

# 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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## **Letter From the Editor** by Mark Ehrlich Editor, The Aiki Dojo

Now that summer has arrived in full swing, we can all make some time to enjoy good food, fun, and fellowship at one of the many excellent *obon* festivals hosted by various organizations in and around Los Angeles. You'll find a handy roster of them on page 6. Come out, support your neighbors and the community, and enjoy some delicious food and fun dances. These events make me think of the old standard, "Summertime, and the living is easy. . . ."

Things which look or sound easy oftentimes become another matter when we try our hand at them. This month, *The Aiki Dojo* considers some of those "easy" aspects of practice we uphold at ACLA. Readers can learn about what our dojo is (and is not); in fact, they can learn how to learn anything at all. We also share the relational aspects that con-

nect teachers and students, and the kind of effort and mindset needed to make that relationship a fruitful one. Some of our branch dojo students who joined us earlier this year at our annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar share their perspectives on that experience, and as has become custom, Sensei visits us from the archives to ruminate on the passing of time, the bridge between generations, a milestone in the life of a dear friend, and the importance of finding wisdom all around us. For my money, it's an issue packed with profundity, and I hope you find these articles as helpful as I did.

Next month Sensei's very good friend Karita Sensei will pay us a visit on his way to the annual sword show up in San Francisco. He'll offer a Tai Chi class and a sword appreciation class. Please try to attend.

Take care until next time. Have a great summer, and I'll see you on the mat!

## Upcoming Events

**July 25th:**  
Instructor's intensive

**August 3-6th:**  
Karita Sensei visit

**August 4th:**  
Karita Sensei Taichi class  
6:30 PM

**August 5th:**  
Karita Sensei  
sword appreciation class  
6:30 PM

**August 29th:**  
Instructor's intensive

## How to Learn Anything

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

We have a maxim in the martial arts which states, “Students can’t be taught anything, but they can learn everything.” This sounds right: anything worth knowing, we teach to ourselves, and do so by what kind of student we are and how we choose to approach the subject. The teacher teaches the subject, but it is the student who creates the opening for true learning. Learning, then, becomes a matter of one’s character; no matter what we do or who we are, anything and everything worth mastering requires the right attitude. I firmly believe that the Way is egalitarian in that everyone can achieve success and maybe even mastery as long as they have the right attitude and apply themselves. Having the proper attitude thus becomes the prerequisite for success. In that spirit I offer below just a few things to think about as we apply ourselves toward success:

### Be consistent

“Tomorrow’s battle is won during today’s practice.”

– Old samurai maxim

In order to achieve success we must apply ourselves consistently, which means that whatever we do as our practice gets done with regularity. I haven’t met a person yet who can do something sporadically and find adeptness at the end of it. In today’s multitasking world of constant distraction, haphazardness has become the norm. Our training teaches us diligence firsthand; if we don’t learn consistency we end up suffering as soon as we step on the mat. How can we possibly become proficient at something that we only do every once in a while? To find success, we need to establish a consistent practice.

### When you train, train hard

“Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.” – Sun Tzu

Nowadays we all feel overwhelmed and inundated; such is the reality of modern times. The dojo ideally offers a sacred place where we can come and attain enlightenment. Sensei used to say, “Cut off your head and leave it at the door.” Whenever we come to the dojo, we must do our best to train hard. In fact, one of the reasons we train in relative silence involves keeping the distractions of the outside world away from us during class and thus help accomplish the goal of training hard. Whenever you find yourself here, please be present here.

## Never give up

“Great works are performed not by strength, but perseverance.”

– Samuel Johnson

The great boxer James Corbett said it best: “Fight one more round.



When your feet are so tired that you have to shuffle back to the center of the ring, fight one more round. When your arms are so tired that you can hardly lift your hands to come on guard, fight one more round. When your nose is bleeding and your eyes are black and you are so tired that you wish that your opponent would crack you one on the jaw and put you to sleep, fight one more round – remembering that the man who always fights one more round is never whipped.” The key to victory in any endeavor is to persevere. Perseverance gives us the power to overcome any obstacle, as suggested by the Japanese proverb, *keizoku wa chikara nari*

(“Perseverance is power.”). Watching students quit just as they have just begun to get good probably saddens me the most as a teacher. Please don’t give up too soon.

### We get out what we put in

One’s act, one’s profit – Japanese proverb

Teachers and parents have popularized the old saw, “You reap what you sow.” No matter what we want to accomplish in life, we get out of efforts what we put into them. Invest time and effort into your training and it will work out.

