



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Message From the Teacher by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The other day, someone asked me, "What is the meaning of training in Aikido?" I said, almost accidentally, "Change." Simply put, we come into the dojo as one person and we leave quite a different and better person.

Just the other day, I read a Daily Message post by Furuya Sensei which succinctly explains this idea of personal transformation.

On June 5, 2004, Sensei wrote:

An armor-smith *tsuba* made about the mid-1500's with the design motif of a butterfly.

The butterfly is a beautiful, delicate creature but it hardly seems appropriate to grace the guard of a courageous warrior. Yet, the butterfly design, especially on older sword guards made during the long periods of civil war in Japan were very popular among samurai warriors.

In this case, the butterfly is not utilized for its delicacy or colorful wings – it is an aus-

picious symbol because the butterfly has the power to re-create life. The samurai warriors, in an ancient age, admired the butterfly's ability to make such a dramatic life change from a caterpillar into another "higher" being of existence which paralleled the samurai's ethic of transformation – through training, through enlightenment, and through life.

Today, we too have this power of transformation through education and personal training and through the personal effort to want to better our lives. We too can be like the butterfly.

In addition, the butterfly represents "new life" – the dream of warriors on the real battlefield many hundreds of years ago.

In this issue, all the articles are written along the same topic of "change." I wish I could say that I plan a theme every month, but it really comes about almost serendipitously. I only see the theme unfold once I start to format the newsletter. My article is about looking at adversity with idea of "How can I use this to make me better." Watanabe Sensei's article is about using ordinary everyday things as a vehicle to train one's self. Almaraz Sensei's article shows us how taking responsibility enables us to learn. Finally, Sensei's article is about the difference between *jutsu* and *do* and how that impacts who we are and how we train as martial artists.

Like the butterfly, we also need to undergo a process of change in order to reach our higher state of existence. Training in Aikido is that process of change. Every day we come to the dojo as one person, put in the time training and, hopefully, we leave a much better person. What is Aikido training all about? Change.

Upcoming Events

August 2-4th:
Karita Sensei visit

August 26th:
Intensive seminar

August 26th:
Shodan exam

September 4th:
Dojo closed: Labor Day

September 30th:
Intensive seminar

October 29th:
Children's class Halloween Party

October 28th:
Intensive seminar

Overcoming Adversity

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Twenty or so years ago, when I was only *shodan*, Furuya Sensei conscripted me to teach morning classes at 6:30 AM a couple times a week. I say conscripted because I didn't volunteer. He asked me, "What time do you start school?" Since I didn't have any morning classes, I was volunteered to teach morning class. The worst part was that I wasn't a morning person which made it so hard in the beginning.

Just getting to the dojo was like a form of torture as traffic moved at a snail's pace as I worried that I would be late and suffer Sensei's wrath.

The drive into the dojo was no different. I only lived 15 miles from the dojo, but in order to get to the dojo before 6:00 AM, I had to be dressed and ready to leave my house by 5:00 AM. Notice I used the word "before" because Sensei had this hidden inner alarm clock that would go off if he thought you were too late even if you thought you were early. So arriving as early as you can was in your best interest. Therefore, even the drive to the dojo had to be systematized and well thought out. Those were the days before GPS, iPhones or Google maps. All we had was this book called a Thomas Guide that you could use to look up addresses or streets, but it didn't tell you how to get there. Once you left home, you were essentially blind and could only rely on what you could see and the traffic reports every 10 minutes on local AM radio stations.

All of my planning and packing had to be done ahead of time because I knew that I couldn't waste any time that early in the morning. As I drove, I had to figure out the traffic situation and I would have to adjust my route accordingly in my head because there was no time to stop and think. The traffic was almost always bad and I usually took a mixture of different freeways and surface streets because there was no way I was going to be late and suffer Sensei's wrath.

Compound the drive with Sensei rebuking me for how I opened the dojo which made the whole ordeal was agonizing. We were required to be there well before the class began in order to *uchimizu* or wash down the front of the dojo and clean up in order to properly open the dojo for the day. These tasks could take as little as 15 minutes or as much as 30 minutes depending on how much the

alley in front of the dojo was messed up over night by all vagrants that passed through there. Most times, we had to be quick, but not in a hurried sense and we had to be efficient because time was usually short so none could be wasted. I remember thinking, "If a student shows up before I am finished, I am going to get in so much trouble." I couldn't waste time thinking or sulking, I would have gotten in trouble for wasting time and doing a bad job which compelled me to be diligent and to think ahead.



