



Leslie Salmon Jones of Afro Flow Yoga on Looking to Her Roots for Inspiration and the Importance of Inclusion

BY [WENDY TAUCHER](#) NOVEMBER 6, 2018  4 MIN READ



Photo: Axel Heben Streit/courtesy of Afro Flow Yoga
Raise the roof: Afro Flow Yoga co-founder Leslie Salmon Jones gets people moving in Indonesia

[Afro Flow Yoga](#), a fusion of meditation, yoga, the dances of the African diaspora, and live music, returns to the [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum](#) on Saturday, Nov. 10. [The ticketed class](#) is open to the public, and all levels are welcome.

Founded by married couple Leslie Salmon Jones and Jeff W Jones, Afro Flow Yoga is currently celebrating its 10th season. The unique method is extremely popular, with ongoing classes in Boston and New York City, special events like the Gardner workshops, and retreats around the world.

Regular classes take place in Boston at [The Dance Complex](#) and [Northeastern Crossing](#), with plans to expand in 2019 into Roxbury. In New York City, classes take place twice a month at the [Ailey Extension](#), taught by an Afro Flow Yoga-certified instructor.

Inquisitive and searching for meaning even at the age of 13, co-founder Leslie attended a performance of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and felt a profound spiritual connection. The event led to Leslie, as a young adult, studying modern, Afro-Caribbean dance, ballet, and yoga at the Ailey School in New York City as part of a full-time, two-year intensive certification program. She is equal parts enthusiast, dancer, yogi, healer, and educator. Husband and co-founder Jeff, an experienced yogi and mover, plays 11 instruments and sings.



Photo: Amadi-Obi Kelechi/courtesy of Afro Flow Yoga

Strike a pose: Leslie and husband Jeff take their Afro Flow Yoga on the road—1600 Pennsylvania Ave., to be exact

The Boston-based entrepreneurial couple met while working on various fitness and dance projects. As they collaborated, they found they shared a deep longing to connect with their forbearers.

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“In the mid-’90s, Jeff and I both felt a need to explore our roots. We took an extended trip to West Africa, where we studied the history of African enslavement and the connections to our music and dance. We searched for and found a bond with our ancestors and new ways of being. The trip was a prayer answered. We were answering the prayers of our ancestors to return home.”

The study of the music and dance of West Africa and the Caribbean created a palette of work that Leslie and Jeff found compelling. The cultural aspects of community, of sharing the process collectively as it happens, made sense.

Combining elements from diverse cultures added a rich tapestry to their artistic endeavors. Leslie found herself organically uniting all of the aspects of her spirit, traditions, talent, and training. Through movement and sound, she began to build the foundations of a joyful practice incorporating dance, energy, strength, flexibility, rhythms, song, reflection, and full-tilt boogie.

Leslie has always been open to inspiration. Serendipity, as in many successful creative endeavors, played a part in the invention of Afro Flow Yoga. Ten years ago, Leslie was asked to teach a yoga class at a [Sedona Raw Food Retreat](#) in Arizona.

After years of experimenting with combinations of movement practices, Leslie, at the spur of the moment, invited an ensemble of Brazilian drummers to play for the Arizona workshop. The enthusiasm of the attendees, the musicians, and the collective energy created during this class allowed her to understand that this was a magical moment. A life changer. She had found her spiritual home.

Back in Boston, Leslie explains, “What really brought it all together was Jeff, who said this new type of class needed live music.” Jeff continues, “The concept of live music gives Afro Flow Yoga a true spirit of spontaneity. We’re not locked into a programmed sequence but can respond to the collective synergy. Our classes are very dynamic in terms of the mix of yoga, dance, music, volume, and rhythms. Each class begins and ends in silence, followed by guided breath work, guided meditation, and an inward focus to connect with heart and soul.”

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“We are extremely mindful of making Afro Flow Yoga accessible to everyone, including all shapes, sizes, colors, abilities, movement experience, and socioeconomic background,” Leslie adds. “All of our classes take place in a circle, which is a literal symbol of our commitment to collaboration between the attendees, the teacher, and the musician. We aim to create community.”

Community is what it’s all about for Afro Flow Yoga. To experience elation through movement and sound, try Afro Flow Yoga. Whether you’re a lifelong mover or a complete novice, you’ll energize your chakras, build strength, gain flexibility, and connect with your soul. Think dance party in a sacred space.