be emotional and could not even sleep. But now, I'm laughing at them. In fact, David Silverman approached me.

A few years ago when I was in PATAS, I joined the Blackout Secular Rally. It's like a colored rally. I was there. We had a table too. He approached me and asked if I could speak to the AA group at the convention.

I said, "I'll get killed if I do that" [Laughing]. I made a lot of enemies already. He said, "If nobody is hating you, you're not doing the right thing." That's what he said.

**2. Jacobsen: That's always a good response. If someone is getting mad at you for critiquing or doing something different, just say, "Look, I didn't kill him. There's no reason to crucify me for having a different set of beliefs."**

**Langseth:** Right, exactly, he is right because: why are these people trying to kill me? Why are they mad at me? I didn't do anything wrong. I'm on social media promoting my society and coming out as an atheist.

But hey, I have a good marriage. I help a lot. Why are they angry with me? He said, because you're doing the right thing, you're doing right.

**3. Jacobsen: Even take the reverse case: imagine if a humanist was offended, and many have a right to be, and they threaten violence, how would the authorities react?**

**They would probably be jailed. In some cultures, even many cultures, if the humanist was killed for threatening violence by the public as a citizen-based retribution for threatening violence, I suspect the authorities would be in favor of it.**

**Those thought experiments of reversing the examples are likely instructive as to the religious privilege that most mainline religions have in the cultures that they happen to inhabit or have grafted themselves onto.**

**Langseth:** This is why when I was in the Philippines I told you that I had 2 security guards. I asked the Filipino humanists, "Aren't you guys afraid if they find out we have this book that they will come after you?"

I said, "I will be going to the USA, so I'm not afraid. But what about you guys?" They said we're not afraid.

**Jacobsen: Why not?**

**Langseth:** They're not afraid. We use real names. Nobody uses a dummy account. We removed the dummy accounts in that book. Whatever you see in that book, they're all real human beings. And they said they're not afraid. I said, "I'm afraid for you." I told them.

**Jacobsen: I'm afraid for you [Laughing].**

**Langseth:** That's what I told them! They said, "You shouldn't be afraid for us. We are going to be okay." I'm glad because of the other atheists in Malaysia and Indonesia. They're being persecuted. They're going to get killed.

They're being beheaded. They're being thrown in prison. I'm glad in the Philippines that it's not coming to that yet. I don't know in the future. We are under the radar right now.

**4. Jacobsen: When it comes to the politics in the Philippines, the outside image is that there's a lot of chaos going on with President Duterte, who was voted in, but it might leave some humanists concerned, irreligious people in general, who are in the country or those who have loved ones in the country but who are not themselves in the country.**

**What has been your experience while there even though you are based in New York?**

**Langseth:** While I was there, I was a little bit afraid when I went home. A little bit. Because I'm a Filipino, they'll still admit me, but I was hoping that nobody will take me; the people there, because I am an activist.

But everything was so smooth. I had my own agenda. I had my own itinerary for how, where, and what I was going to do in the country. Everything went perfectly. It was so peaceful even in those towns. It was peaceful.

Of course, we did not go to Manila now. It may not be that way now with the chaos. So, this is my hunch. People from the US or from another country think that it is dangerous because of wrong info.

One example is my husband woke me up at 2 o'clock in the morning. Of course, there's a 12-hour difference. He woke me up at 2 o'clock in the morning telling me not to go to Manila because ISIS was there.

So, that's what he said because that's what they heard from CNN. He's worried because I'm in the Philippines. I'm going to Manila that day. So, out of curiosity, I called some people in Manila.

They said, "No, that's wrong information." There was a guy who lost lots of money in the resort world. Of course, the news was wrong. It was wrong. That was why people from the USA were mad at CNN for a while.

In fact, my husband was so mad with that also because he alerted me. He called me, and everybody at home, at 2 o'clock in the morning. That's what I'm saying. When information is sent wrong, the people become angry. They become afraid.

