

# Nia Technique: Movement, joy, healing in 'your body's way'

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Special to The Argus

**W**ork it! "Pump it!" "Don't give up!" Instructors would shriek to the loud, numbing, heavy beat of rock music.

It was the early 1980s, and hard-body, feel-the-burn, high-impact aerobics was the latest fitness craze.

Debbie and Carlos Rosas were teaching in that scene

but finding it a bit too painful for themselves and their students. It was too much "tuning out" of personal experience with follow-the-leader and too little opportunity for people to "tune in" to their hearts, minds and bodies.

So the Rosas soon began to incorporate time-honored practices that help people appreciate the richness of their personal experience: The ecstasy of dance, the power of martial arts and the wisdom of healing arts like yoga.

Soon, the Nia Technique was born.

It's been 25 years, and the Nia Technique is now



Rogers



Bass

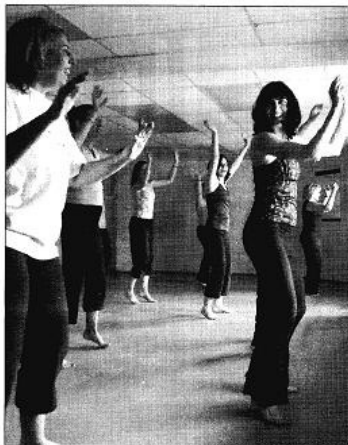


Photo courtesy of Brant Rogers

Instructor Laurie Bass, right, shares the joy of movement with participants in a recent Nia Technique class.

taught worldwide in 26 countries by 1,800 highly skilled Nia instructors. We're blessed to have the Rosas' Nia Technique world headquarters nearby in Portland.

Nia is based on 52 moves that are taught to soulful music as an invitation for students to find their own unique sense of grace and personal expression.

Rather than copying and keeping up with the regimented moves of the teacher, students are invited to tune into their own

inherent capacities to express the moves in a free and joyful way.

Recently, a Nia student, Teresa, wrote us to say, "I have mild cerebral palsy, and coordination has always been harder for me. Nia allows me the freedom to dance to a choreographed routine without having to do it the 'right' way. Nia adds energy and movement to uplift my heart and mind."

One of the beauties of Nia is that the teacher will offer three intensity levels

for the moves, so students of all levels can find a home in the class. Stretching, strengthening, balance and a low-impact cardiovascular workout are ingredients in full measure during a Nia class.

Also, Nia is a whole-body experience inviting students to explore movement from the core of their bodies, to the soles of their bare feet, to the crown of their heads.

While moves are demonstrated, you'll be urged to express yourself in your own way without censorship or judgment.

Local Nia teacher Fred Bass recently wrote, "Once I got over my own self-consciousness and realized no one was watching me, nor did they care, I began to notice how well my body felt."

Because students are "tuning into" rather than "tuning out of" — the experiences of body, heart and mind in a Nia class, they often find healing and liberating experiences arise as long-held contractions and emotions unlock.

Smiles, laughs, tears and deep sighs may all arise as a student finds release with the flow of life in his or her movements. It's a practice of getting in touch with what you're feeling at the moment and then expressing it with your own unique movements in "your body's way."

Caz, a personal trainer and Nia student, expressed her experience in classes this way: "Nia was the first class that I have found in seven years that reignited my passion for exercising. ... After a class, I feel invincible!"

Brant Rogers is an MBSR instructor and yoga teacher, and Laurie Bass is a brown belt Nia teacher. Brant and his wife, Marie, own and operate Yoga Hillsboro in downtown Hills-

boro. Nia Technique classes with Laurie and Fred Bass are ongoing at Yoga Hillsboro. For more information, call 503-640-6996 or [www.yogahillsboro.com](http://www.yogahillsboro.com).