

VIOLA DAVIS

Biography

Viola Davis is a critically revered award-winning actress of film, television and theater known for her intriguingly diverse roles.

Davis is currently starring on the drama "How to Get Away with Murder," from ABC Studios and Shondaland. The series, which drew 14.24 million viewers during its 2014 premiere, is a sexy, suspense-driven legal thriller that centers on ambitious law students and their brilliant and mysterious criminal defense professor. In 2015, Davis received the *Screen Actors Guild Award* for "Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series," in addition to becoming the first African American to receive the *Primetime Emmy Award* for "Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series." This year, she received her second *Screen Actors Guild Award* and her second Emmy nomination for portraying Annalise Keating. Season 3 premiered in September.

As her credits attest, Davis is in constant demand for a wide variety of roles. This spring, Davis wrapped production on "Fences" for Paramount Pictures. The film is starring, directed and produced by Denzel Washington and is adapted from August Wilson's play. Davis also starred with Washington in the 2010 revival of the play on Broadway. Her portrayal of Rose Maxson brought her a *Tony Award*, as well as the *Drama Critics' Circle Award*, *Outer Critics Circle Award* and *Drama Desk Award*. "Fences" was also honored with the *Tony Award* for "Best Play Revival" and was the most profitable theater production of the year. The film adaptation will release nationwide on December 25th and has already garnered stellar reviews.

This spring, Davis will begin production on "Widows." Directed by Steve McQueen and written by Gillian Flynn, the film follows a group of widows after their criminal husbands are killed during a heist. Most recently, Davis was seen in the highly anticipated "Suicide Squad" with Will Smith, Margot Robbie and Jared Leto. The film broke the all-time opening record for August with \$135 million. In 2015, Davis starred opposite Jennifer Lopez in "Lila & Eve," the story of two mothers whose children are killed in drive-by shootings. Davis also took the reins as a producer on this film, along with her husband, Julius Tennon, for their company, JuVee Productions. Last summer, Davis completed production on "Custody" co-starring Catalina Sandino Moreno and Hayden Panettiere and directed by James Lapine. The film was also produced by JuVee Productions and premiered at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival.

In 2014, Davis reteamed with Tate Taylor ("The Help") on the James Brown biopic "Get on Up." The film starred Chadwick Boseman as the 'Godfather of Soul' James Brown and chronicled his rise from extreme poverty to become one of the most influential musicians in history. Davis starred as James' mother, 'Susie Brown.'

In 2012, Davis received an *Oscar* nomination for "Best Actress" for her portrayal of the heart-broken but stoic 'Aibileen Clark' in "The Help." Emma Stone, Bryce Dallas Howard and Octavia Spencer also starred. The film adaptation of Kathryn Stockett's best-selling novel, directed by Tate Taylor, was set in Jackson, Mississippi, during the turbulent 1960s, and was also nominated for an *Academy Award* for "Best Picture." Davis won the

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Screen Actors Guild and *Critics' Choice* "Best Actress" Awards for her portrayal of 'Aibileen,' and was also nominated for a *Golden Globe* and *British Academy Film Award*. The film won a *Screen Actors Guild Award* for "Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture" and a *Critics' Choice Award* for "Best Acting Ensemble."

In 2008, Davis starred in the critically revered film "Doubt" based on John Patrick Shanley's *Tony Award* winning play, where she portrayed 'Mrs. Miller,' the mother of a young boy who piques the fascination of a Catholic priest. Davis shared the screen alongside Meryl Streep, Amy Adams and Phillip Seymour Hoffman. Davis was nominated for a *Golden Globe Award*, *Screen Actors Guild Award* and an *Academy Award* for "Best Supporting Actress." The National Board of Review recognized Davis with the *Breakthrough Award* and she was also honored by the Santa Barbara Film Festival as a *Virtuoso*.

Formed in 2012, Davis and her husband founded a multi-ethnic production company, JuVee Productions, committed to excellence in film, television, and theatre. As their first project, they optioned the rights to Ann Weisgarber's 2008 book The Personal History of Rachel DuPree. DuPree, a fictional early 20th-century Chicagoan, leaves home to become a rancher's wife in South Dakota's Badlands. The neighboring white settlers rely on each other during 1917's crippling summer drought, but the pregnant DuPree is isolated by both race and geography. The story focuses on her struggle to survive and provide for her family, but also examines the harsh racial struggles facing the rarely-explored lives of black pioneers. JuVee Productions' other projects include the story of Harriet Tubman, a leader of the Underground Railroad which will be produced in association with HBO Films; Vee-Jay Records, a label that released the first Beatles tracks in America; and a Barbara Jordan biopic.

In 2013, film audiences saw Davis in four vastly different projects. In the film adaptation of the popular science fiction novel "Ender's Game," Davis portrayed military psychologist 'Major Gwen Anderson,' opposite Asa Butterfield, Hailee Steinfeld, Abigail Breslin and Harrison Ford. In Warner Bros.' "Prisoners," a dark thriller about two families shattered by the kidnapping of their daughters on Thanksgiving Day, she starred alongside Jake Gyllenhaal, Hugh Jackman, Maria Bello, Terrence Howard and Paul Dano. In "Beautiful Creatures," Davis joined Emma Thompson and Jeremy Irons in telling the tale of two teens confronting a multi-generational curse. Warner Brothers and Alcon produced the film.

In, 2012, Davis starred alongside Maggie Gyllenhaal and Holly Hunter in "Won't Back Down," a film that focused on two women who struggle to make a difference at a local school. She also co-starred with Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock in "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close," a post 9/11 story directed by Stephen Daldry and nominated for "Best Picture" at the *2012 Academy Awards*. Warner Brothers and Paramount Pictures released the film on January 20, 2012.

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That same year, Davis had a six-episode arc in the Showtime's hit series "United States of Tara," written by Academy-Award winner Diablo Cody. Davis portrayed 'Lynda P. Frazier,' a wildly eccentric artist and friend to 'Tara' (Toni Collette).

Davis won the *Independent Spirit Award* for "Best Supporting Female" in 2003 for her performance in "Antwone Fisher." Additional film credits include, "Blackhat," "The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby," "Knight and Day," "Nights in Rodanthe," "Madea Goes to Jail," "State of Play," "Law Abiding Citizen," "Disturbia," "Eat, Pray, Love," "It's Kind of a Funny Story," "The Architect," "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" and "Far From Heaven." She worked with director Steven Soderbergh on "Solaris," "Traffic" and "Out of Sight," and in "Syriana," which Soderbergh produced for director Stephen Gaghan.

In 2004, Davis starred in the stage in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Lynn Nottage's play, "Intimate Apparel," directed by Daniel Sullivan. She garnered the highest honors for an off-Broadway play, including "Best Actress" awards from the *Drama Desk*, the *Drama League*, the *Obie* and the *Audelco Award*. Davis was nominated for the *Lucille Lortel Award* as well. She reprised her role at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles where she was recognized with the *Ovation*, *Los Angeles Drama Critics* and the *Garland Awards*.

In 2001, Davis was awarded a *Tony* for "Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play" for her portrayal of 'Tonya' in "King Hedley II." She commanded the attention of critics and audiences alike for her portrayal of "Tonya," a 35-year old woman who is forced to fight for the right to abort an unwanted pregnancy. Davis also received a *Drama Desk Award* in recognition of her work.

A graduate of The Julliard School, Davis received an Honorary Doctorate during its 109th Commencement Ceremony and she also holds an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts degree from her alma mater, Rhode Island College. She resides in Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.

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