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**Commentary**

**Leeway**

**Reaching Beyond Expectations**

**Dr. K.J. Lee’s Journey from the Hideouts of Penang to Harvard and Beyond**

KJ Lee had an inauspicious start as a young child growing up in war-torn Malaya. Despite this he rose to the heights of great esteem and acclaim that he earned along the path to manhood and sage-status in the United States of America. One almost immediately senses in the book an elusive and driven quality in him as a very young man who was destined to change the imperfect world that was handed to him. He did this not for him alone, but for all he would meet along the way. His physical and emotional journey takes him beyond the security and comforts of family and familiarity. It takes him across the world while a mere teenager alone on a ship; not to seek his fortune but to create it. Despite now being world renowned as a scholar, a writer, a professor, an innovator and inventor, as well as an acclaimed surgeon, he is a humble, unassuming, kind and gracious man.

This book bears witness to the durability of values and ideals that are instilled in us in childhood when they are imbued with love. When you mix that with a brilliant and innovative mind and a strong work ethic; achievement apparently knows no bounds! As his journey unfolds we watch the growth and maturation of Dr. KJ Lee who molded his phenomenally rich life around the ingrained principles of decency, compassion honesty, ethics and integrity and he further imbued those principles with an organized and methodical mind. He made a habit of planning everything down to the minutest of details. These principles were instilled in him at an early age, but he honed them to perfection and made them his own as life tossed him about; he learned something from everything. His values and principles anchored and guided him as he made his way through life away from his family and in a faraway land.

As a physician Dr. Lee truly lives and embodies the principles of the foundation he co-founded; ***The Patient is U Foundation, Inc***. This philosophy espouses that everyone with whom patients come in contact should be treating them and their family members as we would want to be treated. Dr. Lee has a strong spiritual side to him, and one can clearly sense the Golden Rule in this philosophy. It was through this organization that I initially met Dr. Lee. I was being considered for their first Nursing Halo Award, which I proudly received in 2019 on behalf of Connecticut’s nurses in a big Gala. I wholeheartedly embrace Dr. Lee’s and the Foundations’ Board’s philosophy so I became rapidly engaged in advancing their mission; that we educate healthcare professionals, administrators, teachers and others who work with patients and patient care providers about the values of care with compassion, and that compassionate care benefits not only the patients but the caregivers as well. The evidence-based science behind this from multidisciplinary fields is fascinating and plentiful!

It is not often in life that one gets to meet a person of the caliber and accomplishments of Dr. KJ Lee; a man who has rubbed elbows on many occasions with America’s celebrity, political and scientific royalty. He made his accomplishment starting at a very young age and just never stopped achieving! When I first met him I felt as though I were in the presence of someone with exceptional inner peace and I described being with him as feeling like I was sitting with the Dalai Lama. His story is inspiring and uplifting and his approaches to health problems and health-systems issues will lead you to marvel at the apolitical simplicity of his approaches to healthcare dilemmas. Happy reading.

Dr. Stephanie Paulmeno

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President: Communities 4 Action

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