

Commencement 2003

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Profiles of the Graduates

Visually Impaired Rhodes Scholar Will Study at Oxford

Cyrus Habib is visually impaired, a fact that has never limited his achievement. Despite being blind for most of his life, Habib has become a Rhodes Scholar and a Truman Scholar, graduating from Columbia College with a major in English. His tireless intellectual curiosity also led him to studies in computer science and Middle Eastern and Asian languages and cultures. Habib employs his computer skills to foster new opportunities for disabled users and works as an advocate for students with disabilities on campus and in the community. He is a pianist, an avid skier, and holds a black belt in karate. He has even taught karate, blindfolding his students so they learn to "feel" their opponent without being able to see them. Habib, who is from Bellevue, Washington, plans to study modern comparative literature at Oxford.



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Ecuadorian Immigrant Is Valedictorian For School of General Studies

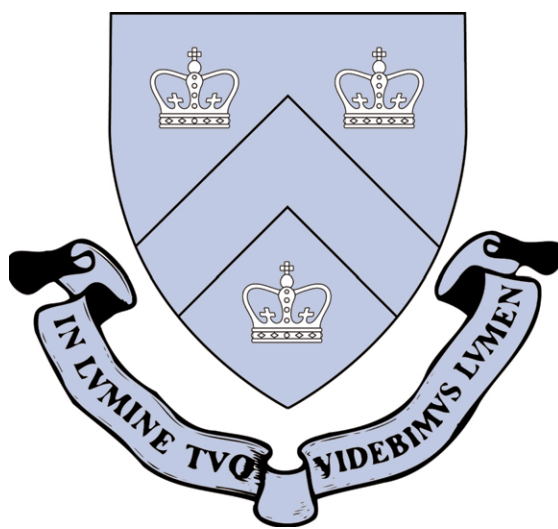
Carlos Barrezueta, formerly a law student in Ecuador, is the 2003 valedictorian for Columbia's School of General Studies. This is especially noteworthy because Carlos had only limited English language skills when he came to America a few years ago with his family. Two months after his arrival, he applied to Columbia. He won a full-paid scholarship through the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS). This program awards outstanding first-generation college students who are members of a historically under-represented group and who have high financial need with a Columbia undergraduate education.

At Columbia, Barrezueta had a double major in political science and history. He also worked in Columbia's Latin American Institute. Overcoming all the difficulties of acquiring fluency in a second language, he has maintained high academic performance. His grade point average in his first semester at Columbia was 4.15, and his overall GPA is 4.0. Barrezueta's next academic goal is to study comparative legislation and international law. He has been accepted at Columbia, Cornell and Yale law schools.

CC Student Applies Skills To Middle East Crisis

Bryan Berkett, of Los Angeles, is graduating from Columbia College with a B.A. in English and extensive study in economics. Bryan has applied his entrepreneurial skills toward finding solutions that can reduce conflict in troubled parts of the world. He recently partnered with an Israeli and a Palestinian to create Jozoor Microfinance, a program that provides microloans and business training to young Palestinian males. Jozoor has generated interest from several international microfinance banks, and from senior officials in the Israeli government and the Palestinian administration.

In order to bring a greater degree of constructive dialogue to the campus debate over regional conflicts such as Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan and Northern Ireland, Bryan last year founded Toward Reconciliation, a student organization that focuses attention on innovative ways to resolve tension between peoples at the grassroots level. Following graduation, Bryan will devote his time to launching Jozoor's first efforts to reduce despair and violence through economic opportunity.



Engineering Class President Also Named Class Valedictorian

Amar Doshi is the 2003 class president and valedictorian for the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. He is graduating with a B.S. in electrical engineering.

In his first year at Columbia, Doshi became involved in student government through the Engineering Student Council. He was later elected class vice president and then class president, a position he held for three years. Doshi also distinguished himself scholastically, finding the undergraduate liberal arts core curriculum and engineering coursework an intellectual challenge that helped him develop technical fluency, inductive and deductive thinking skills, and communication skills.

Doshi graduates with multiple honors, including the Edwin Howard Armstrong Award, presented by the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, and the Thomas "Pop" Harrington Medal, presented to the Engineering student who best exemplifies outstanding qualities of character. Following graduation, Doshi will join the international management consulting firm Bain and Company as an associate consultant.

Soccer Prodigy Will Continue Work in Environmental Biology

Myrilyn Osei-Agyemang (Mimi) has managed to combine an international athletic career with her studies at Columbia College. An avid soccer player since childhood, Osei-Agyemang became a member of the Ghana Women's National Soccer Team when she was 16. She qualified for the team through her Ghanaian-born father, Simon Osei-Agyemang, Engineering '82. Osei-Agyemang's team played against the Nigeria Women's National Team in the summer of 1998. During her stay in Africa, she contracted malaria. This experience later sparked an academic interest in the treatment of tropical diseases.

Osei-Agyemang was awarded the prestigious Kluge Scholarship to attend Columbia. This program is designed to benefit outstanding young adults from under-represented communities. Although she eagerly joined the Columbia Women's Soccer Team, a string of serious injuries sustained during soccer practices left her unable to do any physical activity at all. When she recovered, Osei-Agyemang continued to play at home in Oregon for the Portland Rain, a semi-professional women's team, during summer seasons.

Since her sophomore year, Osei-Agyemang has conducted clinical research on developing treatments for malaria and leishmania, two tropical parasitic diseases. This research formed the basis for her senior thesis. Osei-Agyemang will receive a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Biology. Following graduation, she will continue her research on malaria and leishmania while preparing for the 2003 Women's World Cup in the fall.

Engineering Student Earns Degree Online Through CVN

Steve Ngalo will receive an M.S. in electrical engineering from The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, but commencement marks the first time he has set foot on the Columbia campus. Ngalo pursued his graduate degree through Columbia Video Network (CVN), the distance-learning program of Columbia University.

CVN offers online graduate study through the Internet, which enabled Ngalo to "attend" course lectures via streamed video on his home computer.

Ngalo's Columbia degree represents the culmination of an educational odyssey that spans three continents. He was born in Tanzania, but completed his undergraduate study in engineering at the University of Limerick, Ireland. Ngalo now lives and works in The Hague, Holland, where he is a systems engineer for KPN EuroRings, a leading European data and IP network provider.

N.Y. Times Scholarship Winner Graduates Phi Beta Kappa

Denise de las Nueces is Phi Beta Kappa, a New York Times Scholarship winner and a Kluge Scholar. After graduating from Columbia College, she will attend Harvard Medical School.

The daughter of immigrants, Denise spent her childhood in poverty in Washington Heights, hampered by shyness that caused her to stutter. When she was in eighth grade she became a member of Columbia's Double Discovery Center (DDC), a non-profit youth service agency that tutors students from low-income families. Denise overcame her shyness by forcing herself to speak in front of people and developed a love of science from discarded astronomy books that her father, a doorman, brought home. Denise is chair of the Latino Alumni Association of Columbia University, a group that organizes mentor programs joining students and alumni. She is also Columbia College's 2003 salutatorian.