That is the reason why. They were too afraid. To be honest with you, my husband didn't go with me because he said they could kidnap me, his wife. They stole his wife. That's why he didn't come with me to the Philippines.

So, politically, my neighbourhood in the Philippines is quite peaceful. I haven't experienced anything bad except for delays in flights, which is normal anywhere. The only thing that I've experienced is that the people don't want to talk about politics.

The taxi drivers, they're like, "Let's not talk about Duterte," because there's some fear over there. I sense some fear. One of our drivers, we always hire drivers in a van to tour us around. He was the chief of the Filipino police in the area.

He didn't want to talk about Duterte. So, they were fearful to talk about him. With Marcos, nobody can talk about Marcos. Of course, everything is positive if you need to talk about the previous president.

That they have done good things and some new things, such as the windmills. So, there is some form of fear there. That people don't want to talk about the leaders in the country.

**5. Jacobsen: Looking forward to the humanist community within the Philippines, there has been a discussion between us about a humanist party, a political platform from which to make humanism public and more widely accepted within the Philippines.**

**How is this next step going to play out in your mind?**

**Langseth:** As far as I have gathered, we have to apply. We had discussed it a long time ago, maybe 2 or 3 years ago. We have to apply, permission of action. Then of course, when you register groups such as HAPI, FF, and LGBT groups, we lump ourselves together.

There's always strength in numbers and diversity. So, if all of us can collaborate, cooperate with each other, that is feasible. People are waking up. They're seeing that there are alternatives to religion.

These political parties are the best way to come out as a humanist, having parties. It's GLAD. It's a political party for the LGBT. It's one of the avenues where they came out.

**6. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, you are misunderstood outside of the HAPI group and even within it. Why?**

**Langseth:** It's because people are insecure about the leadership. I've been leading them since its inception. I have retired. Even as a retiree, I'm still being misunderstood. I could be wrong. But maybe, it's because of the lack of organizational skills or lack of confidence within the group.

And it seems I am being hounded out; although, they cannot do that because I am the founder. It's that I feel they are so insecure. They feel insecure about themselves.

**Jacobsen: What about from outside of the group?**

**Langseth:** From outside, so far, it is better now. In fact, modesty aside, this is what's going on. People will say we want to join the group because of you, because of me.

The other people in the group thought that that was wrong. That they would join because of me. I said, "Why not? What's wrong with that? If people see you as an inspiration the people in Bacolod."

She said she made HAPI for children because I had inspired her. There's another one in another city. For her, I am the light of the HAPI group. Without me, it might go downhill. A few of them are telling me that.

Some of the officers have seen it and felt insecure because of how these people see me. They cannot lead. This is the reason why I even removed myself from the HAPI leadership group, so that they can lead.

At the same token, the same people are complaining because the board of trustees are not even responding to their issues. So, what's going on with our group? All societies have flaws, have issues, but this is common in the Filipino community.

This is my second society. The reason why I cannot leave fully even if I'm retired. I'm still watching over them because I did not want it to go downhill when I leave because that's what happened with my first group, my first society, which was called PATAS.

The leaders now think that I'm micromanaging or that I'm not a leader. Now, I'm a 'divider.' I divide them. You think I would do that? You think I would divide my own group? Of course not.

This is the reason why I said, "Why are they misunderstanding me? Is it a deliberate misunderstanding me or to make me respond to them or to irk me or something that?" I don't know.

But I am sure that they misunderstood me because of the posting. But I cannot help these people who will tell me you are our inspiration to our group, to our lives. Is there something wrong with that?

**Jacobsen: No, I see nothing wrong with being an inspiration for a group.**

**Langseth:** A real leader would inspire people. If you are a good leader, you will inspire them to do more, not less. And this is why when I retired, I made HAPI-SHADE. I made that because it's to augment our activities.