Minamoto no Tametomo by Kikuchi Yosai.

We can see in Kikuchi Yosai's depiction of Minamoto no Tametomo that his right arm is much larger and slightly shorter compared to his left arm which is thinner and somewhat longer.

My years spent training under Sensei were hard but looking back it was really good for a young person with no direction in life. Those of us who apprenticed under Sensei learned quickly and early on that we had to be ready for anything which required us to not only to be diligent but organized too. I truly believe that this type of strenuous and seemingly unreasonable "no excuse" type of training forced us to not give in to adversity and to have the mindset to find a way around any and all problems. I think this "no-mind" type of thinking helped many of us to improve beyond what we knew we were capable of and what we thought was possible too.

Most think that Aikido training only occurs on the mat or only in the dojo. As we can see from the paragraphs above, the training in Aikido can take place in every part of one's life. From this idea, we can posit then that Aikido training is learning how to overcome adversity which we can use as a means

to overcome ourselves and improve our lives.

In Aikido, one of the things we strive to do is align our energy with our partner's energy sometime during the technique. This "alignment" enables us to use their energy and then redirect it.

In life, it is said that, "We reap what we sow." When confronted with adversity, there is a tendency to inadvertently view the challenges of life from the darker side and view it as something negative or bad. This only allows us to align our energies with things that are negative or bad. Along this same train of thought, if this is true then we only need to see the brighter side of something in order to align with the positive side of things. How we choose to see things allows us to align with that energy and use it to influence the outcome.

Continued on page 6...

Responsibility

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

The other day, I was reading a book about swordsmanship called *The Spirit of the Sword* by the sword teacher, Nakamura Taisaburo (1912-2003). I was struck by something in one of the side notes. It was a description of a calligraphy brushed by Nakayama Hakudo, the famous Iaido teacher. When Hakudo Sensei was 88 years old, he brushed this calligraphy which read, “Yama takaki ga yue ni tattokarazu” or “A mountain is not imposing only because it is high” which more or less means that something is not really admirable just because it looks that way – it also must possess the inner substance to back up its grandness.

Nakayama Hakudo’s words made me reflect on how in this modern society, the whole issue of social media influences the perception of martial arts and determines who is good and who is bad. Today, it seems that the art of “self-promotion” is as important as mastering the technique. So called “masters” and students alike use social media to promote themselves and post just about anything and everything ad nauseam. Today, the “like” button is the key to success in the martial arts as people post certificates, degrees, acknowledgements or achievements hoping to gain followers and friends.

Seeing these social media posts makes me think about Nakayama Hakudo Sensei’s calligraphy and how empty these things can be if the person posting them doesn’t have any inner substance to support it.

It is almost impossible to determine who is real or fake these days. How are we to know who is good or who is an imposter trying to deceive us? Conversely, how are we to know if they deserve our

accolades or accomplishments and when it is a good time to promote them or hold them back?



Yama takaki ga yue ni tattokarazu
“A mountain is not imposing only
because it is high.”

When I met and began to follow my teacher, Reverend Kensho Furuya, times were very different. In those days, the only way to “know” a teacher and understand their true essence was to be their loyal student for many years. A dedicated student had to wholeheartedly trust their teacher, train hard, and spend as much time as possible with that teacher. We had to earn the teacher’s respect and confidence just so that they would in turn trust us and teach us. In those days, the only thing we could rely on was the relationship we had with our teacher. We didn’t place any stock into our degrees or certificates. We only relied on our teacher’s respect and confidence.

Aikido is a true martial art. It is something much deeper than learning a certain number of techniques and performing them on the internet. The art of Aikido goes way beyond the technique – far beyond the technique or purely physical movement.

There is nothing wrong with sharing life’s treasures and tribulations. Where sharing goes wrong is when it becomes a form of salesmanship where the only reason is for self-promotion.

The art of Aikido is a path toward physical and spiritual enlightenment which is rooted in a relationship of respect. Respect for our teachers, opponents and ourselves but, most of all, it must be an art based upon humility,

morality, and proper conduct.

