

**I want to hear your story. Everyone has a story.
Come to Jamaica and tell me yours.**

**3rd Annual Yoga Retreat in Negril, Jamaica
December 2-9, 2007.**

I went on vacation to Negril, Jamaica for the first time in December 1994. I got a job offer, came back to KC, sold my car, and packed a few suitcases for me and my then 4 year old son. I quit a job that paid \$500 U.S. a week for my new job in Jamaica that paid \$50 U.S. a week! Three weeks later, we were Jamaica bound!

Jamaica changed me. It was there that I took my first few conscious steps, mostly barefoot, on my spiritual journey. Experiencing a new culture in a developing country taught me gratitude. I taught my first yoga class in Jamaica and fell in love with its philosophy. I fell in love with the Caribbean Sea. Not hard since Kansas doesn't boast a teal green and turquoise blue ocean or a 7 mile white sand beach outside my door. It was a romance I'll never forget. Palm trees, amazing sunsets, illuminating stars, and the sound of the ocean lulling us to sleep. My son and I bonded with many special times there. It was Samadhi before I knew what the word meant.

We moved back to Kansas City in August 1996. I was broke and living with my mother again. Then the man that introduced me to Jamaica, Barry Becker, introduced me to professional boxing. No joke! He'd arranged my first pro boxing match. Didn't even ask, just told me I had three weeks to train and that it paid \$400. I loved challenges, I loved working out, and I needed a car again. So in August 1996, 'The Island Girl' was born. My study of duality was born too. Yoga & boxing! Yin & yang! Ha & tha!

Fast forward eleven years, 4 World Championships later, and the toughest fights I've had were not in the boxing ring. They're with my now 16 year old teenage son. Ha-ha. I love that little Island boy! I still love working out and I still love challenges, but now I'm faced with new challenges.

I'm trying to do what I can for some Jamaican families. Please excuse my Sanskrit, but it pisses me off that Jamaicans, and many other people in developing countries, work so hard for so little. Because the Jamaican minimum wage is only \$50 U.S. a week, most Jamaicans can't afford an education beyond the 11th grade level. Most can't afford medicine, dentists, or vacations. I learned that what is paradise to some is not paradise for all.

I know you've heard of Fair Trade. I'm paying Jamaican artist's fair wages for these amazing sun & moon cedar woodcarvings. They're decorated with sand from the island's multi colored beaches.



Ha-tha yoga literally means Sun-Moon union. That's what yoga is really all about; uniting, *unity*, *community*. Together we are one, separated we are two. Yoga teaches us to channel our energies not only on healing our own individual bodies, but on healing the body of the global community too. A profound awareness came over me of how something that I do every day...spend money...can actually improve the quality of someone else's life!



Talk about an A-ha moment off the yoga mat! My dharma was born!