

## **Ayo** (bio)

Ayo was born and raised in Nigeria where he was initiated as a babalawo in the indigenous Yoruba religion, Ifa. He has been drumming, singing and dancing since he was a child. In the 1980s, Ayo, whose name means "happy", came to America where he lived and toured with renowned Yoruba master drummer Babatunde Olatunji for eight years. In the 1990s, Ayo was proprietor of Yoruba House in West Los Angeles. Today, he is touring in order to offer his music and teachings to a wider audience.

Ayo says, "If you can talk, you can sing. If you can walk, you can dance." In the indigenous Yoruba religion, drumming, singing and dancing are considered forms of prayer. Songs and rhythms honor various orishas, gods and goddesses who embody natural forces and assist the one Creator. To Ayo, music is both a spiritual practice and a powerful form of healing. He says, "Rhythm is healing. Drumming is advanced meditation where your body speaks to your spirit. That's why once you start drumming, it's difficult to stop."

Ayo is a spiritual priest of Ifa. Ifa is one of the oldest and most sacred religions of mankind. It most closely resembles Native American spiritual Practice including chanting, drumming, and dancing. Ayo was named Ayodele, which means my joy, has reached home. But later he was called just Ayo or JOY. Anyone who has had the privilege of being in his Presence will testify to the joyous and loving space he creates. Ayo is an amazing performer formerly of Baba Olatunje Drum's of Passion he performs individually or with his group and dancers.

Ayo's Training began in childhood to become a babalawo. This includes training in drumming, rituals, etc. He also underwent sacred initiations which opened his third eye. Ayo came to the United States in 1983 playing for the African All Stars Band. Later he joined the drum internationally famous drummer Baba Olatunji. Later he established his own place of worship called the Yoruba House in Los Angeles where he taught drumming, performed ritualistic ceremonies and also provided healing services for individuals. He is now touring nationally and internationally to reach a wider audience.