### Adversity builds character

“If you are caught unprepared by a sudden rainstorm, you should not run foolishly down the road or hide under the eaves of houses. You are going to get soaked either way. Accept that from the beginning and go on your way. This way you will not be distressed by a little rain. Apply this lesson to everything.”

– Passage from the Hagakure by Yamamoto Tsunetomo

Of course, human nature strives for comfort and shies away from suffering, but contentment is the enemy of the Way. No one has ever created or traversed anything significant from a place of comfort. That doesn’t have to mean that we have to lose an eye to become successful but that also doesn’t mean we can have an easy time achieving success. When we find ourselves up against a wall it helps to remember that hardships can serve as the mother of development and the crux of character. Seneca said it best: “Difficulties strengthen the mind, as labor does the body.” Struggle makes for the staple of growth, so see your difficulties as a mountain upon which you’ll build your successes.

Continued on page 4...

## Trying Times or Time for Trying?

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

Often, a teacher's only reward is seeing students train hard and progress in their training. To students, it may not seem like it, but teachers are not the be-all end-all of the art; good teachers always considers themselves a stepping stone from which students can continue on with their training, hopefully keeping the art not only alive, but pass it down to the next generation of students.

Although it didn't seem like it when I was training, teaching requires as much etiquette, thoughtfulness, concentration, and dedication as being a student learning the technique – often even more so. When I was training, I didn't realize how easy I had it. All I had to do was selfishly enjoy the practice and try my best to catch on to the technique.

There are many things to consider when teaching students. In the dojo, we see many kinds of students. Although all students learn the same techniques and abide by the same rules of conduct, no two are alike.

Each student has particular strengths and weaknesses: some have naturally athletic ability and catch on quickly, while others take more time to learn and enter training with a limited amount of physical talent. Students come from different backgrounds, bringing to the dojo a variety of experiences and temperaments. On one hand, teachers must grant all students the same opportunity to practice and realize their potential, yet at the same time bring a case-by-case approach to their teaching tailored to each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Some students gifted with lots of physical talent and potential just plod along – overconfident, sure that mastery will come to them like well-deserved lottery winnings. Other students practice quietly and diligently trying their best to catch onto the technique. As untalented as some students might appear, nothing else can make the teacher happier than when these students try their best. Every teacher desires such a student. When I see some students train, it seems as if they just sleepwalk through the class; not practicing at their full potential, as if talent alone is enough to deserve catching onto the technique. This kind of student will always become disappointed with the training.

Whether students have natural talent or have to work hard for everything, without a sense of urgency or desire, they will never penetrate the profound nature of martial arts like Aikido and Iaido. Students who feel self-satisfied or think highly of their own talent will never know the satisfaction and benefits of training. Talent can only take us so far; without hard work to shore up their abilities, talented students will only have disappointment waiting for them.

To catch onto these techniques, you must learn them as if your life depended on it. In this modern society, we have many ways to defend ourselves more efficiently, yet only in martial arts do we also

take into consideration the defender's mindset and attitude in the training. This, I think, partly explains why Aikido and Iaido amount to more than combat systems but transcend things like winning, losing, size, strength, speed. Yes, those qualities have some importance, but martial arts such as Aikido try to go beyond mere physical technique.

When we watch Aikido or Iaido, it appears deceptively simple. Yet when we begin training we immediately realize how difficult even the basic movements feel. Arts like Aikido and Iaido operate at this level: the movements look like very simple, everyday movements we all take for granted, yet with mastery we execute them at a very high level full of meaning and purpose. These movements look deceptively matter of fact, yet their hidden profundity makes them extremely difficult to perfect.



My teacher, Furuya Sensei, reinforced this idea with an anecdote about his friend, Sifu Adam Hsu, one of the top exponents of Chinese martial arts in the world. Master Hsu told a story about a student who felt frustrated with his progress. This student tried hundreds of times to perfect a particu-

lar spear thrust, but just could not get it. Master Hsu brusquely retorted, "Only a hundred times? You need to do it millions of times!" Students practicing Aikido or Iaido face these same kinds of odds every day. Perfecting the simplest movement in response to an attack requires an almost infinitesimal margin of perfection and tireless practice.

How many times have I seen students leave for reasons based on their own ego; reasons like rank, pride, or attitude? To these kinds of students, their smaller selves have become more important than their bigger selves. This means that they feel satisfied with the "way they are", which is fine as no one expects excellence. Yet martial arts inherently has an elitist nature and thus demands excellence. But excellence in comparison to what? To get trophies? Lovers? Props? Respect? Training for these reasons will only bring disappointment.

