

# IMPRESSIONS

## MY NAME IS NEW ORLEANS (to Marcus Christian)

### *I* **COMMUNION**

My name is New Orleans...

My name is Jim Crow and Old Crowe

I am the Old Guard in a New Wave

I'm a Schwegmann shopping bag fulla okry

I am Larry & Frank and Morgus and Chopsley

I am the Negro League and the Urban League

I am a SOCIAL AID AND PLEASURE CLUB, incorporated

I am the Original Illinois and the Young Men's 22s

I am the Bunch Club and the Beau Brummels

I am the Busy Stitches

I'm the Autocrat

I am snowballs and carnival balls -- doubloons, octoroons and  
quadroons

("I ain't Black! I'm a **Injun!**")

I am the Yellow Pocahontas and the Wild Tchoupitoulas

I am 110 degrees in the shade of a genteel Magnolia

I am the "Duke-Duke-Duke-Duke of Earl..."

I am Ed Screamin' Teamer and Shelley Pope

I am Uncle Henry Dupreé and The Great MacNutt

I am the Dew Drop Inn and Frank's and Hank's  
(and the *original* Chez Helene)

I am a circle of clouds dancing in the hurricane's eye

I am a star, laughing with a Mississippi moon  
 I am Jean Lafitte and Al Scramuzza  
 I am memory  
 I am legacy  
 I am history

I am the Deep South (the Dee-ee-ee-eep South)  
 I am "2-4-6-8- We don't wanta in-te-grate"  
 I am Pontchartrain Beach and Lincoln Beach  
 I am Lemann #1 and Lemann #2  
 I am St. Louis #1 and St. Louis #2  
 I am Contemporary Arts Bread and Blackarts crumbs  
 I am soft drinks and hard times, magnolia trees and second lines  
 My name is New Orleans.....  
 I am Nellie Mae, Ethel Bell, Flora, Aunt Sweet and Willameena  
 (My name is Greenhouse)  
 My name is New Orleans...  
 New Are-leens  
 N'awlins  
 New O.

I am Big Daddy's spirit and Big Momma's creole tomato-red  
 polka dot dress

My name is New Orleans...  
 I am underpaid attorneys and over-rated trumpet players  
 (no matter *how* many Grammys they got)  
 I am "carfare" instead a "busfare"  
 I am "donuts and rolls" instead a "beignets and croissants"  
 I am "earl" instead a "oil"  
 I am "berl" instead a "boil"  
 I am "sperl" instead a "spoil"  
 I am "pernt" instead a "point"  
 I am "jernt" instead a "joint"  
 I am "strimp" instead a "shrimp"  
 I am "rinch" instead a "rinse"  
 I am "scurlin'" instead a "scalding"  
 I am "around the cornder" instead a "around the corner" cuz  
 the rain on Dumaine falls mainly on the banquette  
 (By Zulu! I've gawt it!)

I am Marie Laveau and Satchmo  
 I am UNO, SUNO, HANO, and PANO  
 I am dirty rice and dirty politics  
 I am crabs in a barrel  
 I am Gentilly Woods, Smallwoods, Amazing Technicolored

Mayors and a project named Desire  
 I am modernity  
 I am treeless strips of Claiborne Avenue in the name of progress  
 (making the city safe for tourism)  
 -que pasa, senorita?

I'm a handsucker and a headsucker  
 I am cowain and alligator pear  
 I am "lovin' that chicken from Popeye's"  
 (I yam what I yam and that's all what I yam)  
 I'm a anklewhipper-wearin' pompadoo zigaboo  
 I'm a Uptown stud  
 "Sharpen my shank  
 Gimme my wine  
 I'm from the mighty 'Nine'  
 And I *don't* mind dyin'"  
 ("Shut up and eat yo redbeans, boy!")

Hey bay -I'm The Willie Cole Trio!  
 I am filé gumbo, crawfish etoufeeé and "chitterlings"  
 I am bowing boys and curtsyng debutantes  
 I am Coon-Can, Battle, Pitty Pat, Spades and Whist  
 (What's *yo'* bid?)

I am a truck parade runnin' into the neutral ground  
 I am a dirty washrag in the backa the barroom  
 I am brickwork and grillwork and crumbling tombstones  
 I am a cemetery fern dancing at the foot of a chineyball tree  
 I am picklemeat and peckerwoods  
 I am "Yeah-Ya-Right" and "Where Y'at bruh?"  
 I am "Who Dat?"

