When B. Anselme Sadiki, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, receives his Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, it will mark the latest chapter in an extraordinary life. Sadiki attempted to flee the Congo in 1991 and was nearly killed by Mobutu’s presidential guards in Kinshasa. After his school’s campus was burnt to the ground, Sadiki was placed in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. He was released in 1992 and found work with a charitable organization in Nairobi, working as a translator in French and Swahili. A quick learner, Sadiki picked up the Bantu language in just three months of living in East Africa. In Kenya, Sadiki joined a local Mennonite church. There he met an American Fulbright scholar who urged him to apply for asylum in the United States. With INS approval, Sadiki traveled to Iowa in 1994 to stay with his American friend. He then followed him to Idaho when the scholar was awarded a teaching position at Idaho State University. Although he could speak only a few words of English, Sadiki enrolled in the university and studied social work. He also served as the school’s director of international admissions, which enabled him to support his family in Africa, which had been displaced after civil war broke out in his home town following the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Although he was offered a full scholarship to continue graduate studies at Idaho State, his heart was set on Columbia. Sadiki applied only to SIPA and was accepted in the class of 2001. At Columbia, Sadiki specialized in African affairs and interned for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in New York and in Thailand. He assisted in the implementation of a democratic governance pilot project, and currently works part-time as a research assistant for the United Nations. He co-edits a UNDP HIV/AIDS newsletter. Sadiki hopes to work with a non-governmental organization post-graduation this spring, possibly returning to the Congo.

A Glimpse of Columbia History ...

The Class of 1923—First-year students from the Class of 1923 pose for a photo taken at the class dinner on March 10th, 1920.

Congo Refugee to Graduate from SIPA

W hen B. Anselme Sadiki, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, receives his Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, it will mark the latest chapter in an extraordinary life. Sadiki attempted to flee the Congo in 1991 and was nearly killed by Mobutu’s presidential guards in Kinshasa. After his school’s campus was burnt to the ground, Sadiki was placed in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. He was released in 1992 and found work with a charitable organization in Nairobi, working as a translator in French and Swahili. A quick learner, Sadiki picked up the Bantu language in just three months of living in East Africa. In Kenya, Sadiki joined a local Mennonite church. There he met an American Fulbright scholar who urged him to apply for asylum in the United States. With INS approval, Sadiki traveled to Iowa in 1994 to stay with his American friend. He then followed him to Idaho when the scholar was awarded a teaching position at Idaho State University. Although he could speak only a few words of English, Sadiki enrolled in the university and studied social work. He also served as the school’s director of international admissions, which enabled him to support his family in Africa, which had been displaced after civil war broke out in his home town following the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Although he was offered a full scholarship to continue graduate studies at Idaho State, his heart was set on Columbia. Sadiki applied only to SIPA and was accepted in the class of 2001. At Columbia, Sadiki specialized in African affairs and interned for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in New York and in Thailand. He assisted in the implementation of a democratic governance pilot project, and currently works part-time as a research assistant for the United Nations. He co-edits a UNDP HIV/AIDS newsletter. Sadiki hopes to work with a non-governmental organization post-graduation this spring, possibly returning to the Congo.

GSAS Graduate’s Research Could Shed Light on Evolution

A na Luz Porzecanski graduates from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences as a world expert in evolutionary biology. In 2001, Columbia established the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology to prepare scholars to tackle the critically important links between ecology, evolutionary biology and biodiversity conservation. Porzecanski has been examining how current patterns of avian diversity evolved in the arid regions of South America. Her research could shed light on broader questions of how life developed on the planet. She led an expedition to the Bolivian Chaco, in conjunction with Bolivian natural history museums, and helped add several new species to the country’s collections. She works closely with the American Museum of Natural History to study the geographic variation, species limits and distribution of birds in the southern hemisphere. Porzecanski also has worked with colleagues in her native Uruguay to examine conflicts between rice production and habitat conservation.

Porzecanski’s wide-range of interests, from biogeography to environmental policy, have led her to take advantage of Columbia’s diverse offerings. She has taken classes at the School of International and Public Affairs, earning a certificate in environmental policy, and is one of the first graduate students to be affiliated with the Center for Environmental Research and Conservation, a joint venture of Columbia University and several organizations, including the Museum of Natural History and New York Botanical Garden. Porzecanski plans to continue her work at the Museum of Natural History, developing education and conservation projects in South America. She hopes someday to play a role in implementing sustainable development policies in Uruguay.