Ultimately, I can only blame students' lack of progress on my own shortcomings as a teacher. Do I motivate them enough? Do I show the technique to the best of my ability? Do I give the students the proper example to follow? We must take so many things into consideration. A good teacher is patient, yet is also extremely impatient, because the teacher knows that we have no time to waste; the teacher knows how little time a student truly has to catch on to basics in order to master the art.

They say teaching is like two people firing arrows at each other with the goal of having their arrows hit in midair. Both teachers and students learning any of the traditional arts face those very same odds. If anyone does not try their best to fulfill their part of the teacher/student relationship, training might as well become simply physical exercise or a pastime. Let's remember to practice hard, not only for ourselves, but for the students after us.



## 11 Easy Pieces

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

A dojo is a place for practice, not personal drama.

A dojo is a place for enlightenment, not self-indulgence.

A dojo is a place of harmony and friendship, not competition with others.

A dojo is a place of joy, not one's own inner darkness and gloom.

A dojo is a place of sharing with others and giving, not self-focused egos.

A dojo is a place of home and family, not enemies and rivals.

A dojo is a place for building up one's self, not tearing down others.

A dojo is a place of the here and now and a bright future, not dwelling on past mistakes.

A dojo is a place of one's better self, not of the self one hates.

A dojo is a place of the inner spirit, not of grasping at straws and false dreams.

A dojo is a place of one's self and others together in Aiki, not of "me" over others.

Please support your dojo and help your dojo to grow in the best and most positive way.

Working for others and giving is the best way to develop one's self in practice. Practice your "Best Self" in the dojo, not the self you want to throw away.

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different board, to his daily message board on May 20, 2006.

## How to Learn Anything *continued from page 2...*

### Be brave

The end of our Way of the sword is to be fearless when confronting our inner enemies and our outer enemies.

– Yamaoka Tesshu, 19th Century swordsman and Kendo master

The things that matter most in life take courage. Success involves confronting our fears and challenges and then continuing on our way. We all feel scared sometimes and we all encounter seemingly insurmountable odds, but we must never give in to that fear. Courage acts as the ladder that helps us get over our obstacles and ultimately to reach success in our undertakings. Nelson Mandela said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Don't give into fear, but let bravery take over.

There is a saying in Buddhism, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." This doesn't mean that we merely wait for some divine being to come into our lives and teach us. But rather in order to learn anything at all we must have the openness and willingness to be taught and forgo our stubborn, relentless egos. The martial arts may at first glance seem like they embody simply physical techniques, but they actually monitor the portal towards something much deeper. The right attitude has the way of connecting us to that special something deep down inside of us which we can then use as a vehicle toward not only being successful at any endeavor but toward becoming better human beings into the bargain.



Yamaoka Tesshu

## In The Community...

### Learn Japanese! Summer Camp for Teens Discover Little Tokyo



Step away from the classroom for a more interactive approach to language learning! Learn Katakana (ex. ア、イ、ウ) and simple expressions in Japanese through fun activities such as exploring Little Tokyo and scavenger hunts. For 14-18 year-olds with no prior experience in learning Japanese.

**Dates:** Mon., July 20 – Fri., July 24 (5 days)

**Time:** 9:30am – 12:30pm (3 hours)

**Location:** Little Tokyo, JACCC (Japanese American Cultural & Community Center)

244 S. San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Total hours:** 15 hours

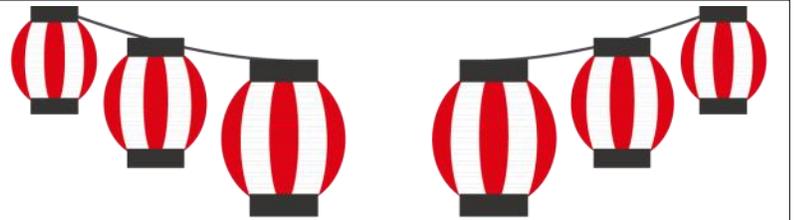
**Fee:** \$180.00 (Class materials included)

**Age:** 14 -18 years old

**Japanese proficiency level required:** none

**Class size:** 12 people\* (\*minimum of 4 people required)

For more information: <http://www.jflalc.org/summercamp.html>



### 2015 Obon Matsuri Schedule



**Zenshuji Soto Mission**  
July 11 - 12

**Nishi Hongwanji**  
July 11 - 12

**Pasadena Buddhist Temple**  
July 18 – 19

**Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple**  
July 18 - 19

**Sozenji Buddhist Temple**  
July 20

**Higashi Hongwanji**  
July 25 – 26

**West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple**  
July 25 – 26

### Little Tokyo Service Center's 9th Annual Sake & Food Tasting Event



**July 24, 2015**

For more information:  
<http://sake.ltsc.org/>



NISEI WEEK™

**Save The Date:  
Nisei Week**

**August 9-23, 2015**



### Japan Night at Dodgers stadium

Wednesday, July 8, 2015 at 7:10pm

Join the Nisei Week Foundation as they celebrate the Japanese American Community. Arrive early to see the Nisei Week Court recognized on the field and a very special member of the community throw out the first pitch. The first 40,000 ticketed fans will receive a Hello Kitty Plush!





