

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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謹賀新年 Happy New Year!



Message From the Teacher
by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

On behalf of the members of the ACLA, the Iaido Kenshinkai and the Furuya Foundation, I would like to wish you all the best in 2016!

In Japan, December is a time of reconciliation where the Japanese people put their affairs in order to bring a sense of completion into their lives as the calendar switches over. With this settlement comes a clean slate so that January can be a time of rejuvenation.

To ring in the New Year, many Japanese people travel to their respective temples or shrines to pray for good luck and prosperity.

In the dojo, January is the time for each of us to re-evaluate our training goals and intentions in order to help guide us in our practice for the rest of the year.

I would like 2016 to be the year we got back to the basics. I would also like our students to have a more regular and consistent practice. It is my belief that to derive any benefit from Aikido training, one has to make it a regular practice.

One of the best comments someone made about our dojo was that the training here was, "Consistent and constant." This comment made me very happy because it showed that our persistence to professionalism was in some way paying off.

There is no secret to becoming good at Aikido – all that is required is that one put in the work. I hope you all have a wonderful 2016 and I hope to see you soon on the mat!

Upcoming Events

December 31-January 2nd:
Dojo Closed: New Year's

January 3rd:
Kagami Biraki
Official opening of the New Year

January 16th:
2nd Doshu *Meinichi*
Memorial Service

January 30th:
Intensive Seminar

February 27th:
Intensive Seminar

March 5th:
Furuya Sensei *Meinichi*
Memorial Service

謹賀新年 (Kinga Shinnen) or
"Happy New Year."
Calligraphy brushed by the late
Bishop Kenko Yamashita.

Budo's Highest Ideal

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

"We have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and god-like technology. That's dangerous." – E.O. Wilson

Generally speaking in movies and in the main stream media, all martial arts are grouped together and are typically seen as nothing more than glorified forms of violence. In actuality Aikido, like all martial arts, is a form of self-cultivation. It doesn't take long for

students to realize that violence, hate and anger are nothing more than the outward manifestations of inward weakness. O Sensei understood this and created Aikido so that mankind could realize their true inner strength. The inner strength that we all seek is the wherewithal to be kind, compassionate and forgiving especially when confronted by someone who neither earns it nor deserves it.



Jet Li flies through the air as Nameless in the movie Hero

To understand compassion is to understand suffering. As one becomes learned and studies the Way, they realize that all human beings suffer. This suffering is not theirs alone but something that we all struggle with on a certain level. Understanding this allows us to, as the Dalai Lama has said, "Find common ground" and thus a place that we all are the same. As we understand their suffering we realize that they deserve kindness, compassion and forgiveness just as we do too.

A commonly worshiped martial arts deity is Gyuanyin (觀音), who is more commonly known in Japan as Kannon. Kannon is a Buddhist deity that is classically associated with mercy and compassion. She is a *bodhisattva* or *bosatsu* which is one of the four sublime states a human being can achieve where despite achieving this state of enlightenment she doesn't enter into nirvana but chooses to wait to enter until all living beings become enlightened. Besides being venerated for her compassion ordinary people, Kannon is also revered by martial artists. The March 1995 issue of *East* magazine best described the goddess Kannon's followers in these two ways:

Believers in Kannon come in two groups. Members of the first seek salvation through the benevolence of Kannon. Those of the second strive for salvation through their own efforts. Pursuers of the Way should be members of the latter group, who strive to be as merciful as Kannon and work for society.

One the highest ideals in *budo* is *shinmu fusatsu* (真武不殺) or this idea that "true *budo* does not kill." With *shinmu fusatsu* in mind, O Sensei refers to the theory of Aikido as *satsujinken* (殺人

劍), *katsujinken* (活人劍) or "The sword that takes life, the sword that gives life." One of the most widely accepted explanations of *katsujinken*, *satsujinken* is that the sword is something that can either protect or kill and that there is some sort of yin-yang duality to the sword and on a certain level this is true.

