

Mark Drost and Zefea Samson

OF EVOLUTION YOGA

You opened Evolution Yoga after being a Senior Bikram teacher for six years. What elements did you take from your Bikram practice, and how does your school and 'Hot Yoga' teacher training differ?

Our classes are the same 26 postures taught in a direct and straightforward way. We add meditation and more focus on breathing. Evolution also offers other class types from different traditions. This way students and teachers alike can grow and evolve within the same studio and organisation. Our trainees experience an intensive and challenging course, but will go home with all the tools to be an effective teacher. Many describe the experience as life changing.

Why did you decide to defend yourself when Bikram sued you in 2011 for copyright infringement?

Bikram has been trying to hold this particular yoga sequence hostage, so that no one can improve upon it, re-interpret it, or teach it with a different energy. Evolution has not been looking for a fight, but when we found ourselves defending against this stranglehold on a practice that has been handed down without restrictions throughout its history - essentially, defending yoga itself and we resolved to take it all the way in service to the greater community.

The judge ruled that yoga moves couldn't be copyrighted. What effects do you think this will have on yoga?

This is very big for everything yoga, and even beyond. Many teachers will carry on the tradition that they learned from and move it forward without fear and restrictions. The Bikram community is held together by threats and fear tactics. Those have no ground anymore. It will take a while, but yogis will feel freedom on their path to do whatever is right for their students and themselves.

In six years you've opened Evolution Yoga studios across the world. What's been the secret of your success?

Evolution is about the message and not the messenger, about the teachings, not the teacher. We are a collective of likeminded studio owners, teachers and students. We focus on tools that remind us that we are all always teachers as well as students. While many of us came from different paths, our vision of a more expansive practice was the same: remove the rigidity, fuse the physical with the mental and be open for continuing growth and change. We have no demands to our partners, but offer support in any way we can.

What will students learn at your teacher trainings?

Because our groups are small and intimate the experience is very personal and hands on. They learn to understand the postures, 'read' bodies, and teach several classes before completion. We also spend a lot of time on anatomy, philosophy and many other subjects. Most of all they learn about themselves and tapping into their full potential.

Where can people train in the UK?

We have our first London training this year, June 2-29. People can also train with our partner Michele Pernetta owner of Fierce Grace in London.