

Good morning,

This is actually the first time that I will admit in front of people other than my friends: I am an undocumented student. I have not admitted this before, because I live in fear, fear of consequences my status could bring on my student life. I was brought to the United States at the age of 11 on 2001. My mother brought me to Chicago after my father passed away, as a police man in Mexico, he became a victim of the violence he intended to fight. The violence and economic deterioration pushed my mother to find a new way to give me a better future.

Both of my parents valued education even when they did not finish high school themselves. I also remember promising that I would always do my best in memory of my father and to honor my mother. When I started elementary school, I realized the amount of opportunities that were available, even when English became my first challenge. I remember how I wanted to learn English as soon as possible to understand the people around me, to learn the culture, way of life, this city which became my new home. I stayed in school in the bilingual program and graduated from 8th grade with As and Bs on my report card.

At that time, my high school education was about to start and I wanted to do my best to accomplish the so-called "American Dream" that I always heard about. It was during high school when I realized that I had to be my own abdicante since the school put me on the bilingual program again. I new that in order for my grades to mean something in Chicago Public Schools I had to speak English and I visited my counselor 7 times before he realized I wanted to only take English classes. It took long nights of homework and dedication to get good grades in school. However, that dedication payed off and I also earned recommendations to higher level classes.

During my 4 years in high school I went from bilingual classes to Honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

During my 4 years in high school I earned a Grade Point Average of 4.07

During my 4 years in high school I was inducted to the National Honor Society, and the Tri-M National Music Honor Society and I earned my school's Leadership Award

Like other students in my situation, all my merits and community service earned me a place in the most prestigious universities in the state, but I was not able to attend many. Because I did not have a social security number for financial aid or scholarships. After learning about of my situation Lake Forest College took away a \$35,000 scholarship and raised my tuition since I was, according to them an "international student" At Concordia University Chicago I was offered the Presidential Scholarship, worth \$10,000 but that was not enough to for me to pay its 31,000 tuition.

Thanks to the help of a many I am attending a private institution with great values of which I am proud of wearing its colors. I have a current grade point average of 3.5.

But regardless of my achievements, like many other students in my situation, I live in fear, we live in fear;

We live in fear of not getting the money needed for next year's tuition and books;

We live in fear of using our consular ID card as identification with the Chicago Police;  
We live in fear of walking down Pilsen or little Village and getting caught in the middle of a raid;  
We live in fear of talking to school officials about our status and loosing our scholarships;  
We live in fear of traveling outside of Chicago;

I ask you, we all ask you, to help stop the deportation of undocumented students. Students who have managed to stay in school despite greater difficulties, who have become targets of hate, who have been treated differently when they show a consular ID card/ or their nationality is known, above all, people who dream of constructing a better future for everyone in America regardless nationality, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Please help stop the deportation of Rigo Padilla and other students as one step to not live in fear.