

FROM BAYOUS TO BREAKTHROUGHS

THE SACRED UNFOLDING OF CASSANDRA JACKSON

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As a first-generation college scholar and the proud granddaughter of a Southern Louisiana sharecropper, the value of education was woven into my DNA long before I ever set foot in a classroom. My story is anchored in the soil of New Iberia. I went to school in the vibrant soul of New Orleans. Growing up in a loving, two-parent home, I built my foundation on an unshakeable holy trinity: hard work, family, and selfless service. Those core values nourished a quiet, burning dream inside my young chest—a dream to break barriers and create a life that looked radically different from the past.

For years, I carried that dream like a precious seed. But girlhood doesn't transform into womanhood overnight; it shifts in a single, sacred moment when life calls you to step completely into your own power.

For me, that pivotal moment came the day I loaded up a car and traveled up Interstate 55 alongside a dear girlfriend and her mother. We were bound for graduate school in Columbia, Missouri. As the familiar sights and sounds of Louisiana faded into the distance, I felt the sheer weight of what I was doing. Leaving my sweet hometown and the rich, comforting embrace of the Crescent City for a place that felt like the absolute middle of nowhere marked a definitive pivot in my life.

Standing on that new terrain, completely stripped of the physical safety net of my family and lifelong community, the reality washed over me: I was truly on my own. Starting over in an unfamiliar environment that

looked, smelled, and felt nothing like home shook the girl right out of me. It forced the sovereign, resilient Black woman within me to step to the front.

Standing in that quiet independence, my resolve didn't break—it solidified into steel. I was determined to make my family and my ancestors proud. In the quiet moments of transition, the timeless words of my mentor echoed loudly in my spirit:

“Education is the key that lets you stop looking in from the outside.”

Earning my Master's degree was far more than just fulfilling a personal ambition. It was the physical manifestation of my grandfather's prayers and my parents' sacrifices. It shattered glass ceilings and handed me a permanent, earned seat at the table—giving me the power, the authority, and the voice to advocate for our people and open doors for generations to come.

I left Louisiana as a hopeful Black girl with big dreams, but I emerged on that road as an unstoppable Black woman with a divine purpose.

I am Cassandra Jackson. TS#35 of 52 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ✨