As one trains harder and begins to journey deeper into themselves they begin to understand O Sensei's theory and thus understands his enlightenment. What one realizes is that the sword that O Sensei is speaking of is a metaphor for our true sword which is our inner spirit – we are the weapon which is being wielded. The highest ideal in *budo* is not in learning how to sublimely wield a sword or how easily one fells their opponents but in learning how to surrender it.

In the 2002 movie *Hero*, Jet Li plays a would be assassin named Nameless

and there is an apropos scene that illustrates *budo*'s highest ideal. The Emperor realizes the highest teaching in *budo* as Jet Li's assassination plot is revealed. The Emperor studies a piece of calligraphy done by the assassin Broken Sword as he pontificates on the secret of Broken Sword's swordsmanship and says:

I have just come to a realization. The scroll by Broken Sword contains no secrets of his swordsmanship. What this reveals is his highest ideals. In the first stage, man and sword become one and each other. Here even a blade of grass can be used as a lethal weapon. In the next stage the sword resides not in the hand but in the heart. Even without a weapon the warrior can slay his enemy from a 100 paces. But the ultimate ideal is when the sword disappears altogether. The warrior embraces all around him. The desire to kill no longer exists, only peace remains.

Nameless flies toward the Emperor to attack but decides not to kill him and says:

Your majesty I have completed my mission. Because of my decision today many will die and your majesty will go on living. A dead man begs you to never forget the ultimate ideal for a warrior [and then he drops the sword].

The poignant moment comes as Nameless gives his last admonishment and symbolically drops the sword to represent his understanding of the highest ideal of swordsmanship – peace comes only when one surrenders the sword.

Continued on page 6...



What Do We Do for Aikido?

by *Santiago Garcia Almaraz*

Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai (Salamanca, Spain)

Many of us enjoy the benefits of Aikido training but what do we do for Aikido? What is our role or what are we giving back? It is my belief that we are expected to preserve and pass on Aikido for future generations.

To me, there is nothing more rewarding than giving to others, offering to help, reaching out, and sharing the art of Aikido. Everyday teaching adults and especially children pushes me physically, mentally and spiritually to strive to reach higher and this dedication helps my commitment to truly being a teacher.

When I started to teach Aikido in the year 1996 I started to only teach adult classes in my dojo because there was no children at the time. Although I felt that teaching children was something that I liked and that I felt was part of the process to grow as an Aikido teacher and that I always believed that true Aikido should be taught from childhood, I knew that at the time I didn't have the sufficient knowledge nor the ability to teach children Aikido properly.

The following year in 1997 I travelled, for the first time, to Los Angeles and met Furuya Sensei and I was able to see and participate in Aikido classes for children. Seeing how he taught children in his dojo, I came to understand that the teaching of this art to children is one of the pillars of the growth process and the future of Aikido. I also realized that trip that teaching children required that I be good at teaching. To be good at teaching Aikido would require much work, time and sacrifice so I decided to postponing offering these kinds for children. In 1999, I decided to start with a small group of five children and I think that it was the hardest yet most rewarding thing that I have ever decided to do!

Aikido is not easy to teach to children, one needs to not only be good at teaching, but also must have a good imagination, have patience and, most difficult of all, to try to teach without distorting the essence of O Sensei's teachings. The class shouldn't de-evolve and become something akin to a simple gym class – it is Aikido. As a teacher, I get the joy of seeing little by little how I shape the children's behavior, attitude, and respect for Aikido, the dojo, their friends and family and who they become as human beings. It is a true reward for me to see the children grow up into not only good Aikidoists, but good people too.

Today after six years since we started with the children's program in the dojo, we have a group of about 25 children who range between five and nine years old. Some of the children who started in the children's classes as little kids have now grown into teenagers and are now 14 years old and are starting in the adult classes, there are now 15 of them participating.

For me, when I think about Aikido, I believe it is all about educating children in this art. The children are the future and it is my responsibility to give them what I have received from Aikido. My hope is that by teaching children good Aikido today that tomorrow they will become good people, good Aikidoists and maybe even good senseis too.