In fact, it is also my strategy, so that in case the location or a specific chapter has no meet up, the HAPI-SHADE will have a regular meet up. Because they always do that. They always have children coming in and teaching them.

So, that's part of HAPI as a whole in general. So, why did the people think of it as a divisive strategy? I've been a leader for so many years. There are strategies that we need to do in order for our society to survive and that was my strategy.

It was never to divide; it was never to compete with anybody. In fact, it's to augment the activities because some of these people think we're only volunteers. We'll do it once a year or once a month, or whenever we are not working.

But that should not be right. When you are a volunteer at a specific time, you should volunteer. That's me; I'm Westernized. If you volunteer, you should do it once a week, or maybe one hour a week or once a month. A society cannot survive with a once a year event. It is not a society, it's not an activist group. It's the HAPI group, once a Year because they think they're only volunteers and that attitude irks me.

**Jacobsen: Where else do you feel misunderstood within the group?**

**Langseth:** For now, that's all. Before, it was bad. During the PATAS days, back in 2013, it was bad. I was not only misunderstood, but they were voting things. They were making stories about me, which were bad.

But that all went away because they weren't true. But this time, this is what is bugging me. That misunderstanding that I am dividing them, that I am making my own events to divide them. And that's not true at all.

**7. Jacobsen: Also, off-tape we were talking about some things in the news such as the case with the Atheist Republic consulate in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.**

**Langseth:** Yes.

**Jacobsen: There are legitimate fears around "being hunted down" by the authorities based on the statement by the minister, as it is an Islamic country. If you look at HAPI's case, if it became more known, what are some of the fears there for you or for the group?**

**Langseth:** I am sure that is a legitimate fear. This is why we have to take down an article about what's going on with the Atheist Republic in Malaysia. Because somebody wrote an article, it was on our page.

We had to take it down. That legitimate fear is because we are getting known already and there is a plan of making a party, a humanist party, in the future. If we become known, I'm sure.

They are going to hunt down the founder. Because that is the founder's fault, why did she make that? What is happening in Malaysia? They are looking for Armin because he's the founder, even though he's based out of Canada, in Vancouver.

In fact, Armin told me before that he had a lot of death threats already. And even before that incident, he had a lot of death threats. How much more now? So, that is legitimate. It could spread to the Philippines.

Because our government is also somewhat corrupt. Malaysia is mostly Islamic. The Philippines is mostly Catholic, and the CBCP. If the CBCP will find out about HAPI, I'm sure they're going to put a price on my head.

But again, I'm glad I am here. I am fortunate that I am here in America. They cannot touch me. But I am afraid for the people in the Philippines, really. This is the reason why I asked them about this book.

If someone can get a hold of that book, they can be hunted down by the CBCP, the Catholic Bishop Society in the Philippines. They also hunted Carlos for showing up in the church holding up something that offended their feelings.

**8. Jacobsen: What did they mean by offended religious feelings? What did they mean by that? Why is it illegitimate?**

**Langseth:** During the time of the Spanish regime, there was a law about that. I forgot what number, because it's been there forever. There is a law that if you offend the religious feelings of these friars and clergy, then you can be put to jail.

They think that a person like Carlos who went to a church, has done something wrong. Has done something that will offend them because of the sarcasm. One of those friars in the Spanish regime. He had a lot of women anyways.

**Jacobsen: (Laughter) Ah yes, the height of hypocrisy, again.**

**Langseth:** There you go, it's ongoing. It's still ongoing because he is not out of the woodwork; he's not out of danger yet, Carlos. He could still go back to jail. He was in jail for a few days. That was way back in 2011.

