

SHAYLA RIVERA BIOGRAPHY

Shayla Rivera is an Aerospace Engineer and former Rocket Scientist with NASA turned salesperson, corporate trainer, and now Int'l Keynote Speaker, TEDx Speaker, TV & Radio host, Emcee/Host, Comedian, Actor, Writer, Producer, Seminar Facilitator, Panel Moderator and as of 2017, Director of the ENGR[x] program and Professor of Practice with the College of Engineering at Texas A&M University.

However, none of these labels tells you much about her. She best describes herself as a spiritually irreverent Mystic and Awareness Expert. What many would call a Renaissance Woman.

Keynotes include subjects that span Inspiration, Motivation, Leadership, Diversity & Inclusion, Education, STEM Education, Awareness, Stress Management, Communication, and Self Growth, always using the power of humor and her life story.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Rivera grew up with an avid interest in human behavior, science, machinery and fixing things. Her parents always made it clear that going to college was the way to go in order to have a successful personal and professional-life. Rivera attended Texas A&M University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering with a great number of additional credits in her other passion, Psychology. After graduation she joined McDonnell Douglas Space Systems at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, where she worked on the NASA Space Shuttle and Space Station programs for five years.

Rivera left NASA to pursue her abiding interest in psychology, trying to figure out what makes people tick. This pursuit took her through several years in Technical Sales of environmental systems and water treatment chemicals, financial products and finally guiding her onto becoming a corporate trainer. Rivera began facilitating life-changing seminars on stress management for executives at companies around the country.

Shortly thereafter, she began giving motivational speeches. While conducting seminars and giving speeches, Rivera discovered her comedic skills. Encouraged by many of her clients she signed up for a weekend seminar on stand-up comedy, at the end of which she performed a five-minute routine. It was a personal turning point. "I knew I'd found what I was looking for," Rivera recalled.

Almost immediately, Rivera became a regular at Comedy Clubs nationwide. She used her experiences to create the hit one woman show "Rocket Science and Salsa," directed by Debbie Allen for which Rivera earned a "Best Lead Actress" nomination by the NAACP Theater Awards, as well as a nomination for "Best Choreography" for Allen.

Rivera hosted the 13 episode TV series "You're Not The Man I Married" for Lifetime Real Women Network and has appeared on television shows such as "Comics Unleashed," "Xtreme Fakeovers," "National Lampoon's Funny Money," "Funny is Funny" and many others. She has been a guest on the "The Dennis Miller Show," "The Roseanne Show," "The Martin Short Show," was featured in the "Paul Rodriguez Latin All Stars" and was part of the Comedy Central special, "Comedy Rehab" with Paul Rodriguez. She has performed and headlined on entertainment programs for Univision, Galavision, HBO Latino and on "The Latino Comedy Jam" for Telemundo. She was named "Funniest Latina Comedian" by the organization "Latin 2015."

Shayla Rivera has been speaking and performing in both English and Spanish for 27 years and has a broad appeal to men and women of all backgrounds and ages. Her clients around the world include Fortune 500 companies, national and regional organizations, as well as students, parents and faculty from elementary schools to colleges. In 2018, Shayla spoke at the TEDx conference at Texas A&M University. Rivera often applies her expertise to host/emcee many fundraising events for non-profit organizations, charitable and educational programs as well as Award Galas and Conferences.

In 2004, Rivera received the “Mario Moreno Cantinflas Award” presented by the city of Los Angeles in recognition of entertainers who "represent the Latino Community with the same humor as the great Comedian Cantinflas did" and for her involvement in the community. In 2007, Rivera received the President’s Volunteer Service Award from the President’s Council on Service Participation. In 2010, she received the Award for Excellence in Public Speaking by the Latino Speakers Bureau.

Rivera performs live stand-up comedy worldwide and is extremely proud of her comedy and speaking tours for our servicemen and women stationed around the world in Greenland, Diego Garcia, Asia, Europe, Central America and the Middle East.

Rivera says, “My number one goal is to inspire, through laughter.” She has seen, first-hand, the impact the Latino population and culture has had in all levels of American corporations, organizations and education, and is focused on helping make this merging occur as smooth as possible. She jokes, “We are all the same, only different...once we understand this, we will be able to seize the opportunities that lie in our seeming differences.”

Shayla was thrilled to accept faculty and staff positions at her alma mater, Texas A&M University. Shayla, who is a true Aggie, is very excited to bring her expertise in self-development and awareness to the engineering students at Texas A&M as a Professor of Practice and as Director of ENGR[x], a new program with the objective of providing undergraduate engineering students with professional skills and experiences beyond their engineering degree requirements, making them more attractive to employers. Helping students become better prepared for life, not just as an engineer but as an individual, which is her greatest purpose.

Shayla Rivera is not easily placed in just one category or class, she defines her own. She finally remarks, “Now I even can add Breast Cancer Survivor to my resume. I am grateful.”