It is my wish for 2016, as Sensei once said to me, that I be a stepping stone for those coming behind me to learn and benefit from Aikido just as I have learned and benefited from him.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me in the past and will assist me in the future because without them all this work would be impossible. I look forward to doing more in the future with your tireless support. Have a great and wonderful 2016 and I thank you all very much!

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 Fight Against Non-Fighting

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

First of all, I would like to wish our students and our readers a very Happy New. As Aikido students, we choose Aikido for many different reasons. Some choose it because of its effectiveness while others are attracted to its philosophy of non-violence.

When people first hear about Aikido, it is described as a non-fighting martial art. To most people raised on kung-fu movies and action blockbusters, a non-fighting martial sounds like an oxymoron. When people think about “fighting” they think of hand-to-hand combat, so it’s natural that Aikido’s non-fighting label is interpreted as “turning the other cheek”, surrendering, or simply giving up. However, Aikido uses the term, “fighting” differently than the definition most people have in mind.

In the animal world, when it comes to fighting, it’s only natural that the one who is bigger, stronger, faster, or has the advantage of numbers, will win. Winning, of course, means self-preservation; that you emerge from the conflict in better shape than your opponent, ideally unscathed and in one piece.

In Aikido’s definition of fighting, when our opponent attacks by pushing us, we push back; when they attack by pulling us, we pull back. When our opponent strikes us, our instinct is to block it and resist that power. This protracted back and forth game of tug-of-war is what Aikido and other martial arts seek to avoid. With that being said, “Fighting” is simply a natural byproduct of opposing forces meeting each other whether it clashes physically, mentally, or spiritually.

Because of this opponent-based mindset, when students begin training in Aikido, they’re naturally inclined to use their power against their partner’s power. This sense of expending energy or using force gives one the illusion of strength, which in turn gives the student a sense of power – an illusion that something is being accomplished.

The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, designed Aikido’s techniques to realize the philosophy of “non-fighting.” Aikido technique’s aren’t designed to clash with the opponent’s power, but neutralize its force bringing the opponent’s movement into our own circular movement. The technique is designed so we align with our opponent’s power while drawing it out and bringing it into your own sphere of influence allowing us to control our opponent and thus redirect them. In Aikido, they call this “blending”

which is, if you have ever practiced Aikido, is much easier said than done.

As “non-fighting” as Aikido might be, it is still easy for students to fall into this trap of stopping, blocking, pushing, and pulling during practice. When the opponent attacks, it’s easier to negotiate their power with our strength so it takes lots of practice to go against

this instinctive need to fight against an attacker’s power with our power. In Aikido class it’s very easy to reject the technique and fall back to our comfort zone of using strength to throw or pin our partner instead of using the technique to control and subdue our opponent.

Usually, when we think of controlling our opponent we think of forcing them to do our bidding against their will, essentially fighting with them so they will submit to us. In Aikido we don’t think of fighting to move our opponent so much as we first discipline our own movement

and once we control ourselves, we are able to use the technique, bringing our opponent into our movement and applying the technique. In the technique, we don’t say move the opponent’s hand that is grasping your hand, but move your own hand.

Like anything done at a high level, this level of sophistication is only possible through practice. It’s easy to use strength to throw or pin our opponent, but to throw or pin our opponent using our timing and spacing is very difficult. The level of sophistication in the Aikido techniques require the user to be very well trained and also very well disciplined. This level of expertise can only be reached through constant training.

If you look at the Japanese character for “bu” the first character in the words *budo* – martial way – and *bujutsu* – martial technique – the character for martial doesn’t translate to “fight” but the parts that make up the character “bu” literally mean “to stop the weapon (spear)”. In other words the original meaning of “bu” is not “to fight” but “to stop the struggle”.