First and foremost, we are *budoka* and people of *budo* are people of substance. The true warrior is a mountain, but not because of what they have achieved, but because of who they truly are on the inside.



The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.



The Way of Barbecue

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

It's August and summer is officially here! While some might take this as a time to relax, the training in our dojo never stops and so the summer gets a little busier for the dojo.

The major summer event in the Japanese-American community is *Obon* which are celebrations held at local temples. The observance of *Obon* is similar to the Day of the Dead observed in Mexico. Although their origins are different, both believe that their ancestors return from the realm of the deceased to visit. The word *bon* (盆) means lantern and thus the occasion is called *Obon* because of the tradition of lighting lanterns to guide people's ancestors back to their resting places. In Japan, these are big festivals and here in Los Angeles the tradition continues, albeit in a slightly altered form.

Here in the Los Angeles area, there are many Buddhist temples that hold summer carnivals. For the last couple of years, the dojo has volunteered to help Zenshuji set up their carnival and to work at the teriyaki beef and chicken booth. We worked the entire day cleaning, barbecuing, preparing plates, and selling food. It was a lot of hard work during a very hot weekend. Some of our students even helped out for the entire two days! Although Aikido classes were cancelled, whether they knew it or not, the students were still learning as they were helping out and this is very good training.

Most people would think, "What does barbecuing teriyaki chicken have to do with training?" In traditional training, practice not only happens in the dojo and on the mat, but the training also extends outside the confines of the dojo and into our daily lives too.

In Zen monasteries, most would think the priests spend their days in meditation or studying sutras or other high-minded pursuits. Actually, priests spend most of the day practicing *samu* (作務). The word *samu* means to engage in tasks or duties that we usually think of as the menial tasks of life like cooking, cleaning, gardening, or any other chores needed to operate a monastery, but since it is a monastery then those duties must be performed with mindfulness. These seeming menial tasks are done with an awareness of what is happening in the present.

Traditionally, a dojo is a spiritual place where one practices a *do* (道) or a way. In the dojo, students are required to do *samu* as well as part of their training. These "chores" are not glamorous. In our world of instant gratification and entitlement, some might even see it as a punishment. Sometimes, students see tasks like cleaning to be below their station. However, these menial tasks are a way to bring correct mindfulness into our daily lives in a practical sense. For example, if the person brushing sauce onto the grilling chicken puts too much, the sauce will run all over the place and onto the floor, which makes a mess and could become a dangerous hazard. Likewise, if that person doesn't brush enough then the chicken could burn and not taste good or not have any teriyaki flavor.

The goal is to serve delicious teriyaki barbecue. If all the different parts of the teriyaki making machine – the preparation, the cooking,

the saucing, and the plating – are done correctly then the results are the barbecue is cooked well, the work area is kept tidy, the teriyaki plates look appetizing, and the food is delicious. Therefore, even something like volunteering to help make and sell barbecue can be approached as training and approached as a *do* or way.

A good martial artist with the proper mindset can make everything a form of training. We must be thoughtful enough to foresee the consequences of any act or decision, like brushing on too much sauce versus not enough sauce; cooking enough chicken to get ready for the rush versus falling behind causing guests to wait too long for their food. Even something as simple and seemingly trivial like not paying attention to the flow can affect the big picture.

In our own Aikido practice, instead of mindless repetition of the techniques, we try to practice the techniques with an awareness of the present. This awareness enables us to see how our movement and our energy affect our opponent as well as how they contribute to the effectiveness of the technique. Each class and every technique then is a form of *samu*.

In the dojo, the clean up after the class should also be done with the same mindfulness. Without this mindfulness, the dojo will not become clean; in fact, it will get dirtier. This same mindfulness we practice during cleaning is also vital to our training on the mat.

In class, when we practice with our partner, are we aware of how our movements affect our opponent, or do we just go through the motions? If we simply go through the motions in our Aikido training, the dojo will not become clean when we wipe it nor will our opponent fall down when we throw them. Being aware and paying attention are more than just half the battle – they are everything.

In whatever task we do, whether it's sweeping, practicing a technique or making barbecue, the awareness in which we do it reflects upon our level of training. Regardless of how great we think we are, it all comes down to whether or not we care enough, and possess the ability and skill, to pay attention to the task at hand.

