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Viola Davis Shares Her Story of Growing Up Hungry, Poor and Ashamed. The star of *How to Get Away With Murder* recounts her rags-to-riches story in the August/September Issue of AARP The Magazine

Read Viola's rags-to-riches story of how she got to where she is today and why giving back now means everything to her.

WASHINGTON, DC—Viola Davis, star of ABC's hit series *How to Get Away with Murder*, grew up in Rhode Island in a household of eight that could barely afford to eat even one meal a day. In a revealing interview with *AARP The Magazine*, Davis shares her thoughts on the crippling effects that growing up poor and hungry have on young people today and relates it back to her early years, when she faced the same adversity. Additionally, from the love she now shares with her husband and young daughter to the luxuries she never dreamed of affording, the two-time Oscar nominee reflects on her achievements, biggest anxieties and the determination that has led to her greatest successes.

The following are excerpts from the August/September issue of the *AARP The Magazine* cover story featuring Viola Davis, available in homes today and online now at aarp.org/magazine.

On her reaction to turning 50 and her thoughts on the life she used to live:

"Turning 50 is making me reflect on my life in a way that's more compassionate and forgiving. I'm able to almost accept the old me."

On the work of acting and the pressure of living in the limelight:

"The work of acting is fantastic, but being a celebrity sometimes makes me tense and anxious. Expectations, not meeting expectations, criticism—it really hurts."

On the day she was caught shoplifting:

"I was 9. The store owner screamed at me to get out, looking at me like I was nothing, and the shame of that forced me to stop."

On growing up poor and the hatred that people projected towards her because of it:

"Most of the time, the school lunch was the only meal I had. I would befriend kids whose mothers cooked three meals a day and go to their homes when I could."

"People would throw things out of cars and call us the N-word. It was constant."

On the things she has now that she thought she'd never have:

"Having a house! When you grow up poor, you dream of just having a home, and a bed that's clean—that's a sanctuary. Having a really great husband, a child who's healthy and happy and brings me joy—all of that has been my dream."

"As kids, we often didn't have bus fare, so to have a car today—it's unbelievable to me."

On being asked to be the spokesperson for the "Hunger Is" campaign (hungeris.org):

"I've been so focused on my child, my husband and my career that I never thought of the last step, which is giving back."

On her feelings towards Annalise's promiscuous side:

"Women who are promiscuous are that way for a reason and I wanted to delve into that."

On her feelings towards Annalise's unlikeable side:

"I've played warm and fuzzy to the point that it's made me nauseous. We're not always likable. Sometimes

we're mean, and we're mean to the people we love. I reserve the right to be a mess and completely unlikable."

On her feelings about marriage and love:

"I didn't fall in love. I walked into it, with my eyes wide open. I understood the union of marriage. You sort of die to yourself and you're reborn into this union."

On the little girl she once was who is still with her:

"I'm not poor anymore. Sometimes that girl is literally sitting in my Jacuzzi, going, 'Wow! Look at the yard! Look at the rabbits in the garden! We have cottontails all over the place.'"

Husband Julius Tennon on his and Viola's successful marriage and their professional relationship:

"We work as a team— that's how we roll. A few doors get slammed once in a while. But you can always say, 'I'm sorry.' And we make each other laugh."

For the complete interview, along with behind-the-scenes video and images, check out aarp.org/magazine.

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About AARP The Magazine

With more than 35.2 million readers, AARP The Magazine is the world's largest circulation magazine and the definitive lifestyle publication for Americans 50+. AARP The Magazine delivers comprehensive content through health and fitness features, financial guidance, consumer interest information and tips, celebrity interviews, and book and movie reviews. AARP The Magazine was founded in 1958 and is published bimonthly in print and continually online. Learn more at aarpmagazine.org.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

CONTACTS:

Carla Clunis, Coburn Communication, 646.633.4971, carla.clunis@coburnww.com
Paola Torres, AARP, 202.434.2560, media@aarp.org

Tweet It: [@violadavis](https://twitter.com/violadavis) shares her struggles of growing up underprivileged
in the latest issue of @AARP The Magazine

Read the story at aarp.org/magazine

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