### Sensei's Legacy, 40 Years Later

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai (Salamanca, Spain)

On my last visit to LA, I was fortunate to participate as usual in the annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar, an act that represents the spirit of tradition and respect for those who gave us so much as our teachers have.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of ACLA, and in the 40 years since Sensei started this long journey of learning and dissemination of Aikido, many students have passed through his hands, many have trained under and known Sensei and now that he no longer can guide us, we are fortunate that people continue his legacy and still

work today to keep the dojo going so that there are still classes every day, and that the classes are of quality and do Sensei proud, wherever he is now.

And I have to say it has not been an easy road. The leaders of ACLA have had to work for the interest and benefit of the dojo and not be subjected to pressures from individuals or groups seeking more self-interest and enrichment using the name of Sensei and his dojo. They have had to make difficult decisions which sometimes have not been welcomed by everyone; some people could not or would not understand their choices, and I have seen how former students, friends, and members of the dojo disassociated themselves for not sharing our leaders' mission and decided to find their own way. But despite these vicissitudes and setbacks this work is paying off and has resulted in the recognition of ACLA by Hombu Dojo as an officially listed Aikido organization, something that would have made Sensei very proud. And is that really is the main driver of this dojo: to keep the legacy of Sensei intact so that future generations can look back and see that the steps taken went in the right direction, with some stumbling now and then, but always pointing forward.

For all these things I want to thank all those members and friends of ACLA who bet on the dojo -- for giving your time and sometimes money and walking the difficult route to do the right thing and not the way of doing what your own ego might want, of striving against your own interest or personal gain.



### Congratulations and Thanks

by Javier Garcia Martin

Chief Instructor

Aikido Kodokai La Gomera

Dear ACLA members,

First of all, I would like to thank everyone for your kind and warm welcome once again. It's always a pleasure to share some time with you, training and making us feel at home even though we came from so far away.

I would also like to congratulate everyone at ACLA, on achieving Hombu Dojo recognition and all that that means. I can only imagine how it would be to achieve one of Sensei's dreams and how hard it had to be to get it. He, for sure, would be very proud of you and the work you are doing. Congratulations, too, to Ito Sensei for his 5th Dan; to Watanabe Sensei and Doi Sensei for their 6th Dans; to Watanabe Sensei, Doi Sensei, and Santiago Sensei for their *Shidoin*; and to Mike, Maria, and Mark for their *Fukushidoin* titles.

Last but not least, thank you all who made us feel so comfortable, the ones I met last year and those I just met, both on and off the mat. This year I've learned a lot, specially outside the mat and how the dojo does not end at the door of the building, and a glimpse of what representing a dojo means.



## 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 Flower and the Eye

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Today, my very good friend and daughter of the one of the great Kung Fu masters of the 20th Century is getting married. She was just a little baby in her mother's arms over 20 years ago when I first met her and now she is a beautiful young bride. I am so happy for her and offer her my congratulations and best wishes! She has really done well and I know that she has sacrificed much and worked very hard to reach this day.

At the same time, I feel so old to see how time flies so quickly by us! As I get older, it is so nice to see the younger generation take my place in the dojo. I am blessed with many great and skilled and honest students. Yes, blessed, indeed! But, looking around at this fast-paced, high-tech world today, my head is spinning and I retreat deeper into the sanctuary of my dojo. This is not the world for me. As my beloved Zen master often used to say, "Everything has its season."

Yes there is always the typical, age-old problem, isn't there? The young versus the old. In our society today, it always seems to be a problem that the young never respect their elders. But I have always educated and guided my students carefully in this to respect their elders in the dojo.

Yet, something occurred in the dojo which I never did anticipate ever – elders do not respect the younger generation! So much competition! So much envy and jealousy. So much wasted energy and pride. I don't know why anyone feels it necessary to compete with someone half their age. I don't know why it feels important to show off that this one is elder and that one is only a young punk.



Why do we have this motivation?

