



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL
ASSOCIATION



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**THREE CARIBBEAN JOURNALISTS HONORED
FOR EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM REPORTING**

Awards Designed to Raise Awareness of Impact of Tourism in the Region

MIAMI, Florida (June 17, 2007) – American Express, in association with the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), honored four outstanding members of the Caribbean press with the 5th Annual American Express Tourism Media Awards, at a special awards ceremony at the opening of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Conference (CHTC) in Miami.

The awards are designed to raise awareness about the impact of tourism throughout the region by fostering excellence in tourism reporting in the Caribbean. Winners were awarded and recognized for quality in professional reporting on tourism and tourism development issues in the Caribbean.

Gabriel Parra, a reporter with Caribbean Business, a Puerto Rico-based newspaper, was named Travel & Tourism Writer of the Year, a new award presented for the first time in 2007.

Claudia Gardner, reporter for the Jamaica Gleaner, was awarded for Excellence in Print Journalism.

Els Kroon, a freelance writer for the Curaçao newspaper Amigoe, received the award for Travel Features.

“These reporters and writers are doing an extraordinary job of bringing the world of tourism to the people of the Caribbean,” said Dianelys Rodríguez, VP of Establishment Services - Latin America & Caribbean. “These issues that they are bringing to light provide an important awareness for the region as they help us all focus on the importance of travel and tourism which, in turn, helps to stimulate a better understanding of the industry.”

The Travel & Tourism Writer of the Year for Overall Excellence in Tourism Reporting went to Gabriel Parra, a reporter for the Puerto Rico-based Caribbean Business newspaper. Parra’s body of work contained a series of outstanding articles with a clear engrossing style that presented important issues in a most readable format -- including two excerpts that are noted here:

With a net growth of zero new hotel rooms on the island in nearly four decades [Puerto Rico tourism industry] is still hazy after all these years. A lack of vision and no master plan sees Puerto Rico tourism industry bargaining from a position of weakness. - "The Industry Operation Bootstrap Left Behind"

Projects such as Cap Cana and Roco Ki in the Dominican Republic have eclipsed Puerto Rico's once dominant luster as the shining star of the Caribbean tourism industry. Cap Cana has our cake and eats it too. The Dominican Republic's full frontal assault on the affluent U.S. tourism market is eating away at Puerto Rico's market share because of internal squabbling. - "The World's Next Great Destination is...Right Next Door"

Claudia Gardner, reporter for the Jamaica Gleaner, won the Print Journalism Award for her three articles on "Marine Litter Threatens Eco-Tourism," "Environmental Ebb and Flow in 2006," and "Our Coral Reefs are Disappearing." This series offered an impactful look at a crucial resource that needs protection in our Caribbean region. Her research and writing provided outstanding examples of reporting that would be recognized anywhere in the world.

Els Kroon, a freelance writer for the Curaçaoan newspaper Amigoe, received the award for Travel Features for her series of articles promoting Curaçao and, in particular, windsurfing in Curaçao both locally and internationally. Her articles were printed in several languages, including English and Dutch, and promoted with vivid descriptions the wonderful water sports such as windsurfing and sailing with all the color that a talented writer possesses.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) joined the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) and American Express to present the annual Caribbean Tourism Media Awards. CHA and American Express established the awards program in 2002 with the aim of raising regional awareness about the impact of tourism, by fostering excellence in tourism reporting in the region. CTO, having launched a worldwide travel writer awards program in 2003, has merged its Caribbean journalist awards into the CHA program to generate a stronger impact. The program is open to journalists in print, television, radio, and Internet outlets in the Caribbean. To celebrate the 5th anniversary, a fifth award category was added to recognize a feature article that promotes intra-Caribbean travel.

Criteria

Entries for the "American Express Caribbean Tourism Media Awards" are evaluated taking into consideration the following criteria: originality of the subject; quality of the investigation / research; quality of treatment; ability to relate tourism to social, economic, and environmental issues; and potential impact on the public and policy makers.

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