

# 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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### Upcoming Events

- December 10th:**  
Osoji: Year end clean up
- December 18th:**  
Children's class Christmas Party
- December 22-25th**  
Dojo Closed: Christmas
- December 30th:**  
Osame Keiko –  
Last practice of the year
- December 31-January 1st:**  
Dojo Closed: New Year's
- January 7th:**  
Kagami Biraki –  
official opening of the dojo
- January 14th:**  
2nd Doshu memorial service
- January 21st:**  
Dojo Dance Benefit

### Message From the Teacher by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

うしろすがたのしぐれてゆくか  
*Ushiro sugata no shigurete yukuka*  
“Let it dissolve into the winter drizzle –  
My silhouette from behind.”  
– Taneda Santoka

I was watching *The Karate Kid* the other night. Not the latest Hollywood remake but the original one from 1984 with Pat Morita and Ralph Macchio. Interestingly, it reminded me of an article that I read a while back about a counter view-point that the story was really a coming of age story about the main villain named Johnny and his road to redemption. The author argues that we can see Johnny start to soften over the course of the movie and see his journey come full circle at the end of the match when he loses and demands to give Daniel-san the trophy and says, “You’re alright Laruso, good match.”

In 127 minutes we get to see a person’s full circle *budo* journey, but is *the Karate Kid* a coming of age story only for Daniel-san? I agree with the author of the article that Hollywood did miss Johnny’s road to redemption, but then again it may have not sold the story if in the end the bully gets the opportunity to benefit too.

In the martial arts, both storylines are possible because *budo* is really all about change. Furuya Sensei reminds us of this in the kanji in the *Aiki Dojo*’s header: 道の為, 世の為, 人の為, which means way of change, world of change, people of change. The kanji 為 means “to change, benefit or make use of.” Thus we can see Sensei’s reminder that the journey of *budo*

is really about change. Daniel-san learns to trust himself and his teacher as he improves himself through Karate training and Johnny gets to realize that he is on the wrong path and change the course of his life. Both people get the opportunity change their lives for the better through *budo*.

Of course our lives don’t unfold in 127 minutes, but our lives do follow the same trajectory as Daniel-san’s and Johnny’s.

December is supposed to be a time where we get to reap what we have sown and in January, we all get a “new” beginning. Regardless of what came into fruition or not, don’t get too caught up in what has happened. Change is about acceptance. We accept who we are, but also accept what has or has not happened. With acceptance, change can be birthed.

In Buddhism, they say, “What happens, happens.” As in Taneda’s poem, “Let it dissolve” because January is coming and thus we all get a new beginning.



### Merry Christmas!

## Put Your Heart Into It

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

In the Japanese traditional arts, it is said that the best practitioners imbue their arts with all their heart and soul. This whole-hearted effort in Japanese is known as *kokoro ire* or “to put one’s heart or spirit into something.”

This *kokoro ire* is in every traditional Japanese art from intellectual arts like *Go* to physical arts like Aikido. Most only see one’s heart and soul as the end product as the dancer effortlessly but profoundly saunters across the stage, but what most don’t see is the numerous number of people that also put their hearts and souls into the art as teachers, partners or even the person who takes out the trash in order for that person to show off their mastery.

One of the most profound and yet often overlooked people is the teacher or sensei. The title “sensei” is a Japanese word which means “One who comes first.” The sensei is most often overlooked in the success but yet most blameworthy in the failure. As the years go by, I really understand my own teacher, Furuya Sensei more and more.

Despite Sensei’s amiable online or television persona, he was a very strict teacher. Most people outside the dojo don’t know this because their interactions with him were rarely if ever face to face let alone day to day. James Doi, one of Sensei’s most senior students, told me that Sensei’s strictness was a persona that he put on for us so that we could reach our highest potential. Sensei once wrote about creating a structure for growth in a past article:

There is a secret to making a little pond in your Japanese garden. If it is an open pond the koi or goldfish will tend to stay in the same area. But if you put a stone in the middle of the pond and create a circle “like a donut” or a course to move in, they will swim more and grow bigger and stronger. Just by the “form” of the pond alone, one can encourage the growth and development of the fish that live in it.