**Jacobsen: This is for offending religious feelings?**

**Langseth:** Yes, sir. He was in jail.

**Jacobsen: As a Canadian, that is remarkable.**

**Langseth:** Again, call me in the Philippines.

**9. Jacobsen: Only in the Philippines. Do you consider the Philippines a tacit theocracy?**

**Langseth:** What do you mean? It's a sham democracy [Laughing].

**Jacobsen: Religion is so dominant, and has so much political, social, and cultural sway, so as to render it as if a theocratic society without being a formal theocratic society as you might find in explicit theocratic societies in some Islamic countries, for instance.**

**Langseth:** Maybe, it's akin to being theocratic in a way because the problem is that these politicians, every time they want to be voted on, then they would go to church. They would ask for the help of these priests to promote them.

Because the people will believe them, they will believe the priests. They will vote for whoever is being recommended by the church.

**10. Jacobsen: Is it more often men than not?**

**Langseth:** More men? Of course, it's 90 percent men. The CBPC is 100 percent men.

**Jacobsen: There you go.**

**Langseth:** There are no women there. It's misogynistic. Not only that, it's akin to theocratic because there are no women. I have not heard of a bishop who is a woman in the Philippines. Maybe, in other cultures, but in the Philippines, I haven't heard of any.

These people, I don't understand. Whenever these priests say you have to vote for this person, they will vote for them. They will believe the priest. This is why I get mad with even my classmates nowadays.

It's so frustrating to me. They will go to church to pray for their loved one who is sick. I say, "Why don't you call the hospital? It's the 21st century." They still believe in this bullshit.

**11. Jacobsen: Even in Canada, I do know probably 2/5ths of the population believes in a literal devil, and then some portion believes in the efficacy of exorcism to cure you of a non-problem.**

**Langseth:** Boy, really?

**Jacobsen: I find that interesting. When you're pointing out that the politicians will go to the religious authorities, the priests, to ask for help to get elected, you have a mix of politics and religion at a social level, which then leads to a nearly 100 percent male political leadership with the backing of the Roman Catholic Church.**

**So, does this also reflect, the "misogyny" in feminist terms, the patriarchal nature of the Abrahamic faiths and their mixing up with politics? Now, modern religious apologists argue for women's rights in their scriptures (fair enough and a noble effort), but, of course, only in the light of the women's rights movements.**

**Langseth:** That is the reason why the RH still, the planned parenthood bill, they said it was approved already after 15 years. It has been approved; it has not been implemented. Because some priests, they are holding back the implementation because it's a sin and so on.

**12. Jacobsen: The bottom line is women are suffering because it's not being implemented. Hell, *women are dying* because it's not being implemented.**

**Langseth:** Exactly, not only that, there's overpopulation. We are 100 million now in the Philippines. 100 million.

**Jacobsen: What's the birth rate?**

**Langseth:** I'm not sure right now, but it is high and the death rate is pretty high. I don't have the stats right now.

**Jacobsen:** According to Google, the 2015 birth rate is 2.94. It has declined from the 1960 rate, which was about 7.5 to 8 per woman. As I look at the research that has been done internationally, it shows over and over again.

**If women have a choice in reproduction, the number goes to a healthier replacement rate and the health of the country on all metrics rises, the empowerment of women is the main contributor to the development of societies. Religions, more often than not, hinder this, unfortunately.**

**Langseth:** Absolutely, I have read a book by Judith Hand. It's about women's empowerment. And yes, you're right. If women are the leaders, we have a better society. But ever since the Bible, there's little to no mention of a woman in leadership.

**Jacobsen:** Not many, and if so it is as a sidekick, basically, to the superheroes in the Bible.

**Langseth:** Or being raped.

**13. Jacobsen:** Or being comparatively sold for the value of property or animals, if lucky, or being compared to slaves and property in, for instance, the 10th Commandment in Exodus, this is consistent.

**I know there are sophisticated theologians who read more in between in the lines than most do, but those are few and far between. Most people don't read it that way. Most people take it as a manual for life and they don't even read all of it if they do.**

**Langseth:** Right, there's even more work to do. We have a lot of work to do. Judith Hand is the author of a book about women's empowerment called *Women, Power and the Biology of Peace*. She is an author about a book I read it in 2012. We have a lot of work to do.

