

= Janee Michelle =

Janee Michelle (born Geneva Leona Mercadel ; 1946) , also known as Gee Tucker , is an American actor , model , dancer , and businessperson , best known for her role in the 1974 horror film The House on Skull Mountain .

= = Career = =

Her acting and modeling career has included appearances in a variety of media , including films , television programs and advertisements , theatrical productions , and print advertisements . Mercadel made her first film appearance in the 1964 short film The Legend of Jimmy Blue Eyes . She adopted the stage name Janee Michelle because her talent agent and the film studio both believed her birth name would be poorly received . Michelle 's acting in the television series The Outcasts in 1968 was critically acclaimed , which led to several offers of film roles . Both in a 1969 episode of The Governor & J.J. and in the 1970 film Soul Soldier , Michelle acted alongside her then @-@ husband Robert DoQui .

In 1977 , Michelle was the queen in the New Orleans Mardi Gras Zulu parade . She was the first Zulu queen to wear two different gowns , both of which were designed by Bob Mackie , who had designed outfits for Cher . She divorced DoQui in 1978 and married New Orleans politician Robert H. Tucker , Jr. the following year ; she changed her name to Gee Tucker and became a businessperson .

In 1980 , the couple founded Tucker and Associates , a management consulting company that , in 1990 , received a US \$ 26 million contract with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve , representing the largest contract that had ever been received by a minority @-@ owned company in Louisiana . While working on this contract , Michelle and Tucker started a second company called Integrated Logistical Support . The couple divorced and Michelle retained ownership of Tucker and Associates while Tucker retained ownership of Integrated Logistical Support . When Tucker retired in 2008 , the couple 's daughter Iam Tucker replaced him as president of Integrated Logistical Support . After Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans , Michelle purchased Sophie 's Gelato , an ice cream parlor on Magazine Street where she makes gelato in @-@ house .

= = Early life = =

Janee Michelle was born Geneva Leona Mercadel in New Orleans , Louisiana . Her paternal great @-@ grandfather was a shoemaker who immigrated to New York from Champagne , France before moving to New Orleans in pursuit of a warmer climate . Michelle 's extended family was large and had lived in the 7th Ward of New Orleans for many years . Michelle is related to Sidney Barthelemy , former Mayor of New Orleans .

Traditionally , the Mercadels had worked in construction , and some of Michelle 's cousins continued this tradition . Michelle 's mother 's surname was Mathieu and her family background included people from Africa , France , Germany , and Italy , as well as Choctaw people . Michelle grew up in a religious home in which her father , Walter F. Mercadel , was a barber and her mother was a beautician . She had three siblings : an older brother named Walbert and two younger sisters named Zernell and Zona .

At age 13 , Michelle created , produced , designed , and directed a dance show at the YWCA in New Orleans . She was named Miss New Orleans in 1960 . She attended Rivers Frederick Junior High School where her principal , Leah McKenna , encouraged her to pursue a career in entertainment . While in high school , Michelle won fifteen certificates and medals for language proficiency . She started high school in New Orleans and then transferred to Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles , California , when her family moved there as a result of her mother 's illness , which was aggravated by the high humidity of New Orleans . Her father was unemployed at the time and her brother 's wife was pregnant , so she started working as a cook to support the family . She graduated from Manual Arts ranked 25th scholastically in her 500 @-@ student class , and then

attended Los Angeles City College and Woodbury College , receiving her best grades in English studies . She took drama courses from Actors Studio West and the Columbia Film Workshop .

= = Career = =

= = = Entertainment = = =

Michelle 's acting , modeling , and dancing career has included appearances in a variety of media , including films , television programs and advertisements , theatrical productions , and print advertisements . She commuted to a job as a dancer in Las Vegas while she was still in high school . She has learned to perform both ballet and Cuban dance styles and has danced at the Hollywood Palladium and Tropicana Las Vegas . As a stage actor , she appeared in productions of MacBird ! , The Death of Daddy Hugs and Kisses , Ride a Wild Horse , The Vagina Monologues , In the Blink of an Eye , and other plays . One of her early television advertisement appearances was for Ultra Sheen hair products . In 1964 , Michelle ? still known by her birth name Geneva Mercadel ? received her first film role in the short film The Legend of Jimmy Blue Eyes , which was nominated for an Academy Award . Her contract did not allow her to receive residuals when the film later aired on television . Her talent agent and the film studio both believed her birth name would be received poorly , so she adopted the stage name Janee Michelle . She chose the name Janee (pronounced Ja @-@ Nay , and sometimes spelled Janée) to keep the first two syllables of her birth name . She chose the surname Michelle because she " thought it would be unique to have a name with two first names " . When she found people had difficulty pronouncing the name Janee , she considered changing it again , but decided against it because she believed this pronunciation difficulty caused people to remember her .

