



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Miriam Colon

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Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Miriam Colón

Miriam Colón was a theater, film and television actor, a defender of universal access to the arts, and founder of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, she launched her career at the age of 12 and starred in her first film, *Los peloteros* (The Baseball Players) for the legendary División de Educación de la Comunidad de Puerto Rico (DivEdCo).

Ms. Colón studied at the Actors Studio in New York under Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg. In Hollywood, she joined the cast of popular television series, including *Bonanza* and *Gunsmoke* and films like *One-Eyed Jacks* and *The Appaloosa* with Marlon Brando. She won

over audiences, together with Al Pacino, in the role of Mama Montana in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. Other starring appearances were in John Sayles' *Lone Star* and *City of Hope*, Billy Bob Thornton's *All the Pretty Horses*, and as the principal role in the film version of Rudolfo Anaya's novel *Bless Me, Última*.

Ms. Colón's work on stage was enduring, highlighted by the success of *The Oxcart*, by René Marqués in New York in 1966, starring with Raúl Juliá under Lloyd Richards' direction. The following year, Ms. Colón founded the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. At a time when there were no other models for producing bilingual theater in Spanish and in English, Ms. Colón served and provided resources, education and training in the arts to youth and adults of Caribbean and Latin American origin. She was a pioneer in the field, bringing to light hundreds of playwrights and important works. Later, in consolidating the fusion with Bronx's *Pregones Theater*, Ms. Colón ensured the continuation of that legacy for future generations.

Throughout her formidable career, Ms. Colón received numerous awards and recognitions, among them eight *honoris causa* doctoral degrees, Golden *Agüeybaná*, the *García Lorca Award* from the University of Granada and the *Image Award*. In 2006, the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture dedicated its Theater Festival to her. In 2015, Ms. Colón received the *National Medal of the Arts*, the highest recognition for an artist in the United States, from then-President Barack Obama.

For countless artists across the nation, Miriam Colón was a wealth of imagination and courage.