

2001 Essay Contest

All about our Winner of the 2001 Joshua Tree Essay Contest



Listed below Dakotah's essay is her follow up interview with her impressions of the Joshua Tree Event!

After many long hours of pouring over outstanding essays, we have selected a winner, **Dakotah Davis** from Winfield, Kansas. Dakotah is a journalist, working as a county editor for her local newspaper, the Winfield Daily Courier.

According to Dakotah, winning the Joshua Tree Contest is a pinnacle moment in the culmination of her ten-year journey into spirituality and personal growth. "It began when I found my first Lynn Andrews' book in a used bookstore in Oregon." From that moment on, she embarked on her exploration of shamanism through the dreamtime transport of Lynn's books and sacred teachings. Her essay is a portrait of her decade's journey into the sacred landscape of her soul, capturing the essence of her internal process of self-discovery. Dakotah says, "I wanted my essay to contain the elements of shamanism that resonate within me."

In this winning essay Dakotah skillfully conveys her unique adventure into the terrain of the shaman. Reading her essay shifts your consciousness out of everyday reality and into the

realm of the dreamtime, the sacred reality of spirit. When Dakotah sets off on a shamanic journey, she returns a changed person, confident of the inner knowing that accompanies transformation. "I set my intent and have a clear purpose when I begin to move into the sacred reality. Then I know I must let go and allow the journey to take me. I must allow the adventure to unfold and trust that my purpose will be fulfilled."

Dakotah's essay illustrates her ability to transport the reader into the ecstatic nature of trance journeying. Her story touches the shaman in everyone -- the part of us that is ever capable of exploring the many dimensions of consciousness. She reminds us that we are one with the mystery and magic of life.

As you read Dakotah's essay, take the journey with her and enter the sacred dream of ***Mother Moon***.

Mother Moon

By Dakotah M. Davis

Mother moon east rising.

Clouds part as she draws down her light.

From forest shadows I emerge to greet her.

Warrior woman, yellow hair streaming, I approach my altar.

Flames dancing on silvery stretch of sand, I whirl with my body's song through trance drums.

Power song, prayer song, song of woman, song of strength.

Mother moon pulls as a totem cry is answered.

From water's ephemeral mist she-coyote's metamorphosis.

Our stance across the flames, at once protector, at once prey.

A Shamanic stare, we meet in psychic gaze and circle the hot orange glaze.

At once friend. At once foe.

Mother moon joins in the red mud of blood that is woman, that is beast.

Unites in earthy pelt and four-legged running.

In canine eye and dawn's memory.

Sinking into sand I commune with my Luna mother.

Silver white rays tug my body towards her orb.

In amethyst sound we join.

Her incandescent tendrils wrap me in their arms, light falling into skin, sifting through organs.

I turn on facets of a crystal.

Silken streams of light dancing on the essence of my being.

My femaleness hums in the rhythm, ripens in the glow.

My womb begins her voluptuous weeping.

Moon beams fall on a puddle of blood, each drop a purified, pulsing beat.

My spirit rises into heaven; my soul sinks down to earth.

Licking stream, surface beams floating, I am called to my baptism.

Immersion into cool water.

Washing my newborn soul.

My mother moon sends me sunshine smiles.

In awe of her grace, I am pulled into her sacred dream of padded paws pushing through forests.

Swimming under milky waters.

A liquid tickle over gills.

Mother moon turns her face to me again.

Pulsing in the pulp of stretching bark.

A cycle not yet complete.

She-coyote appears on the horizon of my wild dreaming.

Paw prints worn into ageless sandstone patterns.

She lifts up her throaty call to Great Spirit.

Silhouetted against the dark bowl of sky.

Mother moon answers.

Hands down her Luna moon teaching.

In she-coyote I find myself.

In she-coyote I am one.

In she-coyote I am whole.

In she-coyote I am home.

Wellness of one found in the other.

An interdependent cycle of magic.

Her Luna knowledge carried on the sent of a pine tree sapling stretching from deep roots.

Understanding seen in the stillness of a doe.

In the sharpening of claw.

In the sweet salt meeting of tooth against flesh.

Mother moon west setting.

At home in her seeing.

The North Star falls in favor of her beauty, whispering goodnight.

The moist innocence of the south wind weaves through my sacred dreaming.

I turn for home under a Luna moon.

Cradling my ancient Luna womb.

Here is a follow up interview with Dakotah where she offers her impressions of the Joshua Tree Event:

What surprised you the most about the Joshua Tree Event?

I was very surprised at the reception I received at Joshua Tree. Being the contest winner, I felt like a celebrity, if only for a week. I was very touched by the number of people who took the time to say hello to me, introduce themselves and thank me for the essay I had written.

What was it like to work with Lynn in person in comparison to reading her books?

I was struck with the importance of meditation in Lynn's work, because it is something I had not focused on in her books. Instead of lecturing, Lynn actively engaged her listeners in vivid and imaginative healing meditations. It was an obvious indicator we were there to do work, rather than just listen to a story. Under her direction, I felt Lynn was putting us through our paces, making us work, much like Ruby and Agnes have pushed and tested her.

There are many activities and meditative practices at the Joshua Tree Event. Which one stands out as being the most significant for you?

Until I went to Joshua Tree, I had not realized how hungry I was to do ceremony. Each night Lynn sent us out among the lizards and chollo cactus to sing and chant, watching the golden sun dip below the desert horizon. Wrapped in our sacred shawls, we used our voices, rattles and drums to thank grandfather sun for his gifts and to reflect upon the day. After each ceremony, I felt nurtured and whole, as if broken pieces of my soul had come back together. While it is possible to perform ceremony living in a town, I don't often feel I have the privacy I need to hold ceremony. But, in the desert, singing to the spirits felt welcomed and appropriate. I felt the spirit world was as hungry for it as I was.

How have you changed as a result of participating in the Joshua Tree Event?

One of my goals for attending Joshua Tree was to make peace with a failed marriage. In 1999 my husband of 3 years and I divorced. I then moved two states away and, although I was in a different time and place, I continued to blame and berate myself for wrongs I felt I had committed during our time together. Doing this was holding me back from getting on with my life and a new relationship. For some reason, I felt Joshua Tree held the key that would unlock the door to my new life. It did. I found that key at the feet of the Lords of Kharma, an altar erected in the facility's sanctuary. When Lynn explained it was possible to release oneself from the binding chains of the past by asking forgiveness, I immediately felt a sense of peace and surity. Symbolically, releasing yourself from past karmic debts was done by writing out prayers on sacred paper and placing them in a basket laid out before the altar. I wept as I wrote and through the process of writing my sins, I felt the guilt flow away from me.

How would you describe the Joshua Tree Event to those who have not had the opportunity to attend?

Joshua Tree is a spiritual event with ceremonies tying the threads of the past, present and future into a magical weave. The instructions and tasks help you connect with the spirit world in a way that is real. The ceremonies give flavor to spirituality in a way that many modern

religious practices do not. While you will make friends, dance to lively music and be surrounded by the beauty of the desert at Joshua Tree, it is not a vacation. If you go, go with a goal for spiritual, personal or emotional growth in mind. Your own mindset will determine what you gain from the experience.

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