

**'VIOLA HAS
ALWAYS BEEN
DRIVEN.
I THINK SHE
HAS THE
ABILITY TO
CHANGE
THE WORLD'**

—HER SISTER
DELORIS
GRANT

it. [It] helped that they weren't stage parents, that they just wanted me to be happy. That made it easier."

With support from federal programs including Upward Bound, which helps prepare low-income students for higher education, and teachers like her principal ("I would come into the office, and she would have a paper bag full of hand-me-down clothes from her child"), Davis won a full scholarship to Rhode Island College. She earned a B.A. in theater in 1988 before being accepted into the Juilliard School in New York and got her first Tony Award nomination for *Seven Guitars* three years after graduating. Still, supporting—and believing in—herself was a challenge for the actress. "My confidence took time. It really did, to come into myself," she says. "It took