I don't think I'm going to see humanism in my lifetime be in a position where there's more power. I'm afraid I will not be able to see that. But I'm trying my best. *Godless Grace*, this was launched in New York City. It was made by David Orenstein.

He is also my friend. *Godless Grace*, there's a lot of people there. He interviewed a lot of humanists and atheists who have done good in their country, in their location, and in their locality. Our hope is in the Humanist Party.

**14. Jacobsen:** As with most early political parties, they will undergo definite challenges in original formation, in maintenance and growth.

**Langseth:** That is expected. The growing pains.

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing] I expect that.

**Langseth:** The growing pains are terrible, sometimes.

**Jacobsen: I suspect this would be greater for a religious party in a religiously dominated country.**

**Langseth:** We expect that. These people are bright. Each person has their own opinion, their own interpretation. This is why it's difficult to group them, to herd them. Herding them is difficult because they are all thinking.

In general, the religious people are told how it is and what to say, what their values and stances are. It is easy. But the irreligious, they are intelligent, like you. You have your own opinion of something else, which is different from the next irreligious person.

Other people have other opinions. So, if there are 10 people in the party, you will have 10 opinions. If you have a religious party, you have 1 or 2 opinions, that's it.

**15. Jacobsen: I heard this called the split between dogma and catma. One, and you got it, is about dogma for those reading is there is a single doctrine with maybe minor room for interpretation and wiggle room for interpretation, which people believe on faith for the most part and critical thinking is discouraged.**

**Everyone will believe it as a whole. The catma is a set of meta-beliefs that are fuzzy. You don't know what is the case, but you have probabilistic opinions about what may or may not be the case on specific issues.**

**Langseth:** Dogma, I get it. It's difficult. Building these societies was difficult, how much more if you have a formal Humanist Party in the Roman Catholic Philippines? If I had gossiping among intelligent people in my own group, considering who they are, some of them said, "I'm not ready for that."

Someone said I might get killed. There's also fear there. One of them is an intelligent person. I won't mention who he is, but I invited him to join us to become a board of trustees because he has no problems except to spend his money.

But he told me that him and other people are fighting over this. They are having issues already because they are anti-Duterte or they are pro-Duterte. The problem with some humanists is they let politics get into their system. We have a few like that.

Although, this person is talking about Islam as a formal HAPI member, but he's in the group. If there was no Duterte, there would be no problem, maybe, but, of course, there are always problems.

What I am saying is people have to get off that, their personal issues. This is one of the many reasons why another society has been disrupted, has been dissolved. Because of personality clashes about politics.

There was one time it was about to disrupt HAPI. I had to put my foot forward and set my foot down and said, "We will not discuss Duterte in this room." There was a lot of complaints coming from anti-Duterte and pro-Duterte.

They asked me who I'm siding with. I said, "I'm not siding with Duterte. I have no voice. I am a US citizen." That is the height of chaos if HAPI was stopped. I got some backlash, of course, but I told them you are not allowed to talk about that in this group.

Of course, I warned them because some people will go in the HAPI forum and talk about Duterte. Then they will fight. And if nobody can stop that, I will stop that. I'm strict. I said, "This is not a crowd for politics. This is humanism. This is a humanist arena. If you cannot let go of your political allegiance, you might as get out."

That's the reason why it stopped. I had complaints from foreigners saying your group is becoming anti-Duterte or pro-Duterte. That's the reason why I had to stop that. People complained to me that your group is becoming pro-Duterte and anti-Duterte.

I said that we have to stop talking about this in the group. That's the reason why we're still here. The other societies are gone and dissolved because of that, regarding personality clashes regarding Duterte and politics. So, it helped that I am from the USA.

