

UpRising Yoga Trauma-Sensitive Training Testimonial

As a new yoga teacher, I have thought a lot recently about how and who I want to teach.. Yoga has been an amazing resource in my life, helping me to thrive in spite of clinical depression, chronic physical illness and a history rife with trauma. My primary motivation for becoming a teacher is a desire to give to others – especially those who don't have access to mainstream yoga studios – the gift I have received from so many compassionate, authentic and dedicated teachers. So when I saw the flyer for UpRising Yoga's Trauma-Sensitive Yoga training I was eager to participate.

While I was looking forward to the training, I wasn't sure what to expect when I walked into the South Bay Center for Counseling's (SBCC) Wilmington community center on the first day. I had met the URY founder, Jill Weiss Ippolito only online, in a yoga and social justice tele-course we were both taking. While she appeared to be street-wise, friendly, compassionate and dedicated, I hadn't actually talked to her in person, and so was a bit wary about what I was getting myself into.

My first impression of SBCC was reassuring; the environment felt authentic and organic, lacking in that overtone of pretension and elitism that is present in most commercial yoga studios. The space is infused with a sense of practical optimism, with a focus on collaborative community. This center is a community asset – a celebration of what has been created and how it serves those who participate in it.

This struck me as the perfect backdrop for a training focused on using yoga as a therapeutic tool for teaching self-regulation and empowerment to youth who have been largely ignored and regarded as criminal by the dominant culture.

In the same way that this building is a work of art – a heartfelt, communal effort inspired by a willingness to collaborate with neighbors on building a mutually beneficial framework for self-reliant community, URY's training is a heartfelt, humble, partner-based offering to a demographic largely disregarded, seen as beyond repair and not worthy of mainstream time or attention. It is, in effect, an asset-based training, focused on empowering students.

I have not started teaching yet and am still not sure exactly who my students will be; if I do ever teach to incarcerated youth, it will be a while down the road because I don't feel that I yet have the experience to successfully navigate the challenges of teaching in the juvenile detention system. While the UpRising mission – and, by extension, training – is primarily geared towards teaching incarcerated youth, I am grateful for this training and feel it will enhance my ability to offer a safe and self-affirming practice space to any student I teach.

The training is transformational in its own rite, and not limited to the specifics of teaching asana in the juvenile detention environment. In addition to being a crash-course in teaching in the juvenile detention system, the training is a symposium on social justice and the most authentic, respectful way to approach service in a community different from one's own. Included are discourses on partner-based and empowering service, and teaching in a trauma-informed way. Also offered is a broader background discussion on the experience of youth incarcerated in the system. A big part of that discussion is about CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) victims. While that portion of the discussion is painful to listen to, it provides much-needed information about the (largely unknown or misunderstood) scope and brutality of the exploitation, specifically in LA.

Overall, I left the training with a much better understanding of both the challenges and the potential for positive change when teaching to any marginalized group of students. I feel strongly that I will be a better teacher for it, more able to offer the gift of yoga in a way that is respectful, practical, and

dynamic, adaptable to what will be most beneficial for the students present at any given class. I would highly recommend this training!