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New Orleans

# Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

More Phenomenal Women in New Orleans

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Data Zone Page 4

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# New Orleans Phenomenal Women 2025



Page 2



**Newsmaker**  
LSU Star Teams Up with Experian to Relieve Debt

Page 6

**National News**  
Dr. Christy Valentine's Vision Towards a Healthier Louisiana



Page 7



# New Orleans Phenomenal Women 2025



L'Oréal Monique Evans,



Taslya Mejia

**Gabrielle Cromwell**  
Data News Weekly Contributor

Black women are the most educated group in America according to statistics for the National Center for Education Statistics. They are also the fastest growing entrepreneurial group in the country, according to the TIAA Institute. As a voting bloc, 92% of Black women voted for Vice President Kamala

Harris in the 2024 elections, demonstrating their ability to organize in politics. They are also on the front lines of advancing social change as community leaders. For Women's Month, we ask women who are leading and emerging voices in the Greater New Orleans area to share with readers how they define a Phenomenal Woman in these times and what motivates them to continue to make an impact on their community.

**L'Oréal Monique Evans,**  
Executive Director, River Road  
African American Museum

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

"How would they define a phenomenal woman? —A phenomenal woman is a woman who has overcome and championed obstacles in order to achieve success, which is measured by her attainment of personal and professional goals, while contributing to the develop-

Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

## INSIDE DATA

Cover Story . . . . .	2	Newsmaker . . . . .	6
Data Zone . . . . .	4	State & Local News . .	7

## DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

ment of our future global society.”  
*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

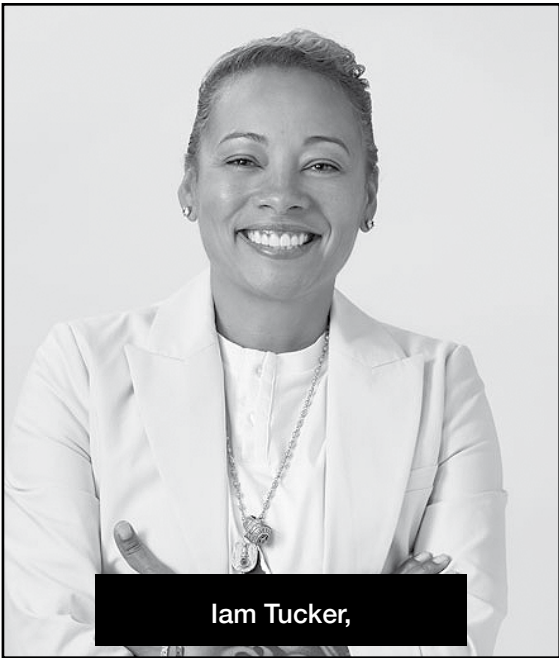
“I am motivated by the achievements, pain, and strength of my ancestors, the persistence, resistance, and insistence of my community, and the promise of our youth.”

Taslyya Mejia

International Relations Director,  
New Orleans Jazz Museum

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

“A phenomenal woman is one who leads with purpose, uplifts those around her, and uses her voice to create meaningful change. She embraces her heritage, empowers her community, and paves the way for future generations through resilience, grace, and determination. She has the discipline to pursue her goals, the humility to keep learning, and the strength to rise above challenges while lifting others along the way.”



Iam Tucker,

*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

“What motivates me is the belief that we all have the power to create positive change. It’s the opportunity to serve, to give back, and to use my position to open doors

for others—especially for those whose voices may not always be heard. By staying humble, disciplined, and constantly learning, I strive to lead by example and inspire others to do the same so that, together, we can build a more inclusive and empowered community.”



Lora Ann Chaisson

Iam Tucker,

CEO of Integrated Logistical Support  
CEO of Integrated Logistical Support

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

“A phenomenal woman, to me, embodies strength, resilience, and

authenticity. She is someone who embraces her individuality while uplifting others around her. It’s about having the courage to stand up for what’s right and the compassion to support those who may be facing challenges. A phenomenal woman is not defined solely by her achievements but also by her ability to inspire and empower others to reach their full potential.”