The Aikido practice is designed to change our usual routine from one that clashes against the opponent’s force to one that matches or aligns with it. Aikido’s philosophy and meaning is directly related to this mindset. Many people like to skip forward to the spiritual meaning behind O Sensei’s non-fighting, non-violent, universal message of love. However, without first practicing Aikido as a martial art; and then mastering the physical and mental aspects of the technique, realizing O Sensei’s teaching will be very difficult.

Continued on page 6 ...



The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, designed Aikido’s techniques to realize the philosophy of “non-fighting.”

In The Community...

Reverend Tetsuo Unno to Give Lectures at Nishi Hongwanji

The topic of Reverend Unno's lectures will be *Seeking a Final Solution to (One's) Life, Guided by Shinran Shonin and Helped by Insights from Zen and Western Thinkers*.

Saturdays, 10:00-11:30AM

January 9, 23, February 20, 27, March 5
(5 week class: \$50)

For more information visit nishihongwanji-la.org



Editor's Note: Reverend Unno was a good friend of Furuya Sensei's and looked over his book *Kodo: Ancient Ways* before the final printing. His brother Taiteusuo Unno also translated the *Spirit of Aikido* for Kisshomaru Ueshiba.

The Storrier Stearns Japanese Garden in Pasadena is Open to the Public the last Sunday of every month



The next Open Day this month will be held on: January 31

Gates will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Reservations at the website address below for \$7.50 or admission at the gate is \$10.00 cash or check only. Children 12 and under are free.

To reserve a space or learn more visit japanesegardenpasadena.com

The Japan Foundation Presents:

Introducing Kabuki: History, Aesthetics, and Star Power



January 19, 2016
7:00 PM

RSVP required

The all-male kabuki theater has been around for more than four hundred years, and to this day it remains Japan's most popular form of theater. A unique theatrical genre that combines dance, music, dynamic action, and picturesque poses, kabuki has left a profound mark on Japan's cultural memory, creating urban heroes, legendary characters, and iconic courtesans and princesses-not to mention a whole culture of stardom.

In her lecture, Professor Satoko Shimazaki, a kabuki specialist who teaches at the University of Southern California, will trace kabuki's roots back to the seventeenth century and give a user-friendly introduction to its aesthetics and special pleasures. This lecture is part of an ongoing series of kabuki events organized by The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, which includes **screenings of high resolution Cinema Kabuki at theaters** throughout Los Angeles.

RSVP at: jflalc.org/ac-lecture32.html

Samurai of the Screen: Films of Akira Kurosawa



The Egyptian Theater

Yojimbo/Sanjuro (double feature)
Friday, January 15th at 7:30 PM

The Seven Samurai
Saturday, January 16th at 7:30 PM

Hidden Fortress/Throne of Blood (double feature)
Sunday, January 17th at 7:30 PM

High and Low/The Bad Sleep Well (double feature)
Friday, January 22nd at 7:30 PM

Rashomon/Ikiru (double feature)
Saturday, January 23rd at 7:30 PM

Red Beard
Sunday, January 24th at 7:30 PM

Budo's Highest Ideal *continued from page 2...*

*A statue of Kannon that is displayed
in the dojo*

In the beginning of training, the natural course of development is quickest physically. Physical hardening and technical advancement leads to a certain type of ego where most people's identity becomes attached to strength and defeating others. Usually these triumphs come without any type of moral deliberation. We in a sense become the *satsujinken* or the sword that takes life. As we develop and mature, this is where the yin-yang duality comes in, we realize our own humanity and discover *katsujinken* or the sword that gives life.

In O Sensei's philosophy, the *satsujinken* is not in cutting down others, but in cutting down the self or one's ego and in *katsujinken* the life that we are saving is actually our own. The goal then becomes as O Sensei stated, *masakatsu agatsu* or "The true victory is the one over yourself."

All martial arts have the potential to destroy (*satsujinken*) and because of this they need to be tempered with compassion (*katsujinken*). To kill or hurt others is at the very lowest level and takes very little inner strength. Being able to give mercy or compassion takes a tremendous amount of true inner strength and upon realizing this, the real journey then becomes inward.

