Laureate *News*

ANTHONY N. SABGA AWARDS
Caribbean Excellence



Dr Diva Amon (centre, behind T&T flag) and her research team as they embarked on the first-ever deep-sea survey of the ocean around Trinidad and Tobago. Photo courtesy: Mónika Naranjo González/Schmidt Ocean Institute



About

The Anthony N Sabga Awards was established in 2005, to recognise and support excellence in human endeavour that uplifts the Caribbean.

Since then, we've awarded 71 laureates, presenting them with over TT$34 million to further their careers.

The Laureate News is a regular publication – all about our laureates and the infrastructure that selects and supports them.

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Courtesy Mónika Naranjo González/ Schmidt Ocean Institute







A Graneledone octopus – a suspected new species; a symbiotic brittle star clinging to a deep-sea coral; and an eelpout lying on a bed of chemosynthetic mussels.

All photos courtesy ROV SuBastian/Schmidt Ocean Institute

What the Caribbean researchers accomplished

- Discovered 20 suspected new species
- Mapped over 11,000 square kms of uncharted seafloor
- Collected over 700 specimens to be housed at UWI St Augustine's Zoology Museum

Diva, out to protect T&T's deep sea

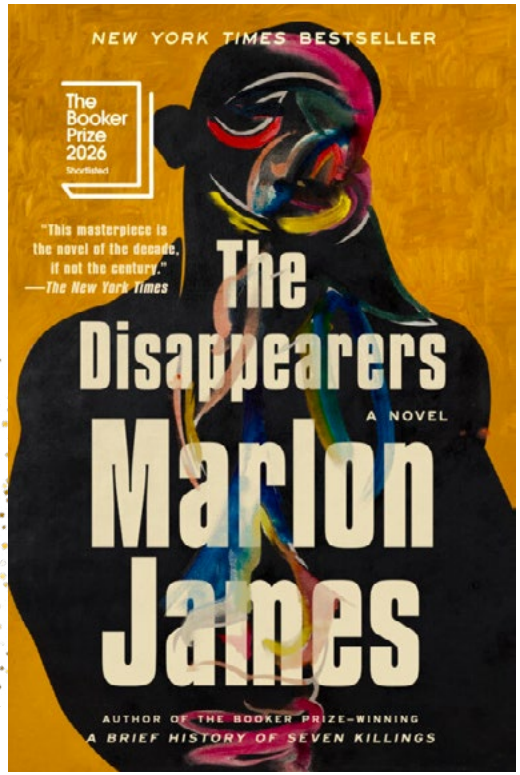
2024 Science & Technology Laureate, marine biologist Dr Diva Amon, recently spent a month aboard the Schmidt Ocean Institute's R/V Falkor (too) leading a team of Caribbean marine scientists on the most comprehensive deep-sea survey ever conducted of the ocean around T&T.

The team mapped 13% of the country's marine territory and engaged an online community with regular updates on their findings and live streams from their Remotely Operated Vehicle. The sights ranged from a black swallower fish stuffed with a meal larger than its own body to crabs feeding on the remains of a manta ray at a depth of more than 1,000 metres.

Dr Amon, who is also founder and director of the non-profit SpeSeas, which advocates for marine conservation, noted that less than 1% of T&T's waters are protected.

"You won't protect what you don't know," she added. "Every map, every data point and every specimen strengthened our ability to be true stewards of our country. Marine protected areas aren't a luxury or a 'someday' idea: They are how we safeguard these ecosystems before we lose them. And they are how we secure the ocean's benefits for generations of Trinbagonians to come."

For more on Diva's expedition, check out our Facebook page, here





Marlon pens "the book of the decade"

Jamaican novelist Marlon James, our 2022 Arts & Letters Laureate, recently had literature lovers buzzing when a New York Times book reviewer called his recent novel, The Disappearers, "the novel of the decade and possibly of the century thus far."

Writing in the Times in September, reviewer Dwight Garner called the 600-page novel based on a homophobic hate crime that took place in 1980s Jamaica, "a maximalist's banquet… humane, blood-flecked, disturbing and sustaining."

The Disappearers was released in September and has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize, which James has already won, for A Brief History of Seven Killings, in 2015.





Prof Stephenson grapples with climate change

Climate scientist Professor Tannecia Stephenson, our 2026 Science & Technology Laureate (Joint), is using her cash award to grapple with the causes and impacts of climate change.

The Jamaican climate scientist, who is Co-Director of the Climate Studies Group Mona, used part of her award (received in our awards ceremony in Guyana in June) to equip the E-Mobility Lab at UWI Mona with 10 kilowatts of solar panels and a 32 kilowatt-hour battery bank "courtesy of the ANSA McAL Foundation through its Sabga Award." The lab showcases an electric vehicle used to educate students about EV potential and the practicalities of EV maintenance.

But Professor Stephenson wasn't finished there!

On behalf of the Foundation and the Awards, she also partially funded a Hurricane Melissa data symposium in October that engaged research scientists and government agencies to strengthen disaster data for resilient recovery and reconstruction.

The symposium was held on October 28, 2026 – the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Melissa, which caused an estimated US$12 billion in damage to Jamaica, making it the costliest hurricane in Jamaica's recorded history.

You can watch the entire symposium here



Sheena and global systems strategist Melissa Howell, outside ANSA McAL's Tatil Building in September



'Being lovely' by Sheena Rose, released as a limited-edition print for TTFF's 20th anniversary

Sheena scopes the creative sector

Barbadian artist Sheena Rose and her colleague Melissa Howell are in the early stages of scoping the Caribbean creative sector.

