



Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon

Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, MD, Mim Eichler Rivas

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Today he is known as Dr. Q, an internationally renowned neurosurgeon and neuroscientist who leads cutting-edge research to cure brain cancer. But not too long ago, he was Freddy, a nineteen-year-old undocumented migrant worker toiling in the tomato fields of central California. In this gripping memoir, Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa tells his amazing life story—from his impoverished childhood in the tiny village of Palaco, Mexico, to his harrowing border crossing and his transformation from illegal immigrant to American citizen and gifted student at the University of California at Berkeley and at Harvard Medical School. Packed with adventure and adversity—including a few terrifying brushes with death—*Becoming Dr. Q* is a testament to persistence, hard work, the power of hope and imagination, and the pursuit of excellence. It's also a story about the importance of family, of mentors, and of giving people a chance.

Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon Details

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From Reader Review Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon for online ebook

Meg says

This is an amazing story and Dr. Q is a great inspiration, but I will say toward the end of the book as he really had achieved his dream I started to lose some interest. The book should probably have been cut a bit shorter as the last few chapters seemed repetitive and I honestly didn't finish it all the way. But overall it's a great story and one I'll be sure to share with my students.

Shana says

This is the inspiring story of one man's journey from undocumented farm worker to highly respected brain surgeon. Oftentimes when we read about undocumented peoples in the United States, it is in a negative light, and this story shows that when you take away borders/nationality/etc., you just end up with human beings. Yes, sometimes we are left with some unsavory characters, but sometimes we are also blessed with undiscovered talent and potential. With motivation, hard work, kind mentors, and support, Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa proved to all the nay-sayers that he has what it takes to succeed and thrive in a competitive and challenging field. While doing this, he seems to have maintained a sense of humility and gratitude for those who took a chance on him. This story gets you wondering about all the undiscovered greatness in the world and how much humanity could benefit from seeking out these hidden gems. Opportunity should not only exist for the well off. Imagine what wonderful things might happen if we truly sought to make educational opportunities available far and wide?

Bryan says

Hard work and dedication can take you far!

Micky Tang says

I enjoyed Dr. Q's story. He didn't make himself out to be a superhero. I felt he presented himself as an authentic human being, complete with fears and dreams. I found the story inspiring because he spoke freely about his struggles. I also found his humility inspiring when he tells about his progress as student, doctor and then leader. The overarching lesson that he tries to pass on is that he did not forget where he came from: small beginnings and BIG dreams. He carries that attitude into life in terms of how he treats everyone. He considers even the janitors at the hospital where he works as part of his team. Expectations from that person are no less than from the other members of his team. I hope to use this book to inspire young members of ethnic America, who are often embarrassed by their small beginnings.

Mariela 🦷👩🏻??? says

Me he topado con uno de los libros más inspiradores que he tenido la oportunidad de leer. La historia de Alberto es poderosa, llena de maravillosas lecciones de vida que te impulsa a seguir tus sueños y no para, te devuelve la chispa que perdiste en el camino y te dice que si lo deseas puedes lograrlo. Me llena de emoción y felicidad leer este libro. No es pretencioso en ningún momento y en algunas partes llora de emoción y felicidad.

Gracias Dr. Q por quitar miedos e inspirarme a seguir a delante aunque el camino no esté claro, tengo que hacer mi propio camino.

¡Gracias!

AGC says

I have nothing but praise for *Becoming Dr. Q*. There is something mystical about his life's story, and I absolutely love the motif of the "light at the end of the tunnel", which he uses in each anecdote that begins each of the big turning points of his life. He writes about his many struggles and how his small triumphs in life led him to tackle the bigger obstacles he comes up against, from poverty to working to college to medical school to residency to starting as an attending neurosurgeon to beginning his own lab. And now, he is actually still struggling, against that mass murderer, brain cancer.

This book does take some time to read: the book is a little over 300 pages in length and has a smaller print compared to most books, but you will be glad you did it. I feel like a better person after reading through much of his personal experiences and comments about what is compassionate care as well as his struggle to forgive and overcome the insults with his hard-work, enthusiasm, and love.

Dr. Q is one who never forgets those that helped him in any way, big or small, and I think him writing this book was a way to show his gratitude, to pave the way for others like him that want to do something great for humanity as others have done for him, to encourage those to never give up fighting (or if to a patient with not long to live, to never give up living your life). In the end, he is also one that will not be forgotten.

Laura says

Interesting autobiography that I think would make a good candidate for my institutions Diversity One City One Book program.