"With great power comes great responsibility" is the Voltaire quote equivalent to *satsujinken*, *katsujinken*. We can choose either to be a liability to society or a part of it. We are all capable of being monsters, but what separates us from those beastlike tendencies is our ability to see and understand the suffering of others. Regardless of the opponent, the true opponent is ourselves and the compassion that we are giving is really for us. The discerning cut of the sword is what gives us life as it cuts down our ego and unites us with all of mankind.

We live in a time of immense opportunity and unrivaled technology, but still reside in primal bodies with primitive minds which can be a recipe for disaster. Compassion is needed to temper this massive potential that we all possess and that is why O Sensei created Aikido – to teach us how to be and live in a better more responsible way. *Shinmu fusatsu* is *budo's* highest ideal and compassion is its greatest weapon. Being able to give and receive compassion is an ability that takes a lot of training. Furuya Sensei used to say that, "The Way is in training" and I guess that is why Aikido is really the way of compassion.

The Fight Against Non-Fighting *continued from page 4...*

In a way, the most difficult aspect to Aikido training is not moving ones feet, taking the *ukemi*, or twisting your partner's wrist, but how to change one's own mindset from one that fights and clashes with the attacker's power to one that blends with it. This non-fighting aspect to Aikido can only be realized when the student develops the awareness and gets enough experience to recognize the physical, the mental, and the spiritual aspects of the art in their own practice.

The fight to develop a non-fighting mindset is the puzzle that each student must solve. Everything in Aikido tries to address this problem. It's natural to think that a bigger, stronger opponent can defeat a smaller, weaker one. Aikido answers the question, how to defend against an opponent who is stronger, faster, or has more experience than you do? What if they are armed? What if they outnumber you? In short, how do you defend yourself when operating at a disadvantage?



At its highest levels, martial arts are used, not to defeat your opponent, but to bring a chaotic situation into order. In O Sensei's Aikido this is developed to the highest degree, requiring high levels of mental and physical discipline. Training in Aikido is not just a way to defeat your opponent but ultimately, a way to defeat the strongest opponent faced in your training: your own ego.

The Moon and the Water

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

I hope that all my students and friends enjoy a great and prosperous New Year and that everyone continues their Aikido training following in the traditions of O Sensei and Doshu.

This year is the Year of the Monkey according to the Chinese astrological tradition. The monkey sits in the ninth position in the Chinese astrological chart between the sheep and the rooster. The word for monkey in Japanese is "saru" (猿). A popular pun in Japanese is "ma ga zaru" (魔が去る) which means "evil goes away," and is a typical Japanese play on words.

Of all the animals in the Chinese zodiac, the monkey resembles man most closely and so many people consider the Year of the Monkey to be a very auspicious and perhaps lucky one. However, as the monkey resembles man, the monkey is also the animal most susceptible to his own delusion and fantasy.

In 16th century Zen Buddhist paintings from the *Muromachi* Period (室町時代), a popular subject was the long armed monkey reaching down from a tall tree trying to grasp for an image of the moon in the pond which is referred to as *suigetsu* or the "moon and the water" in Buddhism. The teaching is about something which lacks substance. The monkey mistakes the reflection of the moon for a peach and is going through so much painstaking trouble to grab it without realizing it is just a reflection. In Zen Buddhism, the concept of *suigetsu* asks us if we know the difference between the moon in the sky and its reflection below in the water. Humans, just like the monkey, can become confused by the image of the moon or a peach and which is actually real.

This reminds me of an old Greek myth about Narcissus. Narcissus was the son of the river god Cephissus who was said to be so beautiful and full of pride that he had contempt for anyone who would love him. Knowing Narcissus' love for himself, Nemesis lured him to a pond to gaze

at his own reflection. Narcissus became so engrossed with his own beauty that he wouldn't leave and ended up drowning. I wonder if man is imitating the monkey or if the monkey is merely imitating man!