It is a fact that the students who clean while practicing this *samu* type of mindfulness are the students who eventually get good. On the flip side, when a student does something carelessly or is thoughtless, the teacher usually says, "*shugyo ga tarinai*" which means "training is lacking."

This awareness is a very important part of a student's mental and spiritual training and it is often the only benchmark by which a student shows their true level.

This hot July weekend at Zenshuji's carnival, it was so nice to see our students come together to help out and represent our school. What was more wonderful was seeing them demonstrate their level of training as they worked. Cooking and selling teriyaki on a hot summer weekend might not conjure up images of enlightenment, but seeing how our students came together and worked in harmony together was pretty close. Ultimately, the *way* the volunteers worked is the teaching Aikido is trying to impart to us.



Volunteering at the 2017 Zenshuji Obon Carnival

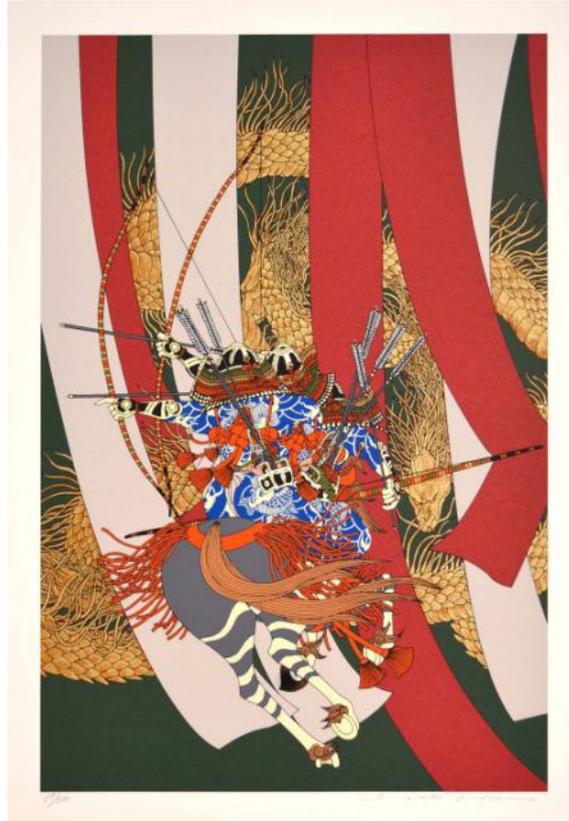


Overcoming Adversity *continued from page 2...*

The life of the legendary archer, Minamoto no Tametomo illustrates how one's perspective can lead to different outcomes. Minamoto no Tametomo is said to be one of the greatest archers in Japanese history. He was supposedly a large man who stood a foot taller than most Japanese of the time and he was known for his incredible physical strength. One of the legends celebrated about him was that his bow string was so strong that it took five people to draw it back. Tametomo was born into nobility and his father was the head of the Minamoto clan which was one of the four main clans of the Heian period. His clan led an unsuccessful rebellion to overthrow the Emperor in 1156 and later he was banished to the country side and later to the island of Oshima. While there, Tametomo claimed the uninhabited island as his own which led the imperial tax collector to pay him a visit. Tametomo was given a hefty tax bill which he immediately tore up and said, "Try and take it." Tametomo's size and his tone led the tax collector to flee for his life. The next morning Tametomo awoke to a dozen warships about to reach his island. Legend has it that he took his bow and notched a blunt iron bulb arrow and fired it off with as much strength as he could muster. The bolt struck the hull of the lead ship which quickly sunk the ship. The rest of the fleet turned tail in retreated.

That is not the remarkable thing about Minamoto no Tametomo. Legend has it that when he was born, his left arm was four to six inches longer than his right arm. To have a disability was seen as a bad omen and would have been a catastrophe for someone born into a samurai family. He could have looked at his shorter right arm as a disability surrendering to the darker side, filling himself with negativity and thus leading him to give up on life. Instead, Tametomo

chose to look on the brighter side and see what a longer left arm could accomplish. As luck would have it, this length imbalance might be the reason why he was such a powerful archer. A longer left arm could be beneficial for creating a powerful *hikiwake* or the drawing apart of the bow because a longer left arm with a shorter right arm could mean that the bow can be drawn back farther because the nock of the arrow is supposed to be behind the head before it is released. Not succumbing to his disability allowed Tametomo to use the discrepancy between his arm lengths to sink a ship with just one arrow and thus the legend of Tametomo the archer was born.