**Jacobsen: When I observe the leaders of religions, more often than not, the ones in power and authority, they're men.**

**Langseth:** Of course.

**Jacobsen: Why is this the case? Not only why is this the case, but, how is this the case?**

**Langseth:** Because the Philippines is patriarchal. We recognize men as the chief or the master or the commander of the household. That's why it's always men and they think that they're better than women.

**16. Jacobsen: Do you think there's that certain compounded chauvinism where you have the male chauvinism that many women will perpetuate as well, but also the religious chauvinism of whatever religion happens to be in dominance? For instance, a Catholic male will have a certain air about him, especially the leadership.**

**Langseth:** One of the many reasons why I did not marry a Filipino is that being mismatched is common in the Philippines. They think because they are men, then they are better than women.

Not only that, the way they talk to women is condescending. I had experiences with Filipino men. I always fight with them. I'm not for Filipino men, nope. It's from religion; it's from when they were born. They see it's the father or the men running the show. In fact, when I was small, I saw my father beating my mother.

So, it was normal for men to beat women, our mothers. Of course, within myself as a child, because they think they are the head of the family, they always think they are the ruler or the chief of the household.

It's all because that's what they were taught and what was told to them in the second Sunna in the Quran or in the Philippines, men, even Duterte is vocal, and open, about him having a girlfriend besides having a wife. Is that right?

**Jacobsen: I didn't know he was taking the French leadership route.**

**Langseth:** He was proud that he has a girlfriend. Showing off the girlfriend and in fact he even said, "Why? Who doesn't have a girlfriend? What rich man doesn't have a girlfriend on the side?"

I said to my husband, "He doesn't have a girlfriend. This is how Filipinos portray themselves. Their machismo."

**Jacobsen: Would the word "weak" fit?**

**Langseth:** They are over-exhibiting their masculinity. Their machismo.

**Jacobsen: Overcompensating?**

**Langseth:** Yes, that's the word. They're only overcompensating. Because, I hate to say it, but these Filipino men are not pretty. They are overcompensating.

**Jacobsen: There's no chemistry. There's no foreplay at all to these things, right? So, the men's own overcompensation creates a cycle of bad relationship experiences for them, where they may then even further overcompensate?**

**Langseth:** And women cannot see that.

**Jacobsen: Right. That's sad.**

**Langseth:** Of course, we did not see it before. I saw it now.

**Jacobsen: That's also with Duterte, with the girlfriend or the French president with the girlfriend. The girlfriend: she's not seeing it. They don't see they're being used.**

**Langseth:** That's what I'm saying. Women, they don't see it. I didn't see it before until now I'm seeing. This is what is wrong with most Filipinos, not all. They just, they think it is acceptable to have that thinking, to have a girlfriend on top of your wife.

They think it's acceptable in society; it's condoned by society, by the Filipinos, which is wrong. Nothing happens without political precedent.

**Jacobsen: Or JFK.**

**Langseth:** JFK. Look at JFK, they cannot even show that they have a girlfriend. In the Philippines, it's acceptable. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with us? What's wrong with Filipinos?

**17. Jacobsen: It shows a culture of maybe enforced morals around sexuality that makes any deviancy so bad as to need it to be not talked about and, therefore, very “hush hush,” very secretive. And that can create a lot of perversions.**

**Langseth:** It’s sad because it’s still happening and this is the 21st century. It should have gone already. It’s still there. This is why humanism is one route, one avenue to change that thinking and show that it is wrong.

Of course, you can say, “Humanism is also good because it takes away the pain. You don’t want people to be in pain. Humanism is trust in humanity as human beings.” You don’t say, “That is fine. There is a 2nd life.”

They all think of the second life. In the second life, it will be better. This is why they accept bad things right now because they think the second life will be better. Look at the prisoners, as we discussed, they are over 80 to 90 percent religious in prison.

Because they think that it’s alright to do bad things right now because the second life is better.

