

Studio Spotlight

[Audubon Yoga Studio](#), New Orleans

Becky Lloyd, CIYT Intermediate Junior III, studio owner, founder, director and head teacher

Faith, a Vitamin for Our Time

Audubon Yoga Studio has been a consistent home for Iyengar Yoga in New Orleans since 2000. While studios around the country have closed down in recent months due to the pandemic, Audubon Yoga Studio has been undergoing changes since January 2019. We were located in the same location in the Uptown neighborhood for 19 years but received word at the beginning of 2019 that we had until the end of April to find a new place due to an expansion of the neighboring business within the building.

Initially I didn't think it would be very difficult to find a new studio space. Students rallied and searched all parts of the city so that we could continue classes. Rents had skyrocketed in New Orleans since I opened in 2000. I was unbelievably fortunate to have had very affordable rent for such a long period of time. I began to question how I was going to be able to hold classes as we had done for so long.

I explored many options: teaching at different studios or venues throughout the city, checking out alternative rental spaces, taking out a loan and investing in a brand new studio, or teaching online classes (when some people suggested this, I said, "No way, never" — and look at us now!).

The search for a new space eventually led to a temporary rental of the local VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) post about 10 blocks away from the original space. In New Orleans-style, we had a fully equipped bar at the back of the studio space. The veterans were kind enough to hide all the alcohol so it wasn't visible during classes! It was an open and airy space with beautiful natural light. We shared the space with Girl Scouts, wedding parties, veterans' events and other community programs. I really appreciated the neighborhood feel. But word was getting out about how nice the VFW venue is, so more groups were booking it and times for our yoga classes were becoming more and more limited. By December we were once again looking for a home.

By mid-January 2020, thanks to a devoted and determined student, we landed at Faith New Orleans fellowship hall, which is spacious, affordable and has a super supportive landlord/pastor. We can teach a full schedule of classes and hold our workshops in the space. By Feb. 1, we were up and running again ... only to close the doors March 15 due to the pandemic.

New Orleans was hit hard by the coronavirus due to Mardi Gras in late February. When it is safe to return to in-person classes, we will be back at Faith New Orleans.

When I see the name of the church, I am immediately reminded of one of the five vitamins that B. K. S. Iyengar speaks of in *Tree of Yoga* from sutra 1.20: *sraddha*, faith. And aren't we all being called upon to have faith: that our practice is there for us and will carry us through.

My long-time student and friend, Lynda Friedman, reminded me repeatedly during our search that Audubon Yoga Studio is not a physical space within four walls. It is a vibrant community of students that reaches far beyond the boundaries of our city and state.

This is the same for all of our studios. That has become all the more evident during the pandemic. While we aren't physically together at this time, our hearts are connected each time we practice in our homes where we are by ourselves in sacred space or with one another via Zoom. Abhijata frequently referred to us as family during the convention in Dallas last year — and in her livestream from Pune this spring.

Students of Audubon Yoga Studio have been extraordinarily supportive during the aftermath of Katrina, through the loss of our longtime studio home and various moves, and now through a pandemic. I am so grateful for the continuous outpouring of love and support, and I can only hope that my community knows how much I love and care for them.

We have continued meeting for classes and practice sessions via Zoom since March as well as teacher study gatherings with Randy Just. Rebecca Lerner was planning on coming to New Orleans to conduct her annual workshop June 12-14, and we are going forward with that workshop on Zoom. No one knows how things will turn out in the coming months, but we will continue practicing, teaching and studying through it all. The world needs us all to be practicing now more than ever.

To my Iyengar Yoga family members in New Orleans and in neighboring communities throughout the region and country, I say: THANK YOU! I look forward to a big hug in the not-too-distant future.