On a visit to the ANSA McAL Foundation in September, Howell noted that Sheena, our 2026 Arts & Letters Laureate, is one of only a few globally-recognized Caribbean visual artists who have stayed in the region to work and produce, rather than emigrating to the world's metropolitan arts centres.

Quantifying the output and economic value of Caribbean culture, Howell said, would be a step towards ensuring that "artists don't have to leave to be valued and respected."

Sheena was recently commissioned by the TTFF (Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival) to produce a limited-edition print for the festival's 20th anniversary. The prints were restricted to 10 signed copies and were on sale for TT$6,000.

More on Sheena's TTFF prints here



Professor Carrington receives her Anthony N Sabga Award in 2022 from then President of T&T, Paula Mae-Weekes. In the background is ANSA McAL Foundation Chairman, Andrew Sabga

Honours for Prof Carrington

Virologist, Professor Christine Carrington, was honoured in September with yet another award to add to an expanding cabinet of accolades. Our 2022 Science & Technology Laureate received the Inspirational Advocate Award from the International Women's Forum of Trinidad & Tobago (IWFTT), acknowledging over 30 years of experience researching infectious diseases, with expertise in genomic surveillance, virus evolution and phylodynamics.

Professor Carrington, who led a team at UWI St Augustine identifying COVID-19 variants during the pandemic in the early 2020s, has also been awarded the Chaconia Medal Gold by the government of T&T.

Her fellow laureate, marine biologist Dr Diva Amon, received an Emerging Leader Award from the IWFTT at the same event, for pioneering research on deep-ocean ecosystems.

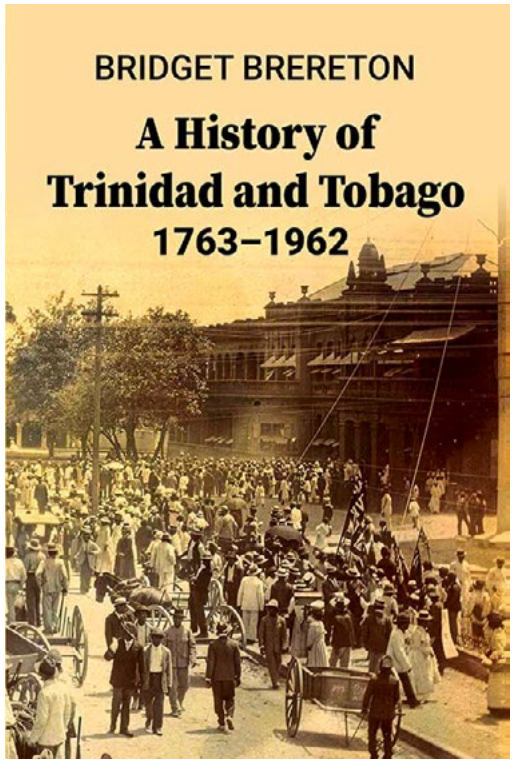


Congrats on 42 years, Father!

Our very first Public & Civic Contributions Laureate, Monsignor Gregory Ramkissoon, recently celebrated 42 years as a priest. The founder of Mustard Seed Communities – a faith-based nonprofit providing lifelong care to kids and adults with disabilities, children with HIV, and housing and training for teen mothers – was selected as a laureate in 2006. Since then, Mustard Seed Communities has grown by leaps and bounds, establishing communities of care beyond Jamaica in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.

Congrats, Father Gregory! Your example continues to inspire us.





And in news of the infrastructure that supports the Awards

The Guyana Prize for Drama goes to…

Dr Seeta Shah Roath, a longtime member of the Guyana Country Nominating Committee, has won the Guyana Prize for Literature Award 2025 in the Drama category for her play Kisna: From Whence We Came– British India to British Guiana.

Dr Roath, a lecturer at University of Guyana's Centre for Communication Studies, has been researching Indian indentureship since the late 80s, when she produced her first documentary on the subject.

Kisna tells the story of a child who survives a theatre fire and is later indentured. Research for the play drew on newspapers, court records, oral histories and interviews with descendants of indentured labourers.

And in other publishing news, outgoing member of the Eminent Persons Panel, Professor Bridget Brereton, has substantially revised her influential "History of Modern Trinidad: 1783-1962" (published in 1981) to include Tobago's history in a much more fulsome way.

The historian and author told the Daily Express that the new edition "A History of Trinidad and Tobago: 1763-1962" was prompted by demand, the passage of time, and the need to include Tobago's place in the wider national narrative. The book will be available at Metropolitan Book Suppliers, Port of Spain from mid-November.



Being greeted by Prime Minister Andrew Holness at a reception following the Presentation of National Honours and Awards (Photo courtesy Jamaica Observer)



Order of Jamaica for Governor Byles.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Dr June Soomer of St Lucia, a member of the Regional Eminent Persons Panel (EPP), has been presented with a Caribbean Global Award for Global Advocacy that advances "global understanding and unity." The award was presented at the Cumberland Hotel in London in September.

And in other news of the EPP, member Richard Byles – an economist and former President & CEO of Sagicor Group Jamaica – stepped down as Governor of the Central Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) in August, after seven years at the helm.

At the BOJ, he inherited a mandate to not only manage monetary policy but lead financial sector oversight in a period of evolving economic challenges and global uncertainty.

Soon after leaving office, Mr Byles was conferred with the Order of Jamaica, for exceptional service in business and finance, at a ceremony on Jamaica's Heroes Day in October.