

**Miriam Colón-Valle**  
***Doctor of Humane Letters***

As a lifetime advocate for equitable access to the arts, the founder of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, and a trailblazing stage, film, and television actress, you, Miriam Colón-Valle, are a true Latina icon.

Born and raised in Ponce, Puerto Rico, you started in the theater at the age of 12, and in just three short years, you landed your first feature film role, as Lolita in *Los peloteros*, or *The Ball Players*. The movie was a production of the civic-minded DIVEDCO, the Division of Community Education of Puerto Rico, a program that sought to stimulate artistic production. At the urging of your teachers and mentors, you moved to New York City to further your training and gained admission to the Actors Studio after a single audition before famed actor-directors Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg.

Your stage credits include performances on Broadway and at Minneapolis's Guthrie Theater and Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum. Your long list of Hollywood credits includes the television series *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, and *NYPD Blue*, as well as the films *One-Eyed Jacks* and *The Appaloosa*, both opposite Marlon Brando. You also played Mama Montana in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*, starring Al Pacino, and had memorable roles in John Sayles's *Lone Star* and *City of Hope*, Sydney Pollack's *Sabrina*, and Billy Bob Thornton's *All the Pretty Horses*. More recently, you were honored with the Imagen Award for your title role in 2013's *Bless Me, Última*, Carl Franklin's adaptation of the classic Chicano novel by Rudolfo Anaya.

While garnering success, you remained devoted to the PRTT, the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, which you launched in 1967 after the successful production of René Marqués's play *La Carreta*, or *The Oxcart*, at the Greenwich Mews Theater in New York. The play, also starring Raúl Juliá and Lucy Boscana and directed by the acclaimed Lloyd Richards, tells of a family who migrates from the countryside in Puerto Rico to New York. While performing in that play, you realized that the formal theater setting made the production inaccessible to large segments of the city's population, including many of its economically disadvantaged Spanish-speaking residents. This inspired you to literally take the play to the streets, marking the beginning of the bilingual theater movement. The PRTT is credited with introducing important new voices to the American theater, securing meaningful arts access and participation for all, and establishing a steady Latino presence within the great Broadway Theater District in Times Square.

Your sustained creative activity and humanitarian vision have earned you many awards, including a 2014 National Medal of Arts, which was presented to you by President Barack Obama; a 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures; and a 1993 Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Performance. As you remain an important and highly visible spokesperson for the Latino community and its artists, you are one of the pioneers featured in *Visiones: Latino Art & Culture*, an award-winning documentary series produced by Hector Galán for PBS.

In recognition of your extraordinary accomplishments as a pioneer of Hispanic theater, helping to open doors for generations of Hispanic actors, as well as your 60-year career in entertainment, I have the honor of presenting you, Miriam Colón-Valle, for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.