

**We are delighted to announce**

**The winner of the 2008 Joshua Tree Essay Contest**

**MICHELE MORGEN**

**New York, N. Y.**

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Michele Morgan (known on the forum as zippypie) knew when she read this year's topic that it was right up her alley – for she is an actress, returning to acting after years of exploring other roles. Her act of power this year is creating a one-woman play.

As a young woman, Michele loved to act. After schooling and some years as a psychotherapist, she has moved back to New York to resume acting. Born in the Philly area, she laughingly describes herself as a bit of a gypsy, as she has lived in a number of places. Her journey in life took her to school in New York and Chicago, and then to work in Los Angeles.

In 1990 Medicine Woman called to her from a shelf in a bookstore, and she began reading Lynn's work. Working through the Teachings Around the Sacred Wheel workbook led to her attend the 1993 Joshua Tree Event as a volunteer. She returned the next year as a participant. A couple of years ago Michele began taking Lynn's online courses, including Luminous Fibers, Act of Power, and the recent Dreaming series. She is also currently participating in the Woman at the Edge of Two World's bookclub on the Forum.

Michele's spiritual journey has included Wiccan and Buddhist elements. She received her training in psychotherapy at Naropa, a Buddhist graduate school in Boulder, Colorado. Her program focused on art therapy and she worked mainly with children in her practice. She continues to enjoy art of all kinds, and especially creating three-dimensional objects.

Congratulations, Michele!

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**The instructions for 2008's essay:**

“Shapeshifting into Power”

If all the world's a stage, as Shakespeare said, consider the parts you have played during this lifetime, and the part you are playing now. How are you taking your power and manifesting in the world? How has this changed over time? Write about your process and experience of transformation in manifesting your life.

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**And here is Michele's essay:**

Once upon a time, I was all things and many more. I chose to forget my perfection and be born. I began a journey of remembering. I chose to suffer in order to know joy. I chose to be human, to be like everyone else but to be different – to be me.

The sun peeks over the horizon, a peachy soft fleshy pulse of color and light and warmth.

I am who I have chosen to be, who I choose to be. I walk on the edges because that's my nature. I join in the human stream with friends and family. I dive into the stars and the mysteries and the silky blackness of aloneness, of solitude, of joining with nothingness and everythingness and being.

I am afraid of being seen. I am retraining, building stamina, lifting weights of thoughts which have fermented into giant fear-soaked raisins in my brain, my heart, my spirit. I squeeze them. I lay them out in the sun to dry. I examine them like a puzzle, a painting, a flower blossoming into fruit, the peachy soft fleshy pulse of the sun, now shining brightly above the horizon as I breathe, in and out, and with a sigh of joy, of reconciling, of love, embrace myself in all my complex simplicity.

A life of opposites. Sometimes consciously chosen, sometimes cluelessly. Or so it seems to the Victim, the Martyr. I know her. We spent many years together and occasionally she drops in for a cup of tea. I now have the strength to show her out the door when her visit has overstayed.

I have been brave. I have been cowardly. I've played the Child and the Mother, the Friend and the Backstabber, the Confident One, the Leader. I've joined forces with the Rebel. She's more exciting than the Follower, yet she steamrollers over others, especially those she loves. The time has come for her to stop fighting just because she can.

I have been the Goddess, the Lover, the Muse. I have explored the hidden caves of the Hermit and the raging fires of the Scorned One.

Like a switch being flipped, I find myself in midlife, wondering what has become of all the roles I have played. I use them in my acting work, my Act of Power, but are they me? Who is "me"?

If my spirit is a fragmented mirror, do the fragments disappear when the mirror is reassembled? Or are they still separate pieces forming a greater whole? Facets of a diamond, reflecting the rainbow of my truth into the world. Where I have been. Where I may go.

I journey on. I let go of becoming. I am, and I have always been and always shall be. The perception of me has changed. There is no good or bad, no right or wrong. I step into the spotlight of power in perfect love and perfect trust. I fall blissfully into its endless peachy soft fleshy pulse of eternal light. I am.