*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

“What motivates me to make a difference is my deep-rooted belief in the power of community and connection. I’ve experienced firsthand the impact that one person can have on another’s life. Whether it’s through mentorship, advocacy, or simply lending a listening ear, I strive to be that positive example for those who may not see their own potential. I want to create a ripple effect, where my actions inspire others to step into their greatness, too. Making a difference isn’t just

Cover Story, Continued on page 6.

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# Data is Proud to Present More Phenomenal Women in New Orleans

**June Hazeur**  
Data News Contributor

As we reach near to the end of Women's Month, we at Data News Weekly chose to publish a Special Edition focused on Phenomenal Women. Here in New Orleans, we are blessed to have so many beautiful, intelligent, successful women. Lots of them are entrepreneurs, owning their own businesses and helping children, youths, and the elderly in their community. As you read their short bios you will see they are really doing things for their community.

Data News Weekly is proud to present not only our cover story but our Data Zone centerfold to introduce some of these phenomenal women to you. Some of these women you may recognize others you never knew existed. After reading their short bios you should visit their businesses and support them as they are supporting their community.

## Representative Delisha Boyd



Representative Delisha Boyd (D-Louisiana) has been a trailblazer in Louisiana politics, serving as the first African American woman elected to represent District 102 in the

Louisiana House of Representatives. She assumed office on November 29, 2021, and has since worked tirelessly to secure funding for community projects, including Brechtel Park, the Algiers Development District, the New Orleans Military Academy, and Heroes of New Orleans, while also partnering with DOTD to improve infrastructure.

A lifelong resident of Algiers, Louisiana, Rep. Boyd graduated from Xavier Preparatory School, earned a B.B.A. from Southern University at New Orleans, and later received an M.B.A. from the University of Phoenix. In addition to her public service, she is a successful entrepreneur, leading Delisha Boyd LLC, a respected

real estate brokerage firm. She also serves on the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority and the Algiers Economic Development Foundation boards.

Rep. Boyd's dedication to her constituents has earned her numerous honors.

Additionally, Rep. Boyd is Vice Chair of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus and an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, The Links, Incorporated (New Orleans Chapter), and the National Black MBA Association.

Through her leadership, advocacy, and commitment to progress, Representative Delisha Boyd continues to shape Louisiana's future, proving why she is a phenomenal woman.

## Chief Justice Bernette Johnson



Chief Justice Bernette Johnson, the first Black Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, has been a tireless champion for justice, fairness, and equal access to the law. Her unwavering commitment to civil rights and judicial integrity has transformed our

legal system for the better. Bernette Johnson retired after having a legal career spanning half a century – for the past 26 years she's been the only Black Jurist on the Louisiana Supreme Court rising to the ranks of Chief Justice.

## Judge Terri F. Love (retired)



As the Chief Deputy City Attorney appointed by Mayor Marc Morial, Judge Love was the lead author of the first domestic violence ordinance for the City of New Orleans. Judge Love was elected in 1995 to the

Orleans Parish Civil District Court. In 2000, Judge Love was elected to the State of Louisiana, Court of Appeal, Fourth Circuit from which she retired as Chief Judge in December 2024. Judge Love has served as a mentor and advisor with programs committed to collegiate education of youth of New Orleans.

Chief Judge Love retired from the Louisiana Judiciary on December 31, 2024, after 29 years of dedicated service. Her retirement provides her the opportunity to dedicate her experience and talents to community service with a focus on creating a new generation of dedicated leaders. She will also enjoy traveling with family and friends.



## Senator Diana Bajoie



Senator Diana Bajoie, a trailblazer in the Louisiana Legislature, broke barriers as the first Black woman elected to the Louisiana Senate. Her

leadership, advocacy, and dedication to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities have left a lasting impact on our state and our people.

