

Actress Miriam Colon, who played Ultima, dies

Prolific actress was also seen in 'Scarface,' 'Lone Star,' many TV episodes

BY RUSSELL CONTRERAS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miriam Colon, a pioneering actress in U.S. Latino New York theater who starred in films alongside Marlon Brando and Al Pacino, died Friday.

Her husband, Fred Valle, told The Associated Press that Colon died early Friday in a New York hospital because of complications from a pulmonary infection. She was 80 years old.

Colon — whose image appeared on posters throughout the American Southwest for her role in the 2013 movie adaptation of quintessential Chicano novel “Bless Me, Ultima” — had been active as late as 2015 with a cameo appearance on the AMC-TV series “Better Call Saul.”

Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, Colon participated in the theater during her school years and was allowed to audit classes in the drama department at the University of Puerto Rico before she graduated from high school.

She came to Los Angeles in the 1950s to study at the Actors Studio and earned small roles in various television shows and films.

During her career, she appeared in more than 90 films and more than 250 television episodes on programs including “Bronco,” “Bonanza” and “Law & Order.” But Colon is widely known as the Cuban-American mother of Tony



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Miriam Colon is awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2015 by President Barack Obama.

Montana, played by Al Pacino, in the 1983 movie “Scarface.” Her voice later appeared in underground hip hop songs as her character chided Pacino for his role in the drug trade.

Colon would go on to star as Tejana restaurateur Mercedes Cruz in the 1996 film “Lone Star.” In that film, she played a former immigrant living in the country illegally who lived near the Rio Grande and was quick to call federal immigration authorities on immigrants crossing the border.

Colon earned wide acclaim for her role as the New Mexico Hispanic healer Ultima in the movie “Bless Me, Ultima.”

In 2015, President Barack Obama presented the National Medal of Art to Colon for her work as an actress and theater founder.