In a sense, Sensei knew that he had to be that stone for us and that sometimes it meant that he had to be the “bad guy” regardless of the toll it took on him personally. In a sense, Sensei sacrificed himself for our benefit.

In the old days of *budo*, it is said that the only measure of a teacher’s prowess was how strict or *kibishii* they were. If one came to a martial arts school, the teacher wouldn’t discuss their skill or accomplishments, but would merely say, “I am strict” as if that was the only qualification that a student required. An experienced teacher knew that a student needed to be firmly nudged in the right direction with the proper guidance in order to reach their fullest potential. In other words, teachers of old knew that the only way to turn a piece of rough coal into a diamond was through pressure or in *budo*

terms strict discipline.

In order to be *kibishii*, one needs a tremendous amount of inner strength because being strict requires continuity because most cannot turn it on and turn it off. Therefore, in order for the student to reach their true potential, the teacher must be very committed.

Sensei’s method of teaching had its ups and downs and many did not benefit from it. But, those that did were able to reach some truly incredible heights. Sensei was one of the best teachers I’ve ever known because he was able to give us the “tough love” that we all needed in order to grow despite the toll it took on him. Sensei put everything into pushing his students to succeed and we can see from his passion and efforts that teaching was his art.

Understanding Sensei’s labors, we can see that all that is required to make something into an art form is that we put our whole heart into it. Therefore, everything we do can then become a form of art.

In order to put our whole heart into something, we must make sure that we are in alignment. To be in alignment means that our actions, words, and thoughts are in line with our intentions.

In terms of Aikido, that means that how we act, what we say and what we think are then an expression of our true intentions. Taking *ukemi* for someone is the quintessential *kokoro ire* because in order for our partner to truly reach their fullest potential, we must fully give ourselves up to them and risk being injured in the process. The *nage* understands this sacrifice and thus acts appropriately ensuring that their partner is handled with care, compassion and concern. Both *nage* and *uke* understand and are mutually working for the other’s benefit. By both putting their hearts and souls into it, their efforts enable it at that point to truly become Aikido.

As citizens of the world, we must put our whole *kokoro ire* into being better human beings. This time of year is time when we all get to be the people that we wanted to be all year as we give gifts and show others our appreciation. All of us, especially during Christmas time, have heard the saying, “It’s the thought that counts.” Up until this time in my life, it was something that I perfunctorily said, but never really put much thought into. Now I understand that the thought is the *kokoro ire* which is an expression of not only our hearts but our intentions too. To live with *kokoro ire* simply means to do our best at everything that we do.

Sensei used to say that our lives were a work of art and now I understand what he was saying. Our lives become a work of art as we strive to live at a higher level and therefore in order to do that we must pour our hearts and souls into everything that we do.

May you all have a wonderful holiday and an even better next year!



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.

## Happy Holidays!

by *Santiago Garcia Almaraz*  
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

When I reflect back on 2016, the truth is that I think I am very fortunate to be able to continue doing what I like and share it with my family and friends.

As with every year, there are always good things and other no so good things but I have always enjoyed learning from all my experiences good and bad.

This year, I had the wonderful opportunity to travel with my family to California on vacation. Usually, I come to Los Angeles alone as I have done for almost 20 years with the main objective of visiting Sensei's dojo and training. So, being able to be with my family and share what I do with them was a great experience.

This year's trip was perhaps a very special and emotional journey. I wanted my family to see the wonderful dojo and people where I practice every year which has taken care of me on the other side of the ocean so many times.

The hospitality that I have received every time I come from all members of the dojo makes me feel that Furuya Sensei's spirit is alive. I would like to say thank you to everyone for all their efforts and especially to Ito Sensei and Watanabe Sensei who work hard to keep this dojo going and for staying true to Sensei's values and principles.

This year I also traveled to Japan with Ito Sensei, Mike Van Ruth and Bill D'Angelo from Los Angeles and with Jorge Gonzalez Martin and Gabriel Collado from Spain.

Our trip was an intense experience of visits, training and trying to work together as a group. This trip taught me many things but above all I learned how important our family and the friends are who support us in our work and enable us to continue our journey. They are the engines that keep us going in life.