I wish I had Dr. Q's drive and energy, not to mention his sense of perspective.

Kimberly says

I was so excited to read this. Dr. Quinones was my neighbor and I even babysat his kids only a few years ago. I just happened to stumble upon it in the library. It was fun reading someone's story that I actually know! Dr Quinones really is a genuinely warm, positive and kind person. It is amazing to see where he came from to know him today and see where he is. Very inspiring!

Quiltgranny says

Inspiring, positive and a great story of perseverance and drive, it was just a bit too introspectively happy, happy, happy, happy, happy.....

Audrey says

Great book! Great story about a Hispanic immigrant who has so much drive he becomes a brain surgeon , with lots and lots and lots of work and blessings also along the way. As they say “ you can’t make this kind of stuff up!” Incredibly fascinating story of true grit and spirit and drive! It’s a book that you need a highlighter for so you can highlight a lot! So many good lessons to learn about on this book. Incredibly smart man! My one gripe about the book is that he doesn’t talk more about his wife and her “support from home” side of the story.....

A. says

This is an amazing account of a man who overcame great adversity. I don't think I have read a more interesting autobiography. This doctor has an amazing story to tell and he tells it well. You do not need to have any interest in becoming a doctor, immigration or brain surgery to thoroughly enjoy this book. It reminds me of the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness" and definitely deserves to be made into a movie. Great book!

Jenny Brown says

This was a very interesting book. The author's tone is relentlessly cheery and positive, to the point where it sometimes seemed hard to believe anyone could really be like that, but that attitude and the undertone of obsession that runs through this story explains how a boy raised in a shack could transform himself from an illegal immigrant supporting himself as a migrant worker into a top brain surgeon associated with one of the top medical schools in the world.

I was particularly struck by the emphasis that Quinones puts on empathy with patients since my many experiences with doctors have been completely devoid of any trace of it, even when my mom was dying an ugly death.

There is much more depth here than you will find in the "made for TV" version of this kind of inspiring story. I found the medical issues covered to a degree that gave me a feel for what Dr. Q actually does from day to day.

OTOH, I did occasionally wonder about what his wife's version of the story might read like. Dr. Q is frank about not giving his family the time and attention they deserve, but portrays his wife pretty much as a perfect plaster saint without any personality of her own. That he continually expected her to give up any hope of her own career, and tore her away from her friends and family support as soon as he finished his residency without being able to give her and their children any more of his time and attention did bother me. But having grown up with parents who were both professionals in a hospital, I already had a pretty good idea that that was what surgeons were all about. Definitely not men you marry if you want a husband who is actually there.

Robin Rathman says

This is one of the most inspiring books I have ever read. I am going to order several copies and have it available for my high school biology students to read. I also intend to read passages in my classroom.

Ruben says

I think Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa is an amazing person, and not just because we share a last name. His story is really one-of-a-kind. No one claims he's the best doctor in the country, but it's doubtful that any brain surgeon started from humbler beginnings. I much preferred the second half of the book, when he follows his educational path through medical school and residency. At times, the anecdotal style reminded me of Dr. Emily Transue's or Dr. Atul Gawande's, in a good way. The first half was hard to stomach, though, with its cheesy proclamations. You've heard it before: "As I gazed up at the stars and meteors that filled the night sky, I knew that, even though I was only five years old, someday I would blaze my own path through the Universe, and I had the twinkling lights of my family to guide me on my journey through the darkness." That's a paraphrase, not a direct quote, but that sort of saccharine overstatement detracts from the enjoyment of what can't help but be an impressive story. Maybe we can blame it on the co-author? Anyway, if you have any interest in medicine or immigration or Latinos, check this one out. It's an unforgettable story.

Andres says

This book fulfills the definition of an inspiring read without being bogged down by anything too cloying.

The author details his humble beginnings in Mexico, his perilous leap over the border into the United States, and the hard work he performed in the fields of California and other various blue collar jobs. His work ethic and determination propelled him to enter school and, as the subtitle of his book reveals, he eventually became a thoroughly respected and talented brain surgeon.

While some of the details I had hoped for weren't there (exactly which classes did he take, and how easy or hard were they?), this is still an impressive life story, impressively told. The author never brags about his success because the details of his story thwarts that kind of self-aggrandizement: he simply wanted to do

more with his life at every step and he worked extremely hard to reach those goals, and in an astonishingly short amount of time. Anybody who reads this will hopefully come away with the knowledge that they can accomplish quite a lot if they are willing to put in the work.

An inspiring read, as well as a great medical read.
