

RAYOS AWARDS

NEW YORK CITY

The first annual Rayos Awards took place at the Las Americas Conference Center in the headquarters of the Hispanic Federation in New York City.

Hosted by LATINO Magazine, the Rayos Awards honored individuals who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields of endeavor, and in so doing given



Who, me? Lillian Rodríguez Lopez and board member Indrani Franchini, Pfizer.

back to our community. It is fitting that the honorees came together at the Hispanic Federation, an organization that works with other groups to promote the social, political, and economic well-being of Latinos. Founded in 1990, the Hispanic Federation has grown to provide a wide range of services that strengthen Hispanic families and institutions.

During the luncheon, the first award was presented by LATINO Magazine to CNN anchor Soledad O'Brien, who hardly needed an introduction. Just a few weeks before, her documentary *Latino in America* had aired,



Soledad O'Brien gave the keynote address at the Rayos Awards luncheon.

exploring changing Latino communities around the country. In her keynote remarks, Soledad described the need for adequate coverage of Latino issues in the media.

"We are the general market," she noted. "We deserve coverage



LATINO Publisher Alfredo Estrada welcomes the guests at the Rayos Awards in New York City.

of all our stories. Those are stories that matter, not just to us but to everyone."

The next award was presented by Indrani Franchini, Pfizer's Chief Compliance Counsel, to Lillian Rodríguez Lopez, the President of the Hispanic Federation. A board member of the Hispanic Federation, Indrani eloquently described Lillian's dedication and commitment to the organization [for a profile of Lillian, see *Strength in Numbers*, p. 42].

Shiree Cooks, Associate Manager of Business Diversity at Prudential, then took the stage to present an award to Beatriz Minetta, the President and CEO of Argent Systems, an IT service provider which was named Minority Business of the Year for New York City in 2008.

Following her came Millie Uriarte, who was recently promoted to Director of On-shore Latin Sales for Continental Airlines. Millie joined the airline in 1991 as



Flying in style, Alfred Placeres received an award from Continental.



Meeting cute at the Rayos Awards. Alfredo Estrada between Indrani Franchini and Ivette Fernandez, Pfizer.

an airport service agent and has held several sales- and service-related positions with the airline before her present position. The recipient was Alfred Placeres, president of the New York State Federation of Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, who was recognized for his advocacy on behalf of immigrants and small businesses.

The final award was presented by Eric Eve, Senior Vice President, Global community Relations, for Citi. He introduced Paul Quintero, the CFO and COO of Accion USA, an organization committed to bringing affordable microfinance solutions to small business owners. It is part of the U.S. Accion Network, the largest domestic microlending network, with over \$272 million lent since its inception in 1991.

LATINO Publisher Alfredo Estrada capped off the event by raffling off two airline tickets donated by Continental, the Official Airline of the Rayos Awards. Each attendee had placed at least one business card in a fishbowl. Coincidentally, the winner was Indrani Franchini, whose parents hail from Guyana and Puerto Rico.

"I never win anything," said the incredulous lawyer, who vowed to go someplace with a golf course.

Many thanks to the Hispanic Federation and the sponsors of the Rayos Awards: Pfizer, Prudential, Continental, and Citi. ¡Gracias!



Paul Quintero describes the mission of Accion USA in helping entrepreneurs.



Shiree Cooks, Prudential, and Beatriz Minetta.



Soledad O'Brien and Millie Uriarte, Continental.

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