Look!  
 I am up in the sky!  
 I am a bird!  
 I am a plane!  
 I am ----- SUPER-D-O-O-OME!!!

My name is New Orleans...  
 I'm on the wild!  
 I'm *cra-zyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!*  
 Sometimes I feel like a nut  
 (Sometimes I don't)

I am the center of the world in the Gay 1990s  
 I am High John the Conqueror and the bottom of the Mississippi  
 I am hoo-doo voo-doo with you-know-who in the backa Big Mary's #2

I am panné meat, nananns and paranns

My name is New Orleans

I'm the veggitibble man:

"I got ba-na-nas, waterll-on, sweet pato-oo-oo-oo-tee!

I got ba-na-nas, watermell-on rade to dee rind!

--so goo-oo-oo-ood it keep the ba-a-a-a-aby from cryin'!"

My name is New Orleans.....

I am big fat mommas and lil poppa stoppas

St. Peter Claver, Bertha Baptist and The One Way Church of Truth

I am the city that care never thought of

I am soft-shelled crabs and hardcore unemployment

I am having to know somebody to get a job

I am Clarence (The Frogman) and Understandin' Henry

I am the ghost of the Claver Building and the flames of the Cabildo

I am a cool breeze from the river through the screen door

I am prom night at the lakefront by the Mardi Gras Fountain

I am a Bulldog in a Yellow Jacket feasting on a Purple Knight

In the middle of a Green Hornet's nest

I am Miss Mildred, Miss Pie and Miss Marguerite

I am Shorteyes and Professor Longhair

I am Dr. Haydel and Dr. John

I'm yo' momma's name

-My name is Flo (Yo *momma name'* NOPSI)

I am a softdrink truck blocking a City Park bus on a one-way street

I am Uptown, Downtown, Backatown, Frontatown, 'Crosstown,

In town, Gert Town, Bucktown, Boscoville, and Pilette Land...

## II

### CONFIRMATION

I AM NOMMO, THE WORD, THE POWER OF THE WORD

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I AM NOMMO, THE WORD, THE POWER OF THE WORD

I am Tom Dent and Chakula Cha Jua

I am Patrica King, Ahmos Zu-Bolton, and Kalamu ya Salaam

I am Quo Vadis Gex and Sekou Fela

I am Brenda Marie Osbey and Mona Lisa Saloy

I am Malaika Favorite and Octave Lilly

I am Labertha McCormick and Marcus Christian

I AM NOMMO, THE WORD, THE POWER OF THE WORD

I AM NOMMO, THE WORD, THE POWER OF THE WORD

I AM NOMMO, THE WORD, THE POWER OF THE WORD

I am food

I am good food  
 I am good *New Orleans* food.  
*Cuisine...*

I'm a plate of red beans, rice, smoke sausage  
 and a potion of berled shrimp  
 I'm a hot sausage sandwich (dressed) -- to **go**  
 (My church havin' a supper, girl)  
 I am soft-shelled crawfish, rabbit sausage (with Creole mustard sauce)  
 crabmeat piquant, Pasta Jambalaya, pecawn candy, pecawn pie,  
 smothered chicken, Oysters Bienville, raw oysters, fried oysters, berled  
 oysters, and Oysters en Brochette...  
 I am turtle soup, gator soup, tenderloin catfish, shrimp sauté  
 Shrimp Samantha, fried shrimp, stuffed shrimp, peeled ice  
 shrimp, Crabmeat au gratin, berled crab, stuffed crab, Shrimp  
 Newberg, Shrimp etouffé, Bananas Foster, Hubig's Pies, Roman  
 Candy, pralines, and hucklebucks. . .

I am food  
 I am *good* food  
 I am good New Orleans food...  
 (You jive muffeletta!)...

My name is New Orleans...  
 I am above the Gulf and below the sea  
 I am the midday sun frying mosquito hawks on corrugated tin  
 roofs of junky, fonky, honkytonks  
 I am a pitcher of beer on the patio of the Maple Leaf Bar  
 I am The Forum, PECK'S Steak House and the Colt .38  
 I am the Celebrity Lounge, the Silver Dollar Lounge and the Big-time  
 Crip  
 I am Sylvia's, Duke's, Scotty's, Hilda's, Barard's, Joe Prop's and  
 The Cozy Corner...  
 I am The House of Joy, Joe & Jean's, the Fatman's, the Peacock  
 Lounge the Snowflake, The Green O Liquor Store, Club Caldonia, Club  
 77, Gloria's Living Room, Dooky's, Club Desire, Bazanac's, Mule's,  
 Blunt's and the I.L.A.  
 I am Willie Mae's, Peggy's, Eddie's, and BART's and tarts and HART's  
 I am "Mason's, Prout's and the H & K Oyster House  
 I am The Brown Derby, The Green Room, The Red Rooster and  
 The Blue Goose...