*Strong Bow of Minamoto no Tametomo
by Hideo Takeda*

A warrior is supposed to have fighting spirit or *konjo* (根性), which means a person who has a spirit which will not yield to adversity. It is often said that trying is not doing, but a true martial artist will always try no matter the odds or the adversity. Aikidoists know that with each try they are not only building up their tolerance to adversity and that they are aligning with the energy which will eventually propel them to victory.

Our lives are own. Other people, things or circumstances may influence us, but they do not define nor control us. We get to choose how we perceive things. There is a great line in William Shakespeare's Hamlet that is apropos,

"Nothing is ever right or wrong, but thinking makes it so." It's either something to propel us forward or a weight to push us further down – the choice is ultimately ours. To align with it means that we can choose to look on the brighter side and see what this person, thing or circumstance is trying to teach us. We can either step up to the challenge, align with it and "Aikido" it or we can run and cower from it and let it ruin our lives. We reap what we sow thus the choice as to the path of our lives is solely our own.



Enter to win a 2018 Toyota Highlander Hybrid to benefit the Terasaki Budokan in Los Angeles

The Terasaki Budokan's mission is to provide a facility in Downtown Los Angeles for youth, families, and seniors that offers sports, community activities, and opportunities to connect visitors to Japanese American culture and to a vibrant, sustainable Little Tokyo.



For every \$10.00 raffle ticket purchased, the Terasaki Budokan will donate \$4.00 back to the Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

Please contact Gary Illiano to purchase a ticket or to sell tickets for the dojo. E-mail: Illiano.gary@gmail.com or 323-225-1424

Jutsu or Do*by Reverend Kensho Furuya*

Editor's Note: *Often times, Furuya Sensei would answer people's inquiries that came via the internet. I think some of Sensei's "answers" can be of benefit to students of today who might be wrestling with similar topics. From time to time, I may publish them here. Enjoy!*

Hello Sensei, I recently heard the description in one of my training classes that "do" or the way is more artistic whereas "jutsu" is more combative or practical. As I heard this I became a bit confused as to really what this meant. Does this mean that "do" has no use in an art but to merely be pretty? I think not. And on the same note, does this mean that "jutsu" is merely a purely physical form of martial art? I think not as well. But as you can tell from this email I am slightly confused as to the true nature of each. My one instinct is to say that they are both one and the same, and to separate the two would be like separating a limb from the body. Perhaps you can shed some light on this subject for me Sensei. Many thanks for your help.

:) Take care, Will, NY

Sensei's Reply:

What you heard is the most typical and popular explanation of "do" and "jutsu" which is accepted by most people. Although not incorrect, I often wondered how this explanation may really help one in their training rather than hinder it. It is a common idea to continually separate mind and body, physical and non-physical, real and abstract all of the time among us today. This conversation comes up regularly all of the time.

Of course, there are the historical considerations in Japanese martial arts as Jigoro Kano first coined the name "Judo" from "Jujutsu." In later, modern times, we have seen Kenjutsu to Kendo and most recently, Karate to Karatedo.

It might be easier to understand if I explain it in terms of calligraphy. With a pen or pencil on a scratch piece of paper or even a stick in the dirt, one can write a word or sentence and whether it is sloppy or done very quickly, most people can read it and understand what has been written.

However, in formal Japanese calligraphy, one follows a certain school or master and one pays attention to the technique one uses to form the strokes and characters. In some cases, there is great attention paid to the quality and kind of brush one uses, or an antique ink stone or special paper. When calligraphy follows a particular school and tries to embody a particular aesthetic or idea by conforming to various and particular rules, this is known as "do."

In martial arts, you can throw someone to the ground just to defeat them. We may even have to bite them or kick them or stab them with a knife in order to bring them down. This is known perhaps as a "jutsu" where we rely purely on the method.

It is not art, just communication. In fact, we may have even misspelled the word or wrote it very faintly and we still might make out what has been written. We do not have to worry about how pretty or clearly we have written. In some ways, this is "jutsu."

