

VICTOR RIVAS RIVERS
CHILD ADVOCATE/AUTHOR/ACTOR

In 1978, the *Miami Herald* dubbed Victor Rivas Rivers "The Longest Long Shot" when he became the first Cuban American to be given a two season tryout with the Miami Dolphins. He had defied the odds by surviving a violent upbringing and by playing in the position of offensive guard—usually reserved for football players much larger than he was at the time. Next came Hollywood in 1979 where, again as a long shot, he went on to attain starring roles in television, film, and on stage.

Rivers's dramatic personal story also reflects an amazing portrait of a young man overcoming the odds. Born in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, he came with his family to this country at the age of two, enduring horrific child abuse and witnessing domestic violence on the level of torture at the hands of his father. At age fifteen, he took the then unprecedented legal action against his father, going on to live with a series of foster families.

Thanks to the intervention of his community, Rivers turned his life around dramatically, going from hard-core gang-member to senior class President and lettering in four sports. He attended Florida State University on a full four-year football scholarship, where he was a team captain and scholar athlete mentored by Coach Bobby Bowden, before the 1978-79 seasons when he became a free agent draft pick with the Miami Dolphins.

Today, Rivers is a veteran star of more than two dozen films, including his most recent, *The Lost City*. His other films include *Blood In/Blood Out*, *The Mask of Zorro*, *8 Million Ways to Die*, *Havana* co-starring opposite Robert Redford, *Fires Within*, and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. Rivers made his feature film debut in *Fear City*—thanks to a recommendation by the film's star, Melanie Griffith. Blessed with a steady career on the screen, Rivers has played everything from heartthrob to villain to funnyman.

His comedy film debut was in *Last Resort*, starring Jon Lovitz and the late Phil Hartman. Rivers then went on to star in the comedy hits *A Million to Juan* and *The Distinguished Gentleman*, as Eddie Murphy's flamboyant sidekick, a portrayal that earned him some of the film's biggest laughs.

With his unique versatility for pathos and humor, River's extensive range also includes his role in the climactic last scene of Ang Lee's 2003 *The Hulk*, in the critical smash *What's Cooking?* which won the New York Film Critics Audience Award, *La Cucaracha*, a thriller named Best Feature Film at the 1998 Austin Film Festival, and in the European independent production of *Lara*, produced by four-time Academy Award nominee Artur Brauner. He appeared in *In Too Deep*, *Fled*, HBO's *The Chain*, and TNT's *Two for Texas*. He has also guest starred in such popular television series as *24*, *CSI Miami*, *JAG*, *Star Trek*, and *Miami Vice*. Rivers has just signed on for a recurring role on the new NBC show *Life*.

Author of the highly acclaimed memoir, *A Private Family Matter*, Rivers has served as the national spokesperson for the National Network to End Domestic Violence since 1999, and in 2007 became a Community Champion for Verizon, their first celebrity advocate to spearhead a far-reaching violence prevention campaign.

In 1999 Rivers became a leading activist in the cause of preventing violence against women and children. As the national spokesperson for the National Network to End Domestic Violence, he uses his own harrowing story of surviving a home where abuse took place on the level of torture to raise awareness about what he considers our greatest, yet most curable disease. He has told this remarkable story of survival and hope in his *The New York Times* bestseller, *A Private Family Matter*. He is currently part of Verizon's new campaign as a Verizon Community Champion for his work to end domestic violence. Today, having broken the cycle of violence, Rivers is also a devoted husband and father-what he believes are his two most important roles. It is his indomitable spirit as an actor, athlete and as a human being that may have inspired director Taylor Hackford to call him, "A big man-in heart and soul." For more information please visit www.apbspeakers.com.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Domestic Violence: It is Everyone's Issue
- A Survival Toolbox: Hope, Empowerment, and Transformation
- Crossing Borders: Lessons Of A Latino Man
- Giving Back: You Can Make A Difference
- I Am the Child That the Village Helped Raise

A Public Family Matter: What All Families Can Do to Create a Safer, More Peaceful World (with Victor's wife, author Mim Eichler Rivas, and his son, Eli Rivas, 13 year old stand-up comedian and junior spokesperson in violence prevention)