More and more, the old traditions of Aikido and all traditional martial arts are starting to die out. Of course, we like what is new and innovative and we become obsessed with the sensations of being thrilled and excited that we find ourselves perpetually trying to re-invent Aikido to suit our own tastes and likes. We keep what we like and discard what doesn't suit us. Yet, we forget that we are only coming from a place of our own inexperience and lack of years. Many of these traditions have been around for centuries so who are we to say what is appropriate or not. O Sensei laid them out for us and our job is to study them not judge them. How can we discard things we don't clearly understand? This is the *suigetsu*. We must be constantly aware that as we kill the traditions of Aikido, we also kill a bit of the wisdom and spirit of Aikido too. This may be the inevitable winds of change, but it could also be the whims of our own ignorance. I apologize for being so critical here, especially in my New Year's message but I feel a deep urgency that if we are too lax now in our training and commitment to Aikido that we are in danger of losing it. I fear that no one like O Sensei will ever appear again to show us the true way and that saddens me. Why are do so many people ignore his teachings today, I do not know. Again, I think that we are too smitten and taken in by our own ideas. From where I am observing people, it seems that we are too busy reaching for the reflection of the moon like the monkey, we are too busy admiring our own beauty reflection in the pond that we have truly lost our real focus and direction.

Please continue to train well and in good spirits in the New Year!

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on December 31, 2003.



Monkey Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon by the Rinzai priest Ekaku Hakuin (1686-1769)

*The poem above the monkey reads:
Miko suigetsu o saguri,
Shi ni itaru made kyûketsu sezu.
Hoshu shinsen ni mossureba,
Jippo hikari koketsu.*

The monkey is reaching for the moon in the water.
Until death overtakes him he'll never give up.
If he lets go of the branch he will disappear
in the deep pool.
The whole world would shine with
dazzling pureness.

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

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

7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Open

*6:30 AM Intensive seminar is the :
last Saturday of the month by invitation only.**

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

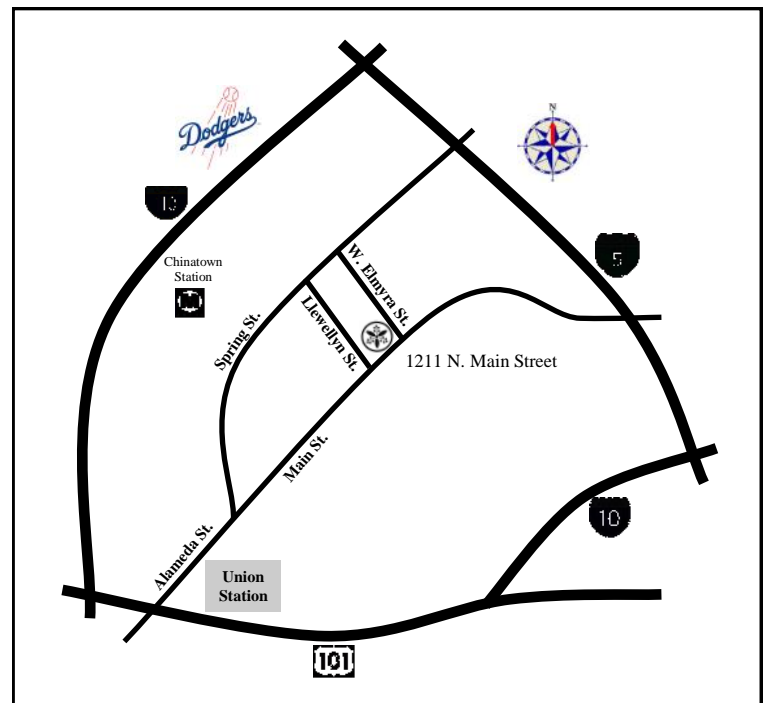
Sundays

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 Hombu Official Recognition by the
AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

公益財団法人 合気会

**Aikido Hombu Dojo - Aikikai Foundation
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
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*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

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.*