In Zeami's *Kadensho* ("The Transmission of the Flower"), he talks about the *Noh* drama and actors. Young actors have a natural beauty of face and form but as the years go by, they will lose this as they get older. Zeami goes on to say that older actors also have important roles which younger actors cannot play. As we age, we must express a different kind of beauty and wisdom and fulfill a different

kind of purpose in life. He calls this, *hana* (flower) or "wisdom".

As the young must learn to respect their elders, the older generation in turn must learn to cherish the next future generations. This again represents another kind of harmony we must practice continuously to refine and understand our Aikido training on the mats. It is O Sensei's rule: Do not compete in the dojo. Please follow this with your heart. We compete in many ways all the time in our lives. Some competition is good – especially when we compete

with ourselves to do better. Sometimes it helps to compete with our classmates or co-workers in the spirit to urge and encourage each other to do better. As in everything, how we approach competition – i.e., with a positive or negative attitude – makes all the difference.

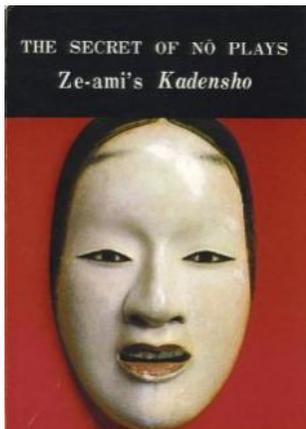
We know that we need to live together with each other to insure our survival on this earth. At the same time, learning how to get along with each other stands as one of the hardest and most challenging duties we have. We must focus on this in our daily practice. Then finally, maybe we can say, "I understand Aikido!"

As I get older, I have come to realize that the love and affection of a few of my students and friends has become the most important thing in the world for me. Nothing else really matters. If I could leave anything in this world, I would leave a little happiness for all of them to enjoy.

Young people seem so obsessed with themselves these days and expect everything to come so easy. We will do well to learn early on that everything we get we must earn. And when we finally achieve something after many years of hardship, it is not worth that much at all! How can we be proud and arrogant towards others? We should feel humble and modest. You might say to me then, "Why struggle if it appears meaningless in the end?" All struggle leads towards purification of the spirit; this transformation matters most in our lives above all else!

In all our practice and effort in Aikido, we will never see any reward, yet the reward is always there. Why can't we see it or know it? Because we have not opened our "eye of wisdom" and this is what it really is all about. Please keep up your practice!

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on May 3, 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**

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 Instructor's Intensive:  
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

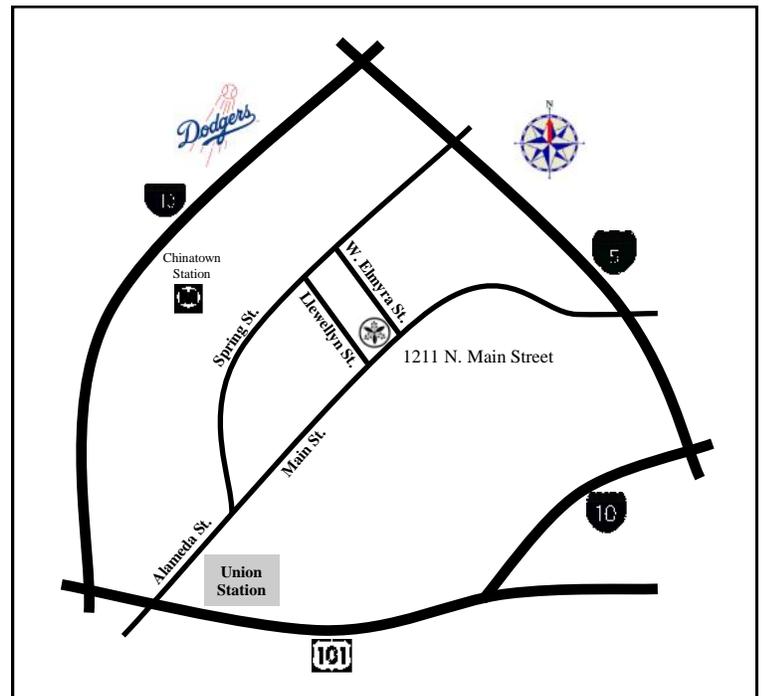
**Sundays**

7:45-8:45 AM

**Thursdays**

6:30-7:30 PM

*No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.*



*We are directly affiliated with:*

**AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

公益財団法人 合気会

**Aikido Hombu Dojo - Aikikai**

**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 also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.*

Publisher: David Ito  
Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich

**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.*