## Rashida Ferdinand



Rashida Ferdinand founded Sankofa Community Development Corporation in 2008 in the Lower Ninth with an initial focus on neighborhood restoration. The work of Sankofa has evolved, as the community has, to include a Wetland Park, Food Pantry, Fresh Start Market, Vegetable Farm, The Lower Ninth Ward Economic Advancement Main Street and Workforce Development programs.

## Deon Haywood



For more than 30 years Deon Haywood has advocated for the rights of Black women and girls, poor and working-class folks, sex workers, substance users, and LGBTQ+ communities in the Deep South. Haywood is Executive Director of Women with a Vision (WWAV), the groundbreaking HIV/AIDS prevention organization. WWAV's work blossomed, connecting HIV/AIDS prevention and education to reproductive justice, youth advocacy, harm reduction, and more, leading to the milestone defeat of Louisiana's archaic Crimes Against Nature by Solicitation statute, and a victory for constitutional rights as those affected were removed from the sex offender registry in 2013 and were able to begin rebuilding their lives.

## Dr. Denise Roubion-Johnson



Dr. Denise Roubion-Johnson has been the Lead Clinical Associate and Medical Advisor for the statewide La Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program since 2017. She provides direct patient care, community

outreach and education to women with breast cancer and other breast abnormalities. She presents webinars and lectures to Physicians, Medical Students, and the Community to increase the importance of early detection through screenings for breast and cervical cancer. Dr. Johnson and her dedication to cancer screening and prevention has been recognized with several honors by groups such as the American Cancer Society, the Diana Bajoie Cancer Ambassador's Award and Proclamations from the New Orleans City Council for 10 consecutive years, with the most recent being 2024 for her long-standing efforts in increasing cancer awareness and access to early detection services. She believes all women with cancer should be treated equally regardless of their ability to pay.



# Flau'jae Johnson on a Mission: LSU Star Teams Up with Experian to Relieve Debt for Louisianans

**Stacy M. Brown**  
NNPA Newswire Senior  
National Correspondent

Flau'jae Johnson is no stranger to pressure. As a standout junior guard for LSU's women's basketball team, she has learned how to manage the intensity of big games, the demands of academics, and the responsibility of being a high-profile athlete in the era of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deals. Now, she's adding another role to her résumé—helping relieve consumer debt for thousands of African American families in Louisiana. "I've been working with Experian for quite some time now," Johnson said during an appearance on the Black Press of America's Let It Be Known News. "We did a lot of things just for helping students learn about financial literacy. So, when this opportunity came about, I was ecstatic. I was like, wow, this is really going to help change lives because debt can really hold peo-



Flau'jae Johnson

ple back. They're just fighting to survive instead of learning how to build more finances."

Experian's latest initiative will relieve \$5 million in consumer debt for 5,000 families in Louisiana, one

of the states with the highest percentage of poverty in the U.S., according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The credit organization noted that 50 percent of African Americans over 18 are "very/fairly worried"

about getting out of debt, and the state has one of the highest unbanked rates in America at 8.1 percent. Further, 52 percent of African American adults indicated they are working to rebuild their credit, and about 1 in 4 have their mortgage applications denied. The initiative, which was carried out in partnership with ForgiveCo, a public benefit corporation (PBC), aims to ease the financial burden of those struggling with debt. To further incentivize success, Experian will add \$100,000 in additional debt relief for every game LSU wins in the upcoming college basketball tournament, up to \$500,000. "Helping it aligns with the tournament, the more games we win, that'll be 100K more that we're adding into the pot," Johnson said. "Coming to the Louisiana community and trying to help is what I want to do because they poured into me, and they kind of adopted me since I came here."

