

2003 Essay Contest

*We are delighted to announce our 2003 winner of
the Essay Contest
Maria Mar, of New York City*



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In 1993 Maria was told by her ancestors and spiritual teachers, "Healer, heal thyself." She says, "I'd been so busy fixing everyone around me that I found I was a disaster. I began what I thought was giving myself time to think about this journey, but the path quickly revealed that my trail was leading to shamanism. My spiritual teachers said I would be taught through the wisdom of the trees. I later came to understand that the trees would teach me from the transformation of their bodies, which were fashioned into books that taught me what it meant to be a shaman."

Maria studied the teachings of the altar and the medicine wheel, but soon realized she had much to learn. She went to the bookstore at the advice of her spiritual teachers who told her that the books would call out to her. It was Lynn Andrews' books that held that magnetic attraction, in an aura of light and soon Maria's journey began where she read all of Lynn's books countless times. Lynn's teachings opened Maria's mind and heart, unearthing many revelations. For seven years,

Lynn's books were Maria's constant companions and teachers, through which she heard the voices of the ancestors.

Maria presently teaches the path of the swan. Her path led her to reject her identity as an ugly duckling and to embrace the truth that she is a beautiful swan. Maria has a colorful and fascinating website where she shares her path with others. You can find Maria's website at [www.shamansdance.com](http://www.shamansdance.com). She describes herself as a performer, a writer, a percussionist, a visual artist, shaman and storyteller. She says, "The path I have walked is what freed my creative energies. I am a woman who has discovered a path to freedom and in that path I have discovered the female face of power."

"Writing this essay felt like I was blasting off in a spaceship, launching my journey to the stars. I've always wanted to say thank you to Lynn for her teachings so winning this contest and being able to meet her in person to express my thanks is a dream come true. This morning before I received the news of winning the contest, I heard the following message in my meditation - "I am enough, I am in grace, I am truly blessed."

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This year at our Annual Joshua Tree Event, we revealed and released areas of **resistance** in our bodies and minds.

When the trap of resistance catches hold of our consciousness, there are almost no waves or ripples of energy going outward from our being. It is as if we become frozen. We stand under the falling rain and we see it, but we do not feel it. When you do not move into the world, when you shield yourself, the world is shielded from you. You do not let anything out, but you also do not let anything in and your consciousness becomes stagnant. More than ever, this is a time for action, a time for spiritual resolve, and a time for embracing the beauty and truth of who we are. We must let go of our resistance, but first, we must find the source of that resistance within us. Even if you don't feel resistance at this point on your spiritual journey, certainly at some time along your path you have.

**For our 2003 Essay Contest, Lynn would like for you to answer the following questions,**

- 1. Describe the kind of resistance you encountered within yourself when you first began your pursuit of spiritual study.*
- 2. As you traveled this path of spiritual training, how and when has your resistance surfaced again?*
- 3. Where in your body and mind do you experience this congealing or freezing up of your energy?*
- 4. When you contemplate this frozen energy and move your awareness into its center, what do*

*you find as the source of your resistance?*

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Here is Maria Mar's Winning Essay:

**The Broken Star**  
**by Maria Mar**

If days had 100 hours each, I would have used them all to change the world. I worked incessantly, slept little and lived furiously. I had to right all the wrongs in the world, and it had to be done today. Resistance was my modus operandus. I resisted "the system", patriarchy and all those who oppressed me. Underneath all these layers of defensiveness lay a deeper, core resistance, invisible, untouched.

One day my Spirit Teachers showed me a mirror. I saw a raging woman, running after justice, defending democracy, while all the time she was the victim of a dictatorship that stifled her grace and joy. A dictatorship inside herself. The pain I felt when I saw this mirror prompted me to track down the source of that inner dictatorship.

The guide my Spirit Teachers sent was not Wolf or Jaguar. It was fragile Butterfly. She took me into an abandoned mine, ransacked, split open and emptied. I had such a feeling of desolation that I sat there and cried.

I saw myself at birth. I was a radiant star with eight rays of light. Each ray was a spiritual power and an art form, for I was a multi-talented child. Then Butterfly fluttered nervously through my first years, and I saw the people who surrounded me. They had forsaken beauty in order to survive in a world of scarcity.

Among my people grace, beauty, creativity and harmony, the Female Powers that give life its meaning, had been betrayed generation after generation in favor of "the bottom line": skill, effort and hard work as one more peg in the industrial machine. That was the only power my family recognized, the only source of money they knew. How could they nurture an artist, a visionary? Yet how hungry they were for the gifts I brought! They mined my light constantly to feed their hunger, but devalued my grace.

The abandoned mine was my Solar Plexus. Butterfly took me deep into the core of the large hole in its weave. There I found a strange paradox. On the one hand, I had given away everything constantly: vital energy, time and resources. I had become a mined star, constantly shining and constantly exhausted.

On the other hand, however, I had stored myself away. I had a locked, closed drawer full of all that I had not allowed to flow into the world. I had secretly hidden my Star-Essence and my art. I became a writer who did not publish. An actress who did hundreds of plays, but had few photos of herself, and did little publicity for her plays. I was an invisible star, shining for others, visible to a few others, to "family" -- but invisible to myself and to the world.

As the light of my radiant star uncoiled within me, I felt for the first time the pain under all my resistance. I had repulsed joy and harmony. I resisted life, for I had resisted the exuberance of my own nature. I had been resisting myself.

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