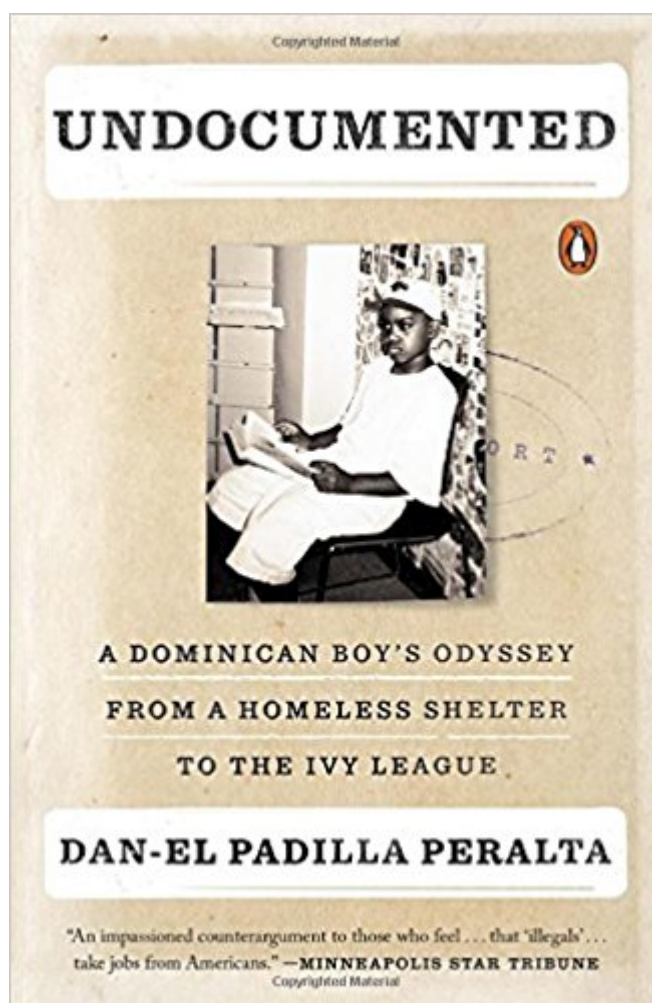


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Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey From A Homeless Shelter To The Ivy League



Synopsis

An undocumented immigrant's journey from a New York City homeless shelter to the top of his Princeton class — Dan-el Padilla Peralta has lived the American dream. As a boy, he arrived in the United States legally with his family. Together they had traveled from Santo Domingo to seek medical care for his mother. Soon the family's visas lapsed, and Dan-el's father eventually returned home. But Dan-el's courageous mother decided to stay and make a better life for her bright sons in New York City. Without papers, she faced tremendous obstacles. While Dan-el was only in grade school, the family joined the ranks of the city's homeless. Dan-el, his mother, and brother lived in a downtown shelter where Dan-el's only refuge was the meager library. At another shelter he met Jeff, a young volunteer from a wealthy family. Jeff was immediately struck by Dan-el's passion for books and learning. With Jeff's help, Dan-el was accepted on scholarship to Collegiate, the oldest private school in the country. There, Dan-el thrived. Throughout his youth, Dan-el navigated two worlds: the rough streets of East Harlem, where he lived with his brother and his mother and tried to make friends, and the ultra-elite halls of a Manhattan private school, where he immersed himself in a world of books and rose to the top of his class. From Collegiate, Dan-el went on to Princeton, where he made the momentous decision to come out as an undocumented student in a Wall Street Journal profile a few months before he gave the salutatorian's traditional address in Latin at his commencement. Undocumented is essential reading for the debate on immigration, but it is also an unforgettable tale of a passionate young scholar coming of age in two very different worlds. Praise for Undocumented: "Undocumented is an impassioned counterargument to those who feel, as did some of Peralta's more xenophobic classmates, that 'illegals' are good-for-nothings who take jobs from Americans and deserve to be kicked out of the country. No one who reads this story of a brilliant young man and his proud mother will automatically equate undocumented immigrant with idle parasite. That stereotype is something else we shouldn't take for granted." — Minneapolis Star-Tribune "Dan-el Padilla Peralta's story is as compulsively readable as a novel, an all-American tall tale that just happens to be true. From homeless shelter to Princeton, Oxford, and Stanford, through the grace not only of his own hard work but his mother's discipline and care, he documents the America we should still aspire to be." — Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter, President of the New America Foundation

