

**Operation Pedro Pan:  
An Exodus for Hope**

**Lucas Mooney**

**Senior Division**

**Individual Documentary**

**Process Paper: 500**

## **Process Paper**

This project was inspired by my desire to learn more about my ancestry. Three of my grandparents are from Cuba as is my uncle, Eduardo Robreno. Eduardo came to the United States alone at the age of 15 through the Operation Pedro Pan program. Sadly, his parents never left Cuba. Eduardo ended up in foster care in Massachusetts. He subsequently put himself through college and law school and became the first Cuban-American federal judge in the country. Eduardo is the American dream personified. I was shocked to learn that outside of Miami, Operation Pedro Pan was virtually unheard of. I wanted to use this opportunity to tell the story of the compromises and sacrifices the parents made as well as the struggles their children endured in their quest for freedom.

Interviewing my Uncle Eduardo was the starting point for my documentary. He referred me to the Operation Pedro Pan Group, a Pedro Pan community in Miami whose mission is to educate the public and document the history of the exodus. Their website, [Pedropan.org](http://Pedropan.org), provided me with many primary resources and photographs that would have been very difficult to obtain. My interview with family friend Emilio Cueto gave me another perspective about the program. I also completed extensive research at the Library of Congress, obtaining documents from the State Department and other government agencies regarding the Cuban

refugee crisis. In addition, the online Operation Pedro Pan archives from Barry University and the University of Miami were invaluable resources for photographs and oral histories.

I chose to do a documentary because I felt it was the best format to present the complicated history of the exodus. The Pedro Pan community in the United States has extensively documented their history through photographs that are readily available on the internet. These images clearly convey what these children went through. Also, by watching the firsthand accounts of the two Pedro Pans, Eduardo and Emilio, one can better understand the hardships they experienced. Finally, I have never created a documentary before, so I felt this would be an excellent opportunity to become proficient in various filmmaking and editing techniques.

Operation Pedro Pan represents a great example of conflict and compromise on multiple levels. The conflict between the Cuban parents and the Castro regime escalated as the government threatened to impose its Marxist ideology. The parents faced the heartbreaking decision on whether to send their children out of the country. Since it was much more difficult for the parents to obtain visas, they accepted the compromise of sending the children ahead to safety. They chose the lesser of the two evils. Castro also compromised in his position by offering no resistance to the exiting children. He took advantage of the situation by ridding himself of potential opponents and consolidating his power. He tightened

his grip on the parents by effectively holding them hostage. Both the parents and the children of Operation Pedro Pan paid a high price for accepting the compromise to ensure a hope for freedom.