

The Impact of Viola Davis

“I feel that confidence in women—especially young girls of color, but women, in general, is so important. It is so important for us to arm ourselves and become powerful at a very young age.” This compelling and inclusive statement, that identifies the needed growth of young women’s instilled self-importance, potential, and capability, was made by renowned African American actress and producer Viola Davis. On August 11th, 1965, Davis would be born in Saint Matthews, SC, and throughout her life would be afflicted with the discriminatory effects of fighting for civil rights. At just five years old, she alongside her mother and several other women at Brown University would be thrown in the back of an enclosed police motor truck for protesting better reform programs for opportunities to self-sustain. In her adolescence and school environment, she would be shunned by other children due to her darker skin in a mostly white environment. These appalling events would just be one of the many disadvantages Davis endured due to her race, and while it wouldn’t stop there, would be the backbone of her bigger dreams for herself.

Davis would later pursue an acting career, with hopes of being a successful actress. However, she would go on to be more than a successful actress, she would go on to be Hollywood's most accredited African American at the Screen Actors Guild Awards and most hardworking black actress in history with over 139 wins and 309 nominations. Her most notable awards span from Golden Globes to NAACP Recognition Awards, and from Primetime Emmy Awards to two Tony Awards, all highly respectable and distinguished accolades that are not easily earned, that came from years of dedication, mastering, and effort into the system and industry of her craft. For most actresses, especially of color, Davis has already said that “the only thing that separates women of color from everyone else is opportunity,” and this is especially true because more than 80 percent of women of color would never make nor accomplish what she has today. Davis’s most recognized roles stretch from her pivotal role in the acclaimed series *How to Get Away with Murder* and movies like *The Help*, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, *The First Lady*, and much more.

Viola Davis’s success story sprouted from her birth in South Carolina has more than inspired and given me the motivation I carry today, it ingrains into me the will and determination to keep moving through the face of struggle. That bigotry can be overwhelmed by the absolute humanity of someone, of people, to diminish itself in the face of unstoppable achievement. When I work on anything today, whether it be writing or schoolwork, I hold Viola Davis’s yearning for the best of tomorrow close to myself. From the moment I saw her on screen as a child, her unabashedness, talent, and perseverance, the representation of her to girls like me, young black girls like me, was the very essence of inspiration.