In 1967 , an article in The Chicago Defender predicted that Michelle 's career in American cinema would be successful . Also that year , she appeared on the cover of an issue of the magazine Jet alongside Ronnie Eckstine in recognition of their appearance together in Eckstine 's debut film The Love @-@ Ins ; it was Michelle 's most prominent film role until that point . A Variety reviewer wrote that Michelle was cast well in the role . Michelle 's acting in the television series The Outcasts was critically acclaimed , leading to several offers of film roles . The Outcasts reviews also led to her appearance in an episode of Love , American Style alongside Greg Morris , known for his role in the Mission : Impossible television series .

Michelle was included in the magazine Ebony 's list of Fifty Eligible Girls for 1969 . Also in 1969 , Michelle again appeared on the cover of Jet , which called her " one of Hollywood 's most attractive actresses " . The article declares Michelle to be one of several up @-@ and @-@ coming African @-@ American actresses , along with Gloria Foster , Gail Fisher , and Denise Nicholas . In the corresponding interview with Jet , Michelle said although racial inequality in the United States may have been a career obstacle for African @-@ American women in the past , " that 's not it today ? and that 's for sure " . Michelle argued that her success as an actor proved the falsehood of the idea that African @-@ American women need to have sexual intercourse with certain people to become successful in the cinema of the United States .

Michelle starred alongside her husband Robert DoQui in a 1969 episode of The Governor & J.J. The couple acted together again the following year in Soul Soldier , a film in which Michelle is the leading lady ; she appears with DoQui in nude sex scenes . Michelle 's and DoQui 's characters form a love triangle with Lincoln Kilpatrick 's character . In a New York Times review of the film , Howard Thompson called all three actors ' performances " plain painful " .

In 1973 , Michelle collaborated with actors Judy Pace and Lillian Lehman to found Kwanza , a Hollywood , California @-@ based nonprofit organization named after the African diaspora celebration Kwanzaa . Run entirely by African American actresses on a volunteer basis , Kwanza initially provided food to people in need at Christmas . Michelle and the other two co @-@ founders each enlisted five other African American actresses to volunteer with the organization and , together , they raised enough funds to provide food to 75 families that first Christmas . By 1976 , the

organization had fed more than 2000 individuals and had expanded to function year @-@ round .

Michelle is best known for her role in the 1974 horror film *The House on Skull Mountain* , which was once an obscure film but became better known when it was released on DVD . She portrays Lorena Christophe , who is summoned to the house of a recently @-@ dead distant relative who was a voodoo queen . Christophe is the love interest of the main character , who is portrayed by Victor French . In the *Encyclopedia of African American Actresses in Film and Television* , Bob McCann writes that Michelle " is quite pretty and gives a charming performance in her undemanding role " . A *Variety* reviewer provided a similar appraisal of Michelle 's appearance , calling her attractive and her role chic . In 2014 , she appeared in a health insurance television advertisement for AARP .

= = = New Orleans Mardi Gras = = =

In 1977 , Michelle 's cousin , Anthony " Chuck " Mercadel , was chosen to be that year 's king of the Zulu parade , part of New Orleans Mardi Gras . He and Michelle had not seen each other since before her film and television career when she was living in New Orleans . Michelle was volunteering with Kwanza in Shreveport , Louisiana with 25 other actresses , including Isabel Sanford , when Chuck and New Orleans politician Robert H. Tucker , Jr. visited Michelle at her hotel . Chuck said he was looking for Sanford so he could ask her to be his queen . Michelle asked him , " Why don 't you ask me to be your queen ? " , and he did so . Michelle refused the offer because she did not wish to be his second choice . Sanford was unable to appear in the parade due to a prior engagement and Chuck asked Michelle again . This time , she accepted , despite having to rearrange her schedule .

Until the time of the parade , Michelle was working in Hollywood . She flew to New Orleans to be ceremoniously greeted at the airport by a band and some Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club members . Michelle was the first Zulu queen to wear two different gowns : one for the parade and the other for the ball . Bob Mackie designed both of these gowns . Mackie had designed outfits for Cher , from whom Michelle borrowed a beige turkey feather boa and headdress for the parade . Michelle 's parade gown was sleeveless , had a turtleneck , and was composed of a gold @-@ and @-@ cinnamon brocade decorated with topaz gemstones . The ball gown was a white , form @-@ fitting garment with a see @-@ through front , and was decorated with crystals and white bugle beads . She rejected the traditional tiara and instead wore a headpiece covered in pearls . Of her promenade around the ballroom , during which she swayed her shoulders and hips , Michelle later said " high @-@ school girls were imitating it for a year after that : the ' Zulu queen ' walk " .

