

**We ARE Americans: Undocumented Students Pursuing the American Dream.** William Pérez, Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009, 161 pages, \$70.00 (hardcover), \$22.50 (paperback).

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A brief note on the back cover of this volume provides a most accurate summary of its content:

Illegal through no fault of their own, some 65,000 undocumented students graduate from the nation's high schools each year. They cannot get a legal job, and face enormous barriers trying to enter college to better themselves—and yet America is the only country they know and, for many, English is the only language they speak.

With this premise in mind, this book features, on the one hand, the plights of 16 students sharing two commonalities while at different stages in their education: impressive academic credentials yet the ominous fear that their undocumented status will effectively prevent them from achieving their real potential in the United States. On the other hand, it depicts the positive change in their lives of four formerly undocumented immigrants once they are in possession of legal status.

The 20 case stories are featured in as many chapters, clustered into five parts comprising four stories each: high school, community college, university, college graduates, and former undocumented college graduates. There is also a Foreword by Daniel Solorzano, a conclusion, and a reading guide; yet a note on the Foreword seems necessary, because it does not appear as such either in the index or as an identifiable chapter in the volume. Rather, readers will find it seamlessly inserted into the Introduction following the initial paragraphs written by Pérez.

In the Foreword, Solorzano intends to counter popular widespread perceptions about undocumented immigrants, namely their lack of contribution to the U.S. economy, their abuse of public services, or their criminal activities, with data revealing the inaccuracies of these misconceptions. In addition, he exposes the inconsistencies of U.S. immigration policies and laws regarding this population when explaining that although the country continues to benefit from the outcomes of their work, it does not help fulfill the aspirations of their children. For example, the failed attempts to pass the DREAM Act continue to punish undocumented immigrants who are forced to pay stratospheric tuition fees in order to pursue their

education. What is more, even after completing the requirements for their respective degrees, they find that their job prospects are limited by their immigration status.

Subsequent book chapters describe students' individual backgrounds, their academic progress (placing special emphasis on their accomplishments), and their family situations and reasons for immigrating into the U.S. Pérez's intent in doing this is to highlight each student's extraordinary achievements as well as the outstanding contributions American society may miss in the future should existing immigration policies continue to be enforced.

Putting a face to the plight of undocumented students is one of the most valuable and endearing features of this book. Fragments of individual stories, vividly described by their protagonists, remind us that although the United States may be the only country these students have known and the only one they have attended, they cannot benefit from the opportunities enjoyed by their more fortunate documented classmates.

*We ARE Americans* will be of interest to readers willing to learn more about one of the most insurmountable challenges for undocumented immigrants: the fulfillment of their American dream. Written in a simple, easy-to-read style, the stories featured in this book definitely constitute food for thought for those individuals with the power to remedy these courageous students' predicaments.