I am music  
 I am *good* music  
 I am good *New Orleans* music...

I am a blues singin' boogie-woogie man in Bertha's Bon Ton  
 I am churchbells ringin' on a simmering afternoon  
 I'm a po' boy climbin' Blueberry Hill while I'm walkin' to New  
 Orleans (Ain't that a *sha-a-a-ame*?)

I am Irma Thomas and Chocolate Milk  
 I am Mr. Big Stuff (Hoo Doo I Think I-Ram?)  
 I am Earl Palmer and Bobby Marchand  
 I am Kid Millenberg, Paul Henderson and James May  
 I am Connie Whitfield and Wanda Rouzan  
 I am Laverne Butler and Blue Lu and Danny Barker  
 I am Trazi and Esquerita  
 I am James Booker and Germaine Bazzle  
 I am the Aubry Twins and Baby Dodds  
 I am Charmaine Neville and The Pfister Sisters (no relation)  
 I am Ronald Jones and Oliver and Charles Brown  
 I am a Royal Duke of Rhythm  
 I am Ernie K-Doe  
 ("Mu-u-uther in-law  
*muther-in-law...*")

I am Dave Bartholomew, Nelson Francis and Sidney Bechet  
 I am Ed Blackwell, James Black, Ed Frank and LEBO  
 I am Tommy Ridgley, Allen Toussaint and Lee Dorsey  
 ("Ri-i-i-i-ide yo' pony...")

I am Sidney Desvigne and Sidney Anderson  
 I am Lillian Boutte and Juno Lewis  
 I am Charles Brimmer, James Rivers and The Meters  
 I am "too-way-pocky-w-a-a-ay" and Lady B.J.  
 I'm going to the Chapel of Love with The Dixie Cups  
 ("Iko-Iko ahn da-a-a-ay")

I am Branford and Ellis Marsalis  
 I am Walter Washington, Chris Kenner and Joe Simon  
 I am music  
 I am art. I am art.  
 I am Art and Aaron Neville  
 I am a flambeau flame, dancing in vanishing wetlands and  
 dying marshes  
 I am the sisters of the stage singin' boo-coo blues by the  
 bannister in warm, midnight rain

(*throw me sumpthin, sister!*)  
 I'ma B-O-K ('cause I'm WYLD!!!!)  
 Eureka!!!!

I'm The Dirty Dozen Brass Band!!!!  
 I'm wadin' in the water and makin' it right  
 I'm galavantin' with a halfa "G"

I'm gittin' up for the downstroke  
 I'm takin' it to the stage  
 I'm tearin' the roof off the sucker  
 I'm Ga-Ga-**Goo**-Ga!  
     Ga-Ga-**Goo**-Ga!  
     Ga-Ga-**Goo**-Ga-Ga-!!!!

I ain't studdin' 'bout choo...  
 My name is Lafargue  
 My name is Lu-Lu  
 My name is Ray-Ray  
 My name is Aunt Leona and Uncle René

My name is Chink (I got that Yang money)  
 My name is New Orleans...  
 My name is Joe Gemelli's  
 My name is Duplessis  
 My name is Battiste, Boudreaux, Bordenave, Barbarin,  
 Guichard, Dobard, Lombard, Broussard, Berniard, Encalarde,  
 Bigard and Broyard

My name is Francois...  
 My name is Padee  
 My name is Moret, Vette, Duronselet, Verrette, Martinette  
 and Robinette

My name is Spadoni  
 My name is Augustine  
 My name is Nubby and Bubby  
 My name is is Zebadee and Otee P.  
 My name is Pasooky, Dooky and Nooky (**Miss Nooky to you!**)  
 My name is Brumfield, Hatfield and Chopfield

My name is Tootie  
 My name is Snootie  
 My name is Booker, Blache, Becknell and Bucky  
 My name is Boyé (I'ma cutcha neck off!)  
 My name is Doublét, Dubuclét, Boissière, Bacquét and Charbonné  
 My name is Coulon, Nabonne, Barzon, Mouton, Melancon, Mouzon,  
 Glapion, Dejean, Bergeron, Bordelon, Robichon, Tervalon, Vaucresson,  
 and Pichon

My name is Breaux, Galleaud, Lebeaux, LeBlanc, Valteau,  
 Boudreaux, Beaulieu, Robicheaux, Crustoe, Arceneaux, Palao, Snow,  
 Charbonneaux and Fontenot

My name is Chicken Ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-annnnnn!!!!!!  
 My name is Dip  
 My name is Delarge  
 My name is Poonanny

My name is Boo-taaaaay!!!