= = = Business = = =

After divorcing DoQui in 1978 , Michelle married Robert H. Tucker , Jr. the following year , changed her name to Gee Tucker , moved back to New Orleans , and became a businessperson . After Tucker had repeatedly been unsuccessful in being elected to public office , he convinced Michelle to go into business with him and stop working for Copeland . In 1980 , Tucker and Michelle founded Tucker and Associates , a management consulting company . The company did not generate much revenue at first , and Michelle worked elsewhere in management and marketing . For the first few years , Michelle and Tucker did not apply for assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA) 8 (a) Business Development Program , which offers support to businesses run by members of minority groups . Michelle said they made this decision because " we had seen other businesses start out strongly , graduate from the SBA 8 @-@ A program and fail [and] we wanted to be able to know that we could compete without it " . Michelle had no formal business education , which made her feel inadequate as an entrepreneur . Of these early years in business , she later said , " I learned the hard way , on the job , things I could never have learned in school . But I think the formal training in school would have made it easier . "

Eventually , Tucker and Associates began receiving contracts requiring a variety of services , including personnel , data processing , finance , and marketing . By 1990 , the company employed 225 people and had a revenue of approximately \$ 11 million . That year , the company received a \$

26 million contract with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve , representing the largest contract that had ever been received by a minority @-@ owned company in Louisiana . This contract was awarded through the SBA 8 (a) program and lasted seven years . While working on this contract , Michelle and Tucker started a second company called Integrated Logistical Support , of which Michelle became the vice president . The couple divorced before the Strategic Petroleum Reserve contract ended , and Michelle went back to using her maiden name . Michelle retained ownership of Tucker and Associates , remaining its president and chief executive officer , while Tucker retained ownership of Integrated Logistical Support .

Michelle was a director of Hibernia National Bank while it was a Forbes 500 company , and as of 2002 , she is the chief operating officer of Tucker and Associates . In 2003 , Ray Nagin , Mayor of New Orleans , ended contracts with eleven companies that had ties to the previous mayor , Marc Morial ; both Tucker and Associates and Integrated Logistical Support were among these companies . Michelle has sat on the board of the Louisiana Children 's Museum and has volunteered with the Drugs Off the Street program .

Michelle purchased Sophie 's Gelato in New Orleans , which she operates .

= = Awards = =

In 1991 , Michelle was recognized as a YWCA Role Model . The National Council of Negro Women named her one of five community leaders of the year in 1995 . Michelle has been named New Orleans Woman Business Owner of the Year and has received the Best of Black Business Award . The Business and Professional Women 's Foundation has named her Employer of the Year . The American Council for Career Women has granted her their Achiever 's Award .

= = Personal life = =

On July 22 , 1966 , at the age of twenty , Michelle married 33 @-@ year @-@ old Albert S. Hubbard in Marin County , California . They divorced in January 1968 . On April 25 of the following year , she married 35 @-@ year @-@ old Robert DoQui in San Francisco . DoQui , whose term of endearment for Michelle was " crazy Creole chick " , already had four children from a previous marriage to a woman who had died , and Michelle developed a relationship with these children , who were aged five , six , eight , and eleven . In a 1969 interview with the magazine Tan , Michelle indicated that DoQui 's fashion preferences were an important factor in her clothing purchase decisions , saying , " I think a girl should dress for her husband " . She also expressed her support for the breadwinner model in which men are expected to make the most income for their families and women are expected to be housewives , although Michelle argued that women should work outside the home if they want to . She went on to say that women no longer worked hard enough to retain the respect and love of their husbands , and the interviewer describes Michelle as following her own advice : " She dotes so much on her man , invests so much of herself in him , his well @-@ being " . Michelle gave birth to a son , Robert Diago DoQui , in 1971 , and he later became an actor and writer . Michelle and DoQui divorced in June 1978 .

Having met Robert Tucker when her cousin Chuck asked her to appear in the 1977 Zulu parade , Michelle eventually started dating Tucker and they married in 1979 . Their daughter , Iam Christian Tucker , in 1983 . Michelle and Tucker divorced after nineteen years of marriage .

= = Filmography = =

= = = Film = = =

= = = Television = = =