For Johnson, this partnership is about more than just this mo-

ment—it's about helping create long-term financial knowledge that can benefit families and young people alike. "I'm the type of person who says, put your money where your mouth is," she said. "If you really want to help, do that. And that's what they're doing. Five million dollars is a lot of money, and 5,000 families, that's a lot of people. This is just the start." Johnson hopes this partnership and her platform will encourage more young people to take financial literacy seriously. "Learn how to use credit," she said. "A lot of people don't know how to use credit. There are so many ways to use credit for what you need, your business, and your future. There are so many entrepreneurs in my generation now. If they know how to use credit to be financially successful, that would be one of my tips."

More information about Experian's debt relief initiative can be found at [experian.com/relief](https://experian.com/relief).

## Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

about grand gestures; it's about the everyday moments of kindness and support that build a stronger, more inclusive community."

### Lora Ann Chaisson

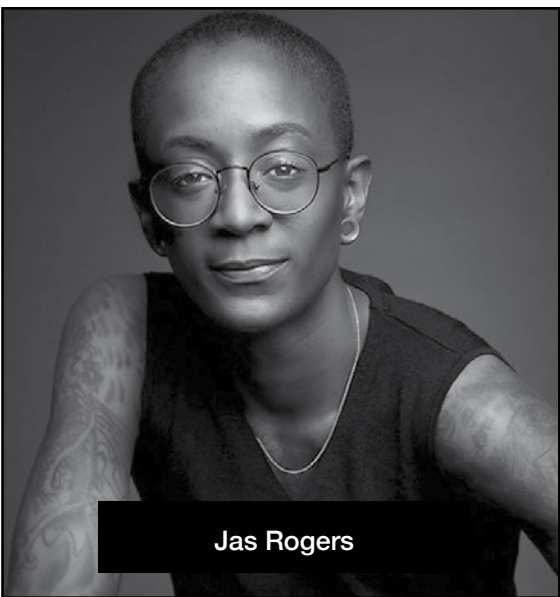
Title: Principal Chief of the United Houma Nation

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

"A phenomenal woman represents strength, wisdom, and compassion. She uplifts those around her, nurturing her family and community with love, resilience, and unwavering dedication. Her actions inspire change, confront injustices, and pave the way for future generations.

She stands firm in her beliefs, leads with integrity and grace, and never compromises her values. A phenomenal woman does not seek recognition; instead, she focuses on making a lasting impact through advocacy, leadership, or everyday kindness.

Her power lies in her ability to persevere, adapt, and empower others. She is a storyteller, a protector, and a visionary—weaving together the past, present, and future to en-



Jas Rogers

sure her people's strength and traditions continue."

*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

"I don't view myself as a role model but as someone with a responsibility to uplift and protect our people, culture, and future. My parents' values inspire me to advocate for tribal sovereignty, preserve our traditions, and increase opportunities and

resources. My deep love for our people drives my commitment to preserving and empowering our culture, voices, and rights for the next seven generations."

### Jas Rogers

Founder, The Pour Decisions Collective

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

"A phenomenal woman is strong, confident, and unapologetically herself. She carries herself with grace,



Kheri Billy

resilience, and purpose. She uplifts others, stands firm in her values, and turns challenges into opportunities. It's not just about success—it's about impact, authenticity, and inspiring those around her.

*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

"What motivates me to make a difference is knowing that my actions, no matter how small, can create a ripple effect. Representation matters, and being a role model means show-

ing others, especially the next generation - that they, too, can rise above circumstances, break barriers, and lead with integrity. Making a positive impact isn't just a choice; it's a responsibility. Do what you love, love what you do - always."

### Kheri Billy

Chief Executive Officer, Reconcile New Orleans/ Café Reconcile, a nonprofit workforce development organization that operates a training restaurant for young adults in New Orleans.

*How do you define a phenomenal woman?*

"How would they define a phenomenal woman? A phenomenal woman takes good care of her well-being and the well-being of her community. She spreads goodwill, considers others, and offers affirmative words to herself and the people she encounters. A phenomenal woman is self-aware and intentional; always."

*What motivates you to make a difference and to be a role model and positive example in our community?*

I am motivated by the belief that we are all responsible for each

Cover Story, Continued on page 7.