I can only travel either to Japan or Los Angeles every year because people take care of the dojo in my absence and because my wife Susana takes care of our family and shoulders my responsibilities during that time too.

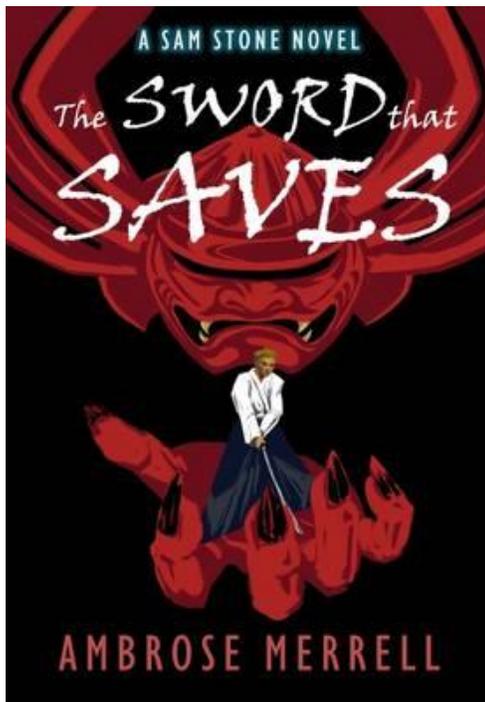
That is why I would like to thank everyone who helps me make my trips possible and makes my absences easier at the dojo and at home. It would be impossible to take these trips without these people who unselfishly take that responsibility on while I am gone.

This relationship between students and the teacher is one based upon responsibility, loyalty, commitment and humility and for me it is something that should be part of every martial artist or Aikido practitioner's journey.

Our relationships and our values are the things which define us as people which in turn define the dojo and our art.

Thank you all for all you do and what you enable me to do. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone!





**Book Review:** *The Sword that Saves*  
by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Every once in a while, my beliefs get challenged and I realize that I am wrong. I used to think that to consider yourself a student of a teacher that you had to actually be in the physical presence of that teacher. I am here today to tell you that is not always true. It has been almost 10 years since Furuya Sensei passed away. Most of his so called students have left for greener pastures. A few have still remained fighting the good fight. Recently, there have been a couple of people that followed Sensei via the internet that have demonstrated that they not only were his students but are in fact more loyal and grateful to him than the students who trained directly under him.

One of those people is Ambrose Merrell. This year Ambrose published his very first book titled, *The Sword that Saves*. It is a very ambitious first book that Ambrose takes on with courage and a sense of honesty that we usually don't see in books today. It is a fictional story about a troubled boy who finds his martial arts master and ultimately finds his way in life through Aikido, Iaido, and Japanese culture (not to give too much away). The book is well written and is not predictable at all. I found myself riveted and could not put it down.

Ambrose deftly weaves Aikido and martial arts themes with life lessons in this coming of age story. What makes this book special is that one of the main characters is based on Sensei. Most times, I would have turned my nose up to something like this as I let out an

audible sigh of disgust. When I came upon the part which introduced Sensei, I was at first very hesitant, but Ambrose does an excellent job of immortalizing Sensei and paying homage to him. I was also blown away at the detail in which he describes the dojo having never been there himself.

Japanese culture and etiquette can be very nuanced and I often have discussions with people who are fluent and miss the point. Ambrose is able to eloquently convey Japanese traditional themes without over complicating them. This book is an excellent read for anyone who wants to start learning more about Japanese culture without trying to learn about Japanese culture. The story is excellent too and I hope that Ambrose does not make us wait too long for the next installment. I wholeheartedly suggest this book to people of any age who want to learn more about martial arts, Japanese culture or if they just want to read a book that is well written.