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Customer Reviews

Minneapolis Star Tribune: ["Undocumented is an impassioned counterargument to those who feel, as did some of Peralta's more xenophobic classmates that 'illegals' are good-for-nothings who take jobs from Americans and deserve to be kicked out of the country. No one who reads this story of a brilliant young man and his proud mother will automatically equate undocumented immigrant with idle parasite. That stereotype is something else we shouldn't take for granted."](#)

New York Daily News: ["Undocumented is not meant to be a 'whole hood-boy-in richy-rich-school saga.' Peralta is merely determined to put another face to the undocumented millions, that of the son of an illegal who reached the highest pinnacle of privileged education."](#)

Publishers Weekly: ["Part memoir, part confessional, and part coming-of-age tale, Peralta's story holds several truths on the road through loss, sacrifice, and achievement to gaining his slice of the American dream."](#)

Kirkus Reviews: ["An impassioned and honest memoir | Underscores the need for comprehensive immigration reform."](#)

Library Journal: ["Peralta's simple and unadorned yet fast-moving narrative provides an insightful read for anyone passionate about immigration reform."](#)

Booklist: ["Peralta offers an inspiring personal story of the hardships faced by undocumented families."](#)

Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter, President of the New America Foundation: ["Dan-el Padilla Peralta's story is as compulsively readable as a novel, an all-American tall tale that just happens to be true. From homeless shelter to](#)

Princeton, Oxford, and Stanford, through the grace not only of his own hard work but his mother's discipline and care, he documents the America we should still aspire to be. Julia Alvarez, author of *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *A Wedding in Haiti*: "Dan-el Padilla Peralta's *Undocumented* should be required reading for every congressman addressing legislation on immigration and for anyone who believes the American dream should not be a nightmare for those who are now faceless, homeless, and helpless in our midst. It should be required reading in our schools, not just to educate the new leaders of America on these issues, but to inspire them to tell lively stories that captivate the imagination, inform the mind, and move the heart to act."

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Dan-el Padilla Peralta came to the United States with his family at the age of four. He received his BA summa cum laude from Princeton University, where he was chosen salutatorian of the class of 2006. He received his MPhil from the University of Oxford and his PhD in classics from Stanford University. He is currently a Mellon Research Fellow at Columbia University and will be returning to Princeton as an assistant professor of classics in July 2016.

Dan-El is authentic in describing his youth and growth. He gives a perspective on growing up that many can relate to, even if they aren't in the same legal situation he's in. His story asks questions like "How does one fit in while still trying to please one's family?" "How can you be a good brother?" In addition to asking critical questions about our nation's piecemeal and outdated immigration system.

With great humor, sheds light on an issue the USA must shed more attention to. Great anecdotes, made me want to know more about his past.

unbelievable! highly recommend this amazing memoir

This book was truly inspiring and I forced everyone in my family to read it. It was truly fantastic.

It was worth the read...and a fast read.

Excellent

The premise of this book has the potential to be interesting. And to be fair, Dan-El's story is an important one to be told. But, sometime writers/novelists write memoirs, and sometimes everyday people write memoirs, and Dan-El is an everyday person with an interesting life story, who is not a writer. I had a hard time getting through this book. The writing was basic, and there were too many details and year-by-year retelling of his life that were unnecessary to tell the story, but necessary, I suppose, to make a book. Might have been better as a short story or a magazine essay.

I was his computer Teacher in first grade, P.S.143, in Corona, Queens, New York. He would spend an hour in the Computer Lab, reading books in Spanish and English. It was obvious, even at age six, that this was a very GIFTED student. I would bring in the other Teachers, and tell them, "check this kid out! He is reading at a fifth grade level. He is smarter than me!...." Yet, if not for the Art Teacher, he may have been, like millions of other gifted students, lost in the system. Great book, Que Dios te Bendiga, Dan-el. Buena suerte en el futuro, hermano. Y que siga LUCHANDO!!!

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