

The Michigan Daily

News

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SOCIOLOGY PROF. SILVIA PEDRAZA

A life-long learner

Sociology Prof. Silvia Pedraza's experience immigrating to the United States from Cuba at 12 years old has provided her with firsthand knowledge of both the subjects she teaches and researches at the University. As part of her work, she approaches race, ethnicity and immigration from a sociological perspective.

A University alum and faculty member since 1988, Pedraza focuses her research and syllabi on immigration. A former director of the University's American Culture Latino Studies Program, Pedraza's current work is influenced by her past.

Pedraza's family immigrated to the United States because of the 1959 Cuban Revolution. To describe her family's situation, she referenced Melinda Lopez's play, "Sonia Flew." The play is currently showing at Ann Arbor's Performance Network Theatre.

"It's about my generation. It is

about the 14,000 Cuban children who came alone. There was a rumor going around in Havana at the time of the beginning of the Revolution. They were going to round up all the children and send them to study in the Soviet Union and take them away from their parents," she explained. "This play is really about that drama."

Although she did not come to the United States alone, Pedraza said she was separated from her parents for a number of years after immigrating.

"Various family conflicts become a part of that decision and this is all very well portrayed in the play," she said.

Once she arrived in the U.S., Pedraza attended a Quaker boarding school in Maine until she finished high school. She then decided to attend the University for her undergraduate degree and graduated in 1967 with a B.A. in sociology. She went on to earn her M.A. in teach-

ing from the University as well. She received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago.

She has received the Excellence in Education Award twice from the University and the President and Provost's Award for Service, among other awards throughout her career.

As a dual citizen of the United States and Cuba, Pedraza is able to return to Cuba using a family reunification visa. The nature of her work also requires that she travel back to conduct interviews. Pedraza estimates that she has traveled there at least 12 times.

"There is a very strong dissident movement in Cuba right now. I do expect that there will be a new democratic awakening, which is how I like to think of it," she said. "And when it comes, I expect that I will be able to help in some fashion."

—HILLARY BOK



COURTESY OF SILVIA PEDRAZA
Sociology Professor Silvia Pedraza travels back to Cuba to conduct research in her native country.