LITTLE TOKYO  
**Sparkle!**  
NANCY KIKUCHI VOLUNTEER DAY  
Community Cleanup



Jose Omar Lam Sanz Sensei visits the dojo from Cuba



Let's Celebrate the Year of the Rooster and Join Us

# Dancing for the Dojo



**A Benefit for  
The Furuya Foundation & the  
Aikido Center of Los Angeles**



www.aikidocenterla.com

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st, 2017**

**Nishi Hongwanji Kaikan**

815 East First Street, Little Tokyo, Los Angeles

Doors Open: 7:00pm

Dance: 8:00pm - 11:30pm

*Opportunity  
Drawings*

*Door  
Prizes*

Music Performed By

**Kokoro**  
Music with Soul

Information: **Dale Okuno** / daleokuno@gmail.com / 626.585.3500 x7220

**Carol Tanita** / cntanita@mail.com

**RESERVE YOUR TABLE NOW!**

Reserved Table of 10: \$350

Individual Tickets: \$30 / person

*No Host Bar  
Complimentary Light  
Appetizers*

The Furuya Foundation is a 501(c)3,  
Non-Profit Corp, Public Benefit  
EIN# 20-0026129

*\*After JAN. 15: \$50 / Person & at the Door*

RSVP FORM/CUT & RETURN BY FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017

Make checks payable to: **Furuya Foundation**

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH / Table Reservations: ONE CHECK ONLY

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email for Confirmation: \_\_\_\_\_

By Jan. 15, 2017: \_\_\_\_\_ TABLE(s) of Ten @ \$350 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Ticket @ \$30 / person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*\*After January 15, 2017  
Individual Tickets At  
The Door: \$50 / Person*

\*Table Guests: List Names in Back  
Unable to attend but would like to donate: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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EIN# 20-0026129

**RETURN ADDRESS:**

ACLA / The Furuya Foundation  
c/o Carol Tanita  
426 Kingsford St.  
Monterey Park, CA 91754

## Breaking Away

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

Before O'Sensei, the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, passed away in 1969, there was only one kind of Aikido; O'Sensei's Aikido. Today, after O'Sensei's death there seems to be many different styles, interpretations and organizations available. Nowadays, even in other disciplines, many options are available. So many choices! Now, an aspiring student doesn't have to make the effort to search far and wide, often for years, to find a good teacher. I did a quick Google search for "Aikido schools in Los Angeles" and 310,000 results came up in only 0.63 seconds.

Now a student has their pick of teachers, schools, and styles. If a student didn't like their teacher, nothing could stop them from running off to another. If they grew unsatisfied their new teacher, they could change teachers again.

A student doesn't need to learn perseverance, discipline, humility, or even how to work with others. They could practice, without showing any loyalty, hopping from school to school, from teacher to teacher. A student is no longer a student but a customer.

In martial arts today, it seems that students don't think twice about switching from one teacher to another. In many traditional disciplines like the Japanese tea ceremony and traditional Japanese dance, the students are not allowed to change teachers, nor is a teacher allowed to accept a student of another teacher. Students were not allowed to quit and go to another school, and if they were unhappy with the teacher they chose, their choices were to continue training under that teacher, or quit altogether. Indeed, that student's second choice, after deciding to pursue the art, weighed heavily on their success or failure.

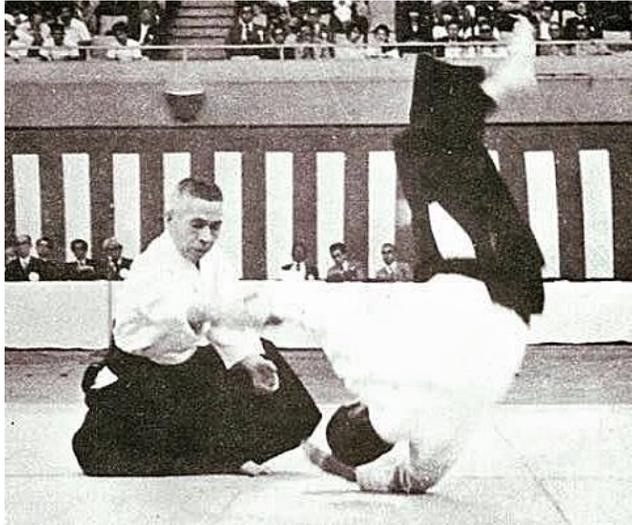
Students choose to leave for many reasons, some of them legitimate and others for self-centered reasons. After O'Sensei passed away, a number of teachers and students took advantage of this opportunity to break away from Hombu dojo.