# Inside Dr. Christy Valentine's Vision Towards a Healthier Louisiana

Jason Roberts  
Black Press USA Newswire

Dr. Christy Valentine's passion for healthcare is both deeply personal and profoundly impactful. A New Orleans native and lifelong advocate for equitable healthcare, she brings a unique perspective to her role as CEO of Healthy Blue Louisiana. For her, healthcare isn't just about treatment, it's about access, education, and breaking down barriers so that every person, regardless of background or income, can get the care they deserve.

From an early age, Dr. Valentine knew she wanted to be a doctor. Growing up as the sixth of seven children, she learned the importance of communication, patience, and advocacy—lessons reinforced by her older brother, who has special needs. His experiences played a pivotal role in shaping her perspective on care and advocacy. When she opened her private practice, it quickly became clear that she wasn't just treating patients, she was becoming a trusted source for other families that have children with special



Dr. Christy Valentine

needs. "I had my private practice in the New Orleans metro area; I had a couple of locations. There were many patients who also had children with special needs. It's a small community so once the word gets out, they're coming in droves," Dr. Valentine said. "They know that you're going to be open to their needs, the special needs of their family, and really hear them."

This ability to translate medical expertise into compassionate, relatable care became a cornerstone of her career. Dr. Valentine's deep connection to New Orleans has shaped her approach to healthcare. The city is known for its rich culture and strong sense of community, but it also faces stark inequalities in wealth and healthcare access. "There's a disconnect between

people who have resources and those who don't," she explained. "New Orleans is a checkerboard city—For example, St. Charles Avenue has beautiful mansions. You go one street over, you could be in the heart of the hood," Dr. Valentine continues, "The resources are there, but they're not always reaching the people who need them most."

Education and prevention are also at the heart of Healthy Blue Louisiana's Mission. The organization regularly hosts health fairs, workshops, and wellness events, equipping people with the tools they need to take charge of their health. With a deep commitment to improving health outcomes, Healthy Blue Louisiana continues to expand its reach and strengthen partnerships across the state. Through its innovative programs and a focus on health equity, the organization is making a tangible difference in people's lives. Under Dr. Valentine's leadership, Healthy Blue Louisiana isn't just providing healthcare—it's building trust, breaking down barriers, and creating a system where every patient feels seen, heard, and valued.

Cover Story/ Continued  
from page 6.

other. All people deserve a happy and full life—a life where we get to flourish and fulfill the desires of our hearts and minds. I am deeply motivated by my work to support young people in my hometown. I care about New Orleans. I believe that New Orleans prospers when its people prosper. I am motivated to do my best work for the people of our city. We deserve the most!"

**L'Issa L. Gates,  
MD, FAAP**

Senior Attending Physician,  
Ochsner for Children

*How Do You Define a  
Phenomenal Woman?*

A phenomenal woman is one who consistently strives to improve the human condition as she



L'Issa L. Gates, MD, FAAP

steadily makes her way through life as a principled person, excelling at what she does. In doing so, she makes certain to impart wisdom to those coming behind her and to leave a lasting legacy. She is also acutely aware that her intelligence, grace and talents should pale in comparison to her abiding faith in a higher power.

*What Motivates You to Make  
a Difference and to be a Role  
Model and Positive Example  
in Our Community?*

My family creed of service to others which was instilled in me during my formative years is also what motivates me. Being a blessing to others renews my sense of purpose and encourages me to continue to use my God given gifts to aid and empower others and in turn, motivate them as well.

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### Job Opportunity

#### Freelance Writers Wanted

Data News Weekly, "The People's Paper," is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment. Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: [terrybjones@bellsouth.net](mailto:terrybjones@bellsouth.net) and [datanewseditor@bellsouth.net](mailto:datanewseditor@bellsouth.net).

We can't wait to  
hear from you!

### Job Opportunity

#### Administrative Assistant Wanted

Data News Weekly, "The People's Paper," is looking for an administrative assistant.

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