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# ALUMNA ALENCIA JOHNSON IS MAKING HER VOICE HEARD ACROSS THE AIRWAVES

**A PROUD CAPTAIN FOR LIFE CREDITS CNU WITH GIVING HER THE TOOLS TO SUCCEED**

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | January 25, 2024

*Read time: about 4 min*

Prominent political strategist and commentator Alencia Johnson discovered the best version of herself the day she became a Captain: Confident. Energized. And ready to take on the world.

### CNU Alumni Profile - Alencia Johnson



She recently returned to campus to speak to students in the [President's Leadership Program](#) (PLP) about working through resistance and to preach the power of being a Captain for Life.

"I really honed in and developed my leadership skills here," said Johnson, smiling as she talked about her alma mater. "It's such a unique university, in that it teaches all of us to be leaders."

Choosing to attend Christopher Newport, Johnson said, turned out to be one of the best decisions of her life and it is still paying dividends as she continues her ascent to the top. Johnson is a frequent guest on national news programs and owner of a social impact consultancy.

A cheerleader, PLP participant, tour guide and member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Johnson got involved from her first day as a freshman. She took advantage of all social, academic and extracurricular opportunities CNU presented. She studied abroad in China and did internships at news stations in Norfolk and Washington, DC. She even organized a mission trip to Honduras.

"There were limitless opportunities for me to get involved. Being at CNU, the world was my oyster," said Johnson, who continues to be a cheerleader for Christopher Newport as she chucks up professional successes and attributes them in large part to her education. "I like to tell folks, I was always making good trouble on campus. The late John Lewis always said, 'It's OK to make trouble, as long as it's good trouble.'"

And good trouble she did make.

"I was in so many different organizations and I had so much support when I was here from (former) President Paul Tribble, the faculty and staff, and my classmates – even if we disagreed on some things, which we did quite often," she said. "CNU really instilled so many values of being a holistic person and making contributions to the world. I don't think I would have been able to hone in on those skills had I gone to another university."

After graduation, Johnson worked for the campaigns of Presidents Obama and Biden and presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). She is now owner and chief impact officer of 1063 West Broad, which strives to connect brands and people with mission-driven marketing concepts. Some of her clients have included America Ferrera and Wilmer Valderrama's nonprofit Harness, Apple, and BET Networks. She serves on Warner Music Group's Social Justice Fund Board, which is distributing \$100 million to racial justice organizations in the wake of the George Floyd uprising.

Johnson is currently writing her first book, teaching people how to be everyday disruptors for good. It will be released in spring 2025.

Johnson, '09 [Communication Studies](#), has emerged as a power player focused on moving society's needle in a direction where words and actions spur a kinder and more equitable world. She can often be seen on CNN and MSNBC, sharing her thoughts on breaking news, politics and society. Her insight runs the gamut, she's been on the airwaves talking about everything from Rudy Giuliani going on reality TV, to pop culture's role in politics, to the Supreme Court, to Black women winning elections.

Johnson has been named to EBONY magazine's "Power 100" list of influential African Americans and PRWeek's "40 Under 40" list. Former Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam appointed her to the Virginia Council on Women in 2020. Much of her success, she said, is rooted in the skills she developed at Christopher Newport.

"A lot of what I learned on campus at CNU was the importance of being able to work with people of differing opinions and how to agree to disagree when you're really passionate about something," Johnson said. "But you have to move those beliefs into action. And being here at CNU, I learned that in so many different ways.

"I also learned to juggle so many different responsibilities," she said. "I came in as a business major, which is so laughable because that is not who I am. And obviously, with the communication studies degree, I found my own path and found a way to use communication skills."

Johnson has embraced the life lessons imparted by her parents, grandmother, and Tribble. From Stafford, Va., Johnson is the daughter of a preacher and the granddaughter of a woman who took activism to heart. Her grandmother influenced her so heavily that she used her address, 1063 West Broad, as her firm's name.

From an early age, Johnson was taught to stand up for what she believes. When she got to CNU, she and Tribble "had an open door relationship," and he emphasized to her the importance of leadership and fostered in her the spark to lead and to develop into the highly-sought after professional she is today.

"I am so grateful for that," she said. "These experiences really shaped who I am today."

Johnson calls herself “a connector and disruptor for good.”

She also is a storyteller, influencer and expert in culture, able to easily and affirmatively express her views and opinions in a relatable way.

At one point, Johnson thought she wanted to be a news anchor. But then, during her senior year, Barack Obama became president, and that ignited in her something she never expected.

“I was so inspired by it that I scrapped my resume and moved to D.C.,” she said.

She started in corporate communications at GEICO, then got her chance to dive head first into the world of politics, working on President Obama’s re-election campaign. She moved into advocacy at Planned Parenthood – where she spent six years at their national office advocating for reproductive freedom and engaging with the entertainment industry and the political campaigns the organization endorsed, including the presidential campaign of Secretary Hilary Clinton.

“None of that would have happened if I had been married to ‘the roadmap’ so many of us believe we have to follow in order to achieve our dreams,” she said.

Using herself as an example, her message to Christopher Newport students was simple yet impactful: “Literally try everything and also not be so married to what it is you think you’re going to do.”

“It’s important for us to try anything and everything,” she said. “CNU gave me the confidence to do that. It gave me the room and space to try something new.”

Johnson’s effort to pay forward the support, confidence and knowledge Christopher Newport gave her so many years ago resonated with current students, who found her message of resilience and her contagious love of CNU enlightening and encouraging.

“Alencia Johnson is a distinguished leader in her respective field, and she left a lasting impact on campus during her time as a Captain,” said PLP student Luke Dietrich, ‘24 Finance. “When she spoke to us, she displayed confidence, encouragement, and enthusiasm that was well-reciprocated throughout the evening. She provided inspiration, showing all Captains that the effort given and skills acquired during our time here at CNU will translate well into our future endeavors.”

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