One of Furuya Sensei's favorite teachers was Kisaburo Osawa Sensei. It's said that if Osawa Sensei broke away from Hombu Dojo he could have created a very large, very successful organization. He was one of O'Sensei's and Second Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba's most loyal supporters and, after the founder, was renowned as one of the greatest exponents of the art.

When my teacher was training at Hombu Dojo, he and another instructor were watching Osawa Sensei practice with amazement and Sensei asked the instructor standing next to him, "How can he

move like that?" This instructor, who was a great master in his own right, could only shrug his shoulders and reply, "He's enlightened, I guess."

There is a story about Osawa Sensei when he served in the navy during World War II. His ship was attacked and sunk and he found himself in the water with his surviving shipmates. He saw many of his shipmates try to swim away only to perish. Osawa Sensei said that he survived only by clinging to the wreckage.



*Kisaburo Osawa Sensei demonstrating at the All Japan Aikido Demonstration at the Tokyo Budokan*

This tragic event left a deep impression on Osawa Sensei. This incident was one of the reasons that in a moment of crisis, instead of abandoning Hombu Dojo for his own personal gain that he chose to stay and continue helping 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba with working to spread Aikido.

In the past, the student had to persevere and learn to overcome these "obstacles" in their training. Now it seems that with one wrong word the students who seem the toughest get their ego hurt and leave, blaming their problems on anything and everything but themselves.

In the past, students had no choice but to continue training and they had to learn how to overcome despite their own shortcomings. Now, there are many reasons for a student to quit. With so many choices out there, a student doesn't need to be loyal to a single teacher or art; they have so many other options available to them. In the past, even if a student had to physically leave a school, they kept a sense of loyalty and commitment to their teacher. Students feel that they already know everything and are free to do anything they please. It's their privilege if they want to go off and do some other martial art or hop from school to school. Nowadays it's easy to leave for any reason. There are so many ways out.

Martial arts, in its most superficial sense is a means to inflict pain and a tool to assert dominance over others, but in its most profound sense, offers us a chance to overcome our smaller, self-centered selves and realize our humanity.

Would you leave a dying friend and think "not my problem"? Or do you stay and help any way you can? To most people the answer is obvious, but throw in some punches, kicks, and throws and it's easy to forget. Ultimately, martial arts teaches us to follow a path not because it's the proper thing to do, or because of some obligation, but because the only way to become a decent human being is to persevere and keep training. Loyalty despite the circumstances just might be the hardest thing to realize in our training.

## Japanese Kind of New Year's

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

New Year's is one of the most important holidays in Japan and was one of the holidays celebrated with the most enthusiasm at Hombu Dojo by O'Sensei and it is the only time when Hombu Dojo closes for several days for the holidays.

Usually, I explain many of the customs and symbols of the Japanese New Year's, but nowadays, I don't know if this still interests students of Aikido. I think the trend today is to modernize Aikido or "Americanize" Aikido so perhaps these traditions and customs have no meaning to modern Aikidoists today. Luckily, we still continue them in our own dojo.

In the traditional Japanese custom of New Year's or *Oshogatsu*, it is a time of renewal and a time to make a new start in one's life. For O'Sensei, it was a "sacred" time which he felt literally goes back to the creation of the Universe.

Mircea Eliade, a renowned professor of world religions, referred to this time of the year as "sacred time and space" or the "renewal of sacred time." It is for similar reasons that we celebrate Christmas, to renew or to revisit a very sacred event of the birth of Christ. By re-living or recreating this important moment in time, we bring ourselves closer to this significant religious experience. In similar light, we celebrate the New Year as also a re-creation of a symbolic "birth of new life" with the New Year.

*Misogi*, breathing, *kotodama*, etc are all such exercises or practices which recreate this sacred experience and comprises the form of the "spiritual" aspect of practice.

I think in our own society, we make clear distinctions of what is our life and what is religious – our idea of the separation between church and state, I think this is called.

In many ancient cultures, the borders of what we call religious, spiritual and our "real" life are not so politically defined.