My name is Dejoie, Bourgeois, Dedeaux and Delotte

My name is Bakewell, Morrell, Mercadel and Morial

My name is Bagneris (or "Bonnareese," if I have a degree)

I am Dago Red, Cherry Red, Virgo Red, Chintzy Red, Brick Red, Brickhead Red, Prickhead Red, Dirty Red, Tricky Red, Icepick Red, Irish Red, Bugar Red, Boogie Red, Lil' Red, Big Red, Redbone Red, Chicken Red, Brickhouse Red, Trickhouse Red, Panna Red, Panama Red, Tampa Red, Uptown Red, Ninth Ward Red, Lady Red, Shorty Red, and Red Red...

*My Name is New Orleans...*

I am the people

I am the people

I am the voices of the people:

"Take it easy, greasy. Don't loudcap me. I'm a door-poppa runnin' my haid out the screen do' on the front step while it's pourin' down rainin'. Well, goodnight Irene! Cra-a-a-azy University! Git my parasol by the chiffarobe 'cuz I'ma go by Ma Dear an' dem! Den I'ma go ballin' on Claiborne an' bummin' over the basin on Canal Street. I'ma holler at cha! Lawd have mercy Jesus!"

"Hey baby."

"Hey Boo. How ya doin', dahlin'?"

"I'm goin' to the washateria and wash these filthy-dirty clothes, den I'ma spend the day by aunt-tee an' emm."

"You still courtin' with that lil' peanut-haid boy down the street?"

The boy so old, he went to Xavier Prep when they still had boys goin' there!"

*My Name is New Orleans...*

I'm a Luzianne Coffee & Chicory can fulla chinees. I'm a chiney. I'm a boley. I'm a cat-eye. I'm a crystal. I'm a knucklefitter. I'm a beanie. I'm a bullring. I'm a banana ring. I'm fooky-knuckle. I'm keepsies. I'm venge. I'm *tight* venge. I'm chiney-mine. I'm no chiney-mine.

WHAT COLOR IS THE SKY?

Blue

-RAZOO!!!

I'm a talcum-powered little girl wearing pedal pushers and a pink barette just learning how to chickenscratch

I'm walkin' in the rain cryin' crocodile tears 'cause my woman done left me for another man...

I am a Creole lullaby, wandering in the willows, caressing the green moss and palmetto leaves of the dark, blue bayou

I am tupelo, gum and cypress trees swinging in the wind and nightmarish, moonlit, ancient oaks

I am hot. I am hot. I am *humid* and hot.

I am hot. I am hot. I am *humid* and hot.

I am hot. I am hot. I am *humid* and hot.

I am September 10, 1965

I am BETSY!

I am *HURRICANE BETSY*!!

-ARRRRRRRRGGGGHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

I am a puke-stained night on Bourbon Street

-UGGGGGGGGGGGGGGH.. .

*My name is New Orleans..*

I am Claiborne & Dumaine and Tulane & Broad

I'm a grade school classmate on a one-way trip to Angola

I'm a crime against nature

I'm in Pirate's Alley-gittin' **all** the booty!

I am dope. I am dope.

I am dope in the projects.

I am Project Dope

I am a Puffie (I am a two-dollar joint)

I am a Fat Boy (I am a two-dollar joint)

I am a Clickum (I am weed dipped in embalming fluid)

I am a Geek (I am a cigarette laced with cocaine)

I am a Primo (I am a cigarette laced with rock cocaine)

I am dope. I am dope.

I am dope in the projects

I am Project Dope...

I am a Betat bike leanin' over a basketball in the breezeway

I'm a Popsicle Pet baseball glove on a Gentilly Warrior

I am football Saints and Claiborne Street sinners:

"Touchdown Touchdown

Touchdown boys

You make the touchdown

We make the noise..."

My Name is New Orleans...