As with "do," we set certain rules and standards for ourselves with the purpose that by following these rules and standards they will not only accomplish the act of throwing but also express the proper idea or spirit or we study a particular master or school.

As one might say that they are one in the same. In "do," we are trying to act and think on a different level to express not only what we are doing but that act must also express a tradition, or point of view, or an adherence to a particular teacher or school.

In Aikido, of course, it is useless if the technique does not work at all or is ineffective – one can hardly call this anything or even a philosophy. This is silly. When I throw, more than simply throwing the opponent down, I am also thinking of the teachings of Aikido in trying to express or feel or materialize harmony and balance in the technique. Watching one's posture and being calm and centered, being aware of one's mental focus, trying to achieve a sense of non-conflict or peace and on and on. These are not really necessary in just a regular throw – but we choose to emphasize these particular rules because they bring us closer to the spirit and thoughts of O'Sensei and what he proposed as "the true art of Aikido." Perhaps other people follow another teacher or school. Some people may think that as long as the opponent goes down, they don't need anything else. In calligraphy, I can write a character that anyone can read but if I am following or trying to achieve an ideal or a very high standard set and determined by a great master whom I admire and desire to learn from – this is "do."

Why "do" is more important in this world today, is that in such a small world that we have created for ourselves, our acts affect one and another more than ever before. What happens on the other side of the world can affect us today.

Is Aikido, to simply throw the person down – why not use a bomb or poison gas? Much easier and faster! No, Aikido has the effectiveness to throw the opponent but, we have decided that in order for it to be real Aikido, it must express a goodness, respect and nobility for life that does not allow us to use excessive violence or an "any means necessary" attitude.

Being very aware of what we do, we become aware of the consequences and seek to achieve a higher level of existence in this world and within our lives and good human beings, we are practicing "do." It is not simply a philosophy or an art as we commonly think of like painting pictures or fashioning clay to make a pot.

This is very brief but I hope you can get a little sense of the difference between *jutsu* and *do*.

Editor's Note: *Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message on March 24, 2004.*

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class

10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM Intensive Seminar* †

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Open

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

† Intensive seminar is offered the last Saturday of every month

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Open

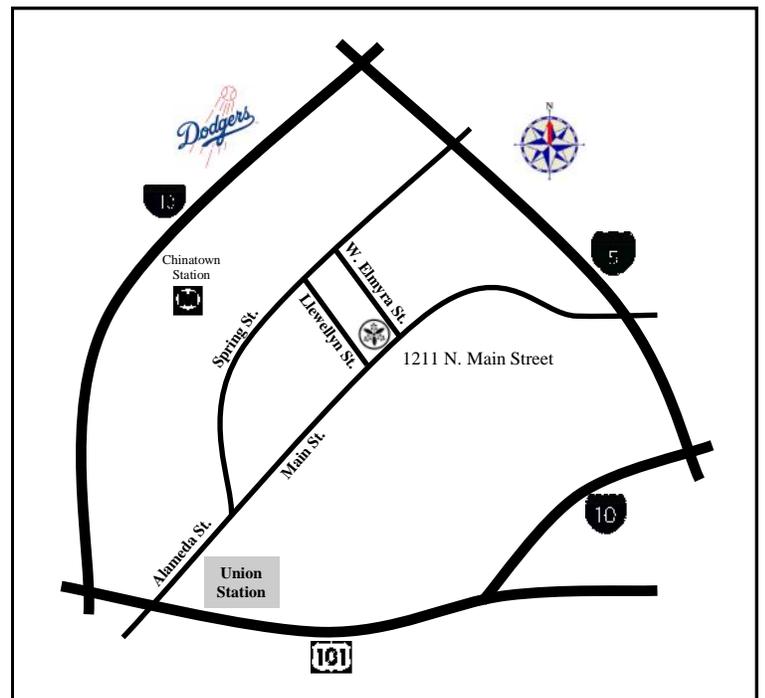
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Open

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded
Official Hombu Recognition by the
AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.



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The Aiki Dojo

Official publication of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

Editor-in-Chief and Publisher: David Ito



Finding Our Dojo



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E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

We are across the street and one block northwest from the Chinatown Metro Station.

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:

You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.