

The Michigan Daily

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Ann Arbor, Michigan

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STRIVING FOR A BETTER LIFE

Thousands march on D.C. for immigrant rights

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Social Work student Dara Orellana and her family came to the United States in 1980 to escape political oppression from the Guatemalan military and to gain economic prosperity.

Nineteen years later, now into her "better life," — dressed in a red sweater, jeans and gripping a red and black flag that read "Hasta La Victoria," literally translating in English to "Until the Victory" — Orellana marched in the sunny, blue sky of Washington, D.C. on Saturday with 14 other University students and more than 15,000 other participants to draw attention to the exploitation of undocumented immigrants.

"My family immigrated here because there was a civil war. The military was raging a war against the citizens. It was becoming more difficult to live there. My father's main reason for coming to the United States was for a better life," said Orellana, from an office in Washington, D.C. where she slept only two hours the night before the protest.

She said the protesters marched in favor of giving undocumented immigrants better living conditions, wages and the chance to be granted amnesty. It was the first event of its kind and the first in a campaign surrounding the issue.

Amnesty would allow immigrants who enter the country without proper legal papers the opportunity to legalize their immigration status so they can legally work and contribute to society. Later immigrants with amnesty would be eligible for citizenship.

The U.S. Immigration Naturalization Service reports that

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SAM HOLLENSHEAD/Daily

More than 15,000 protesters gather in Washington, D.C. on Saturday in a rally to draw attention to the exploitation of illegal immigrants in the United States.