I'm what's happening'

I'm the old *and* the news

I am Warren Bell and André Trevigne  
 I am Stacey Adams and Old Man Comforts  
 I am Wingtips and Edwin Clapps  
 I am brogans and Buster Browns  
 I am Ban-Lon shirts, tailor-made pants and All-Star tennis shoes  
 I am Meadows Draughon Beauty College and Straight Business School  
 I'm a pair of Union skates with a hotbox  
 I am the Garden District and the Treme District

I'm *rumorizin'*. I'm *shoo-shoo'in'*:  
 "Lil' Richard and James Brown gittin' married!"  
 ("Boy - eat yo' red beans!")  
 I am Armstrong Park, Audubon Park, and Pontchartain Park  
 I'm little old ladies going to the Tuesday night BINGO  
 I'm the St. Vitus Dance  
 I'm the St. Ann Shrine on Johnson and Ursulines  
 I'm a washtub fulla FALSTAFF at a picnic on the lake  
 I'm ba-a-a-ad! I'm *terrible!* I'm *treacherous!* I'm *wicked!*  
 I'm *hellacious!* I'm *ign'ant!*  
 I'm wakin' up the dead  
 I'm lowdown and dirty! I'm Fifty McNasty  
 I'm the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the shroud  
 I'm pine earl in the turlit  
 I'm playin' "mommas and daddies" under the bed  
 I'm gittin laid out before the funeral  
 I'm a conniption fit  
 I'm the livin' daylights  
 I'm a nervous breakdown  
 I'm nutty as a fruitcake  
 I'm knee-deep in cosmic slop  
 I'm on my way to Mandeville  
 I'm on the third floor of Charity screamin' bloody murder  
 I ain't countin' my chickens  
 and I'm straightenin' up and flyin' right  
 cuz *my* name is New Orleans...  
 New *Are-leens*...  
 N'awlins  
 New O...

### **III** **RESURRECTION**

My name is New Orleans...

I am mist  
 I am magic

I am memory...

I am C.J. PEETE (I used to be the Magnolia)

I am the Cooper (I used to be the Calliope)

I am "scooters" (I used to be "skatemobiles")

I am A.P. Tureaud (I used to be London Avenue)

I am The Fairmont (I used to be the Roosevelt)

I am an empty hospital building (I used to be Flint Goodridge)

I am the Zulus having a parade route (i used to be flyin' coconuts)

I am "layups" (I used to be "krips")

I am "hairlifts" (I used to be "Afro-combs")

I'm part of I-10 (I used to be the neighborhood)

I used to be Parkchester (I ain't *nowhere*, now)

My name is New Orleans...

I am memory...

I am the yellow sign in the backa the bus

I am getting our drinks "out the wall"

I am not being able to try on hats in KRAUSS

I am a time when parents gave their children *themselves*  
(instead a *things*)

I am tropical depression and economic depression

I am life-sized mammy dolls in front doors of French Market  
souvenir shops

I am pickaninny dolls in MACY's.....

I am magic

I am memory

I am pajamas under khaki uniforms and socks for gloves in winter cold

I am a child cutting a foot on a brown beer bottle in the Project grass  
and being rushed off to the hospital with a white hainkachiff flyin' out  
the window o' the car...

I am ringworms, diphtheria, inferior medical facilities and the  
heebie-jeebies

I an the Upperline and the Lower Nine

I am an afternoon monsoon

I am a streetcar passin' the Y by Lee Circle

I am Hayes Chicken Shack and *Thugs United*

I'm a big, fat flyin' roach

dive-bombin' yo gran'ma in the kitchen (and she ain't got nair  
broom!)

I am the Mardi Gras Mambo and the purple, orange, green and gold

My name is New Orleans:

*"Hear my prayer, Oh LORD, and let my cry come unto thee*

*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble. Incline*

*thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth.*

*My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin*

*I am like a pelican of the wilderness*

*I am like an owl of the desert.*

*I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.*

*Mine enemies reproach me all the day; they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*

*For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down,*

*My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.*

*But thou, O LORD, shall endure for ever; and they remembrance unto all generations."*

*My name is New Orleans...*

August 12, 1988

*This poem appeared in the New Laurel Review 1988; The New Orleans Tribune 1988, 2002; and The Ties That Bind: Making Family New Orleans Style 2002.*

## **SUNDAY SUITE**

**(to the memory of Gwendolyn Fémi Sampson)**

it was sunday	*	i hungered. u came. and came again.
i cast my lot	*	and upon it u built a temple.
it was sunday.	*	
i craved sleep.	*	but from yieau body's flames
		i could not wrest.
i craved night.	*	and loved u crazily thru my daze...