**18. Jacobsen: It’s the similar syndrome of, maybe not similar but, an associated syndrome of committing “sin”: go to the priest, tell the priest through confession, the priest blesses you, and that confession and blessing absolves you from blame.**

**So, it is an easy out. I only pose this as an idea, as a loose theoretical framework of explanation, but not a certainty, a “catma” in other words. The idea that the easy out, whether it’s through confession or a belief in an afterlife.**

**Thinking, “Jesus has my back,” that thing. It may breed people who are on the fence for criminal behaviour to go the next step to full criminal behaviour because Jesus has their back or they can get their easy out from confession and so on.**

**Langseth:** Exactly, that’s what’s happening. The story isn’t right. People do a lot of bad things that they are going to do because hey they can be absolved and go to the priest and after that you can start all over again. Or when you die, there will be Jesus and ask for forgiveness.

**19. Jacobsen: My sense is from you, from others who are irreligious leaders, in the irreligious world, are people who are tough. Because you have to deal with higher standards.**

**It’s funny on the playing field of real life because you’re considered an automatic out in a lot of social life. So, there’s that. It makes it a little bit difficult and a little bit tenser, so you almost have to be a tiny bit on your toes.**

**You have to have your teeth out a tiny bit all the time, psychologically, just in case. And I feel that leaders in the irreligious movement often have to have that. Even to the point of having to call out for militant atheism, I believe Richard Dawkins did in that Ted Talk.**

**I believe he should have rephrased it. So for those reading this, if you plan on leading in the irreligious world in general, you have to be tough. It's just part of the job.**

**Langseth:** Yes. Not only do you have to be tough, but you have to show them that you're an example of true Humanism. For example, I've been married for 22 years. They said, "Why are you still married for 22 years when your husband is not a humanist??" I said, "Why not? We respect each other. We love each other. That's enough."

**Jacobsen: That's all it takes.**

**Langseth:** That's enough. We don't fight about politics. He's voted Trump. I didn't vote for Trump, but he doesn't Trump for so many things. But he voted for him anyway. What I'm saying is, you don't get politics and religion into your system or your married life or your personal life.

Believe me, there will be a lot of broken homes. But because of the respect and love, we're still together. For example, I will not condone any of my members to be girlfriends of married men.

But for me, I cannot condone that. That's not humanism because you intend to hurt other people. I don't condone for my group members to do bad things because we are supposed to be examples of good deeds.

We should do good things to people, not bad things. We should be an example. Especially the officers, they should be an example of what a true humanist is; not hypocrisy. To say, "I'm a humanist," but then you're doing a lot of hypocrisy.

That's why we have to be tough as leaders. We could get a lot of bashing, of course. I get a lot of bashing, but I laugh at it now.

**20. Jacobsen: It also helps to have a good sense of humour about all this stuff.**

**Langseth:** Yes.

**Jacobsen: You argue for women's reproductive rights. A religious leader has a spasm. Usually, he foams at the mouth. It comes out later they are involved in some sex scandal. You've read about the similar cases. I've read about similar cases too.**

**Where it happens and life has a certain humour about it, if you take the right angle, at appropriate times, there is humour.**

**Langseth:** Precisely, we have to have humour in our lives. We can't be serious all the time. Laughter is still the best medicine.

**Jacobsen: That's right.**

**Langseth:** I mean it still is. Of all the drugs in the world, laughter is the best medicine. When I went to the Philippines, I laughed a lot. I laughed a lot of my sister and my brothers, we laughed a lot.

I am pro-LGBT because they're humans. We have to respect them too. Of course, and because, my sister is a lesbian. But respecting human beings, it's not in words. It has to be in action too.

People, they want to preach, the priests, but they do other things. They do bad things on the side. And that is ironic for them to do that.

**Jacobsen: And it goes back to that unquestioned authority given to them.**

**Langseth:** Unfortunately, the Filipinos don't question their bosses; anybody with authority. They don't question.

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