

CURRICULA VITAE

HONORARY DOCTORATE

The degree Doctor of Laws

David Joseph **Padilla**

David Padilla is in the first place a lawyer, and holds among other qualifications, a JD and LLM degree in law. However, his five degrees encompass a variety of disciplines, underscoring his qualities as a "Renaissance man". David received the degrees BA cum laude (University of Detroit) in 1966, JD (University of Detroit Law School) in 1969, MA in International Relations (University of Pennsylvania) in 1974, LLM with the highest distinction (George Washington University) in 1978, and MPA (Harvard University) in 1982.

David Padilla has had an outstanding career as an international civil servant, academic and human rights defender.

As an international civil servant, David served in various capacities for the Organisation of American States (OAS), the inter-governmental organization that brings together all states in the Americas (Latin America and North America). Most notably, David served as Assistant Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission for 21 years (1980 - 2001). The Inter-American Commission is the main inter-governmental human rights body of the OAS, and has contributed significantly towards democratic progress particularly in Latin America, following a period of dictatorship and autocracy in many of the states in this region. In this time, David Padilla was responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in 35 countries in Latin America, a region known for political upheavals and at a time when some of the worst human rights atrocities were perpetrated by military and other dictatorships in the region. Despite being a staff member of the OAS, his field work was fraught with physical danger. He took great personal risk in confronting governments known for letting their critics 'disappear'. As a result of his extensive experience on the ground, his singular ability to manoeuvre around regimes determined to obstruct his work, Prof Padilla became known as 'the man who knows where the bodies lie' in Latin America.

Within the Inter-American Human Rights Commission itself, David Padilla started as a Senior Legal Officer and over time, became the most senior legal and administrative officer, occupying the positions of Director of Human Resources and Deputy General Counsel and Director. He represented the Commission before the OAS, as well as in various European and African countries. This earned him the 2002 Leo S. Rowe Award for Outstanding Employee of the OAS.

As an academic, David Padilla taught International Human Rights Law at postgraduate level at the Washington College of Law, American University, for 12 years. He is a pillar of the core academic corps of the award-winning LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa programme at the University of Pretoria, where he has taught and examined a unit on the Inter-American Human Rights System for 13 years (since the programme's inception in 2000). In this time, he was appointed Senior Fulbright Specialist in a record six consecutive years (from 2001 to 2006).

David Padilla is a visiting Professor of Law at Silliman University in the Philippines, where he was appointed Fulbright Senior Scholar in 2006. He spends up to three months every year in at Silliman University. On the basis of his singular and extensive experience, he has been invited to address students and academics at over 40 universities around the world. He presented numerous papers and lectured at conferences and has published many journal articles, book reviews and opinion pieces.

As a human rights defender, before joining the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, Prof Padilla served as a prosecutor. At the OAS, he represented the Inter-American Commission before the Inter-American Court and argued cases before the OAS Administrative Tribunal. It is, however, in landmark cases before international human rights bodies that David has truly shown his mettle. His greatest achievement

in this regard involved him representing a well-known Zimbabwean human rights lawyer who was tortured by the secret police in Zimbabwe. Prof Padilla, having taught this student at the University of Pretoria, brought a communication before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which handed down a decision on 22 March 2013, finding Zimbabwe responsible for acts of torture. This is the first time that the African Commission has condemned Zimbabwe for this crime. Prof Padilla's own reaction to this decision is telling: 'This decision is emblematic of the widespread use of state terror to coerce and cow a subject population. It is not merely a legal decision in favour of a single victim but rather a recognition by Africa's most important and prestigious institution that the practice of disappearing people and beating them to within an inch of their lives will no longer be ignored by Zimbabwe's neighbours'.

Prof Padilla has a very strong social conscience and an implacable commitment to improving the lives of people everywhere. From his early years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Venezuela, and throughout his 27-year career with the Organisation of American States, he has consistently striven to serve humanity using the instrument of law. He has an unparalleled record of fighting for the human rights all over the world - through education and training, volunteering and legal action.

It is particularly significant that in his 'retirement' he has shifted his focus to Africa and Asia as a consultant and scholar. At the University of Pretoria it is impossible to quantify the effect his mentoring has had on the African students he has worked with every year. He is the only person to have been invited to serve as a judge in the UN-recognised African Human Rights Moot Court Competition more than once. But for one or two years, he has done so every year since 1994, bringing with him a rich contribution and a unique inspiration to leading young African lawyers.

There is a strong social conscience in the family of Prof Padilla. His grandfather, a Mexican immigrant, helped feed the poor in Detroit, and his father, uncle, many of his 10 siblings and all his children have been involved in community service.

Over the years, David Padilla has endeared himself to our University, our nation and our continent, through dedicated and selfless service. He is the embodiment of the twin values of Ubuntu and excellence, which the Centre for Human Rights holds dear. In recognition of his contribution to the work and achievement of the Centre for Human Rights, he is currently Honorary Professor in the Faculty, and member of the Advisory Board of the Centre.

The award of an honorary doctorate to David Padilla is an acknowledgment of his significant contributions to establishing the Inter-American human rights system as a torchbearer for human rights in the Americas, of his academic contributions to the discourse on international human rights law and of his excellence, goodness and humanity. This award salutes a life lived meaningfully for others, especially in Africa, and a recognition of his inspirational and founding role in two of the University of Pretoria's flagship programmes.