As an example, for orthodox Jews, the religious life and their real lives are very closely integrated without any borders at all. It is the same of many other religions and cultures. In Japanese society, we also see this and so it is difficult to analyze or understand this through the eyes of one who believes that religion and spirituality are a totally different and separate world from what we do from day to day and moment to moment. Lately, I have encountered an alarming form of spiritual incestuousness among Aikidoists who insist that nothing can exist or be imagined outside of their own world or belief system.

I see this trend in Aikido in this country to "remove" all such so-called religious and spiritual content from the art. There is a very old and prevalent movement in America to approach a religious experience or spiritual awakening within the context of daily life with a very close tradition to Eastern thinking. It is for this reason that students of all forms of Eastern disciplines have enjoyed a strong movement in this country for nearly the last 200 years with the early intellectual spiritualism movement of the 1800's.



*Izanami and Izanagi giving birth to kuniumi or the Islands of Japan*

It is readily apparent that O'Sensei had a wide scope of learning and was extremely sensitive or able to see the relationship between the creation event related in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament and Amaterasu Omikami leaving her cave and restoring light in the world which is the creation story or *kuniumi* of Izanami and Izanagi as recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*.

In order to attempt to touch O'Sensei's heart and mind, I believe it might be necessary to follow in his same footsteps to

a degree and try to see what he saw, envision what he envisioned Aikido to be and understand his purpose through what he studied as well as how he trained.

Perhaps, for more than any other reason, these dying traditions should be kept alive. Although we may be of mind to ignore them, perhaps the next generation of Aikidoists should not be deprived of such a wealth of culture, wisdom and tradition. It is often said, the child follows the grandparents, it would be a great shame if this were true in Aikido and this current generation must be skipped before we return to the roots of Aikido right at the knee of O'Sensei as it were, where we should all be at this moment.

For the New Year, I have thought very seriously about the future of Aikido and as so many of us are anxious to move forward and create the Aikido that we want Aikido to be for ourselves, but before we achieve this "sacred" privilege, it is our obligation first and foremost to understand and master what Aikido was first intended to be – a martial art brought to its ultimate level approaching a distant realm in which we can achieve a profound "spiritual" awakening within ourselves which may not only deeply effect our own personal lives but transform the thinking of this entire world towards peace.

This is what New Year means in Aikido.

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on January 5, 2003.

# 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

## Fridays

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 and is open to any Aikidoist regardless of school or style who is at least proficient in forward and backward ukemi.

# Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

## TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

## Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

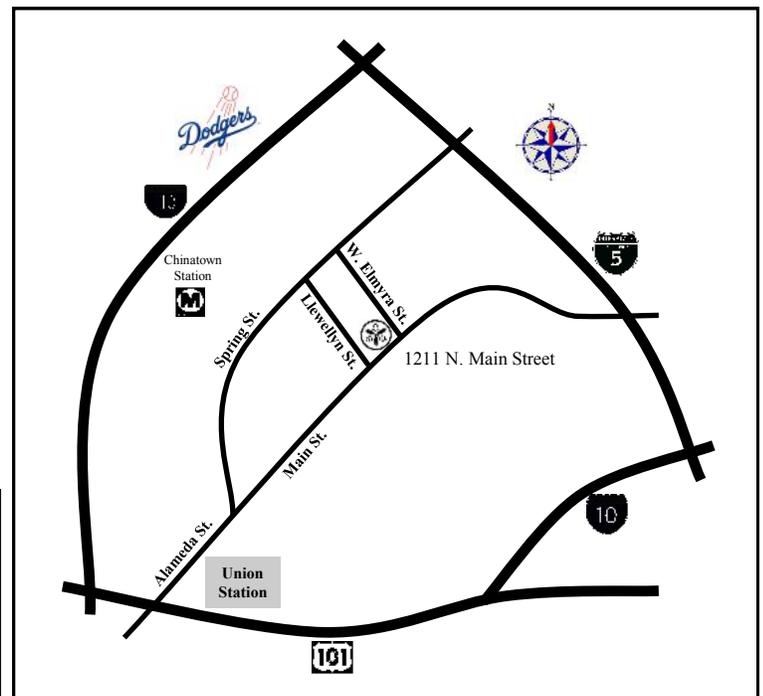
## Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

## Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

*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



We are located at

1211 N. Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: [info@Aikidocenterla.com](mailto: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.*