



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

Autumn has just about arrived as I write these lines – just north of LA, the leaves have begun to turn, and the sun shrinks behind the skyline rather earlier than it did just a few weeks ago. The heat here can't seem to decide whether it wants to stay a bit longer, or move on; today for instance, I enjoyed a bracing breeze that blew in from the east, while yesterday the air sat stifling, and made us all pout with it.



The students can't seem to decide whether to come or go either. Our enrollment seems higher than ever, and of course we appreciate all the support that means. Yet I must confess that it seems so strange, with so very many students, that our classes lately have had so much room in them. Life happens, certainly: whatever has kept you away from practice, I hope it resolves peacefully and in your favor, and that we see you here again soon.

Those who continue to train will continue to improve, and that recipe will never change. Our teaching staff serves as a key ingredient in that recipe; I hope they will forgive my boasting for them, since they would never do so themselves. Our instructors continue to amaze me with the depth and breadth of their knowledge, their passion to pass along Sensei's tradition, and their commitment to helping students develop. If you found yourself staying away because you feel a little intimidated or scared or turned off, then good! That means all you need to do is pack your gear bag . . . but leave out your ego, it's too big!

The discipline and tradition of training as well as teaching serves as our theme in this issue of *The Aiki Dojo*. I think it seems very fitting, not only because of our dojo's particular bent in that direction, but also as we commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Sensei's dear friend and mentor, Hideo Yonemochi Shihan, the former Head of Hombu

Dojo's International Department and a champion of ACLA in the dark days after Sensei's passing. You can see him in a reflective moment in the photograph here, chatting to Sensei off-camera during one of our seminars. His views on teaching

and training very much influenced Sensei's, so those of you who come to class benefit from his contributions every time you train.

Besides our humble tribute to Yonemochi Sensei, David Ito considers injury and its impact on our training as both challenge and opportunity. Elsewhere, we get a sneak peek at Wong Kar Wai's new film *The Grandmaster* and the lessons the filmmaker learned while making it. Our roving, snacking reporter, Maria Murakawa, gives us the inside scoop on another venerable LA eatery (or three) which our local readers (and any visitors) will want to visit. And finally, as we always do, we have Sensei visit us from the archives to share the work of a master painter, and give us a lesson on what it takes to teach, in the highest and best sense of the word.

Now that school has started again for the children, let's all get back into learning and our training. I'll see you on the mat!

Upcoming Events

September 2nd
Dojo Closed
Labor Day

September 28th
Instructor's intensive

October 26th
Instructor's intensive

October 27th
Children's Class
Halloween Party

November 28-29th
Dojo Closed
Thanksgiving

November 30th
Instructor's intensive

December 7th
Dojo Christmas Party

Fear/Hurts

by David Ito, Chief Instructor

Everyone gets injured at one time or another; it is an inevitable part of the learning process. Besides our teachers, injuries can teach us some of life's greatest lessons. Don't get me wrong: I am not glorifying getting hurt or hurting others. What I am saying is that injuries have a way of revealing our true inner nature and therefore give us the opportunity to grow and develop as a person.

By far the most common perspective we have towards injury is fear. It's only human nature to feel an aversion to getting injured or to feel pain. When we become injured it taps into our primal defense mechanism which in turn triggers our sense of mortality. The moment we realize that we are injured, the thought of being injured or even the possibility of death causes us to become afraid. That fear can manifest as any one of the normal reactions to stress: fight, flight, or freeze. Every one of us has a knee-jerk reaction pattern that we follow when we feel fear.

From a martial arts standpoint, injuries reveal character. When injury strikes, it creates an opportunity to build character or to gauge our current level. In our training, an injury can turn into a true gift, but it takes a shift in our perspective to appreciate its value. It all comes down to how we "see" misfortune. If we come from a high-minded place we can react with the highest qualities like honor, courage, humility, patience, or grace. If we come from a place of weakness then our reaction might be filled with the lowest of qualities like blame, anger, hatred, or self-doubt. How we react says a tremendous amount about our in most selves and quite possibly the things we need to develop. So the question is, What will we do or how will we react when something untoward happens to us?

In order to use an injury in a constructive way, the best question to ask ourselves is, "What is this injury trying to teach me?" When we can ask this one simple question, we take fear completely out of the equation and we come from a place of empowerment. Victims don't get to ask, nor do they get to choose. Martial artists feel empowered because they understand that how they react to adversity is a choice and that they are empowered not because they can hurt people, but because they choose to see things differently. The trick is in not giving into the fear, but to accept it. Once we can accept it, then we can address it. The bumps and bruises of life tend to add up but, if we suspend our usual response and instead try and breathe and ask ourselves, "What is this injury trying to teach me?" Adversity will then become our teacher instead of our usual enemy.

The first thing students who become injured must do is inform the teacher immediately. The teacher can then help them to manage the injury so that it doesn't get worse as well as how to prevent it from happening in the future. Secondly, if the injury is severe

enough students should seek medical advice. After consulting the teacher or senior students and, if necessary, a medical professional, the next thing to do is to continue to come to class. We might well ask why; simply put, our body might be injured but we have other ways to train.



Many people use injuries as an excuse not to come to class, but those people are missing a colossal opportunity to learn. Empirically, the best way to learn any art form is experientially or what is known as learning by doing. However, if we want to get a real change in perspective, then come to class and just watch. If we are careful and discriminating in how we "observe" the class we can see and hear things that we might not pick up as we are "taking" the class. This called *minarau* or "learning by observation." Sometimes we struggle with something for so long that all it takes is a change in perspective in order to see what we need to improve that someone has been telling us all along.

When life gives us lemons, let's make lemonade: this adage rings especially true with any adversity, but especially when it comes to injuries. Life is full of lessons if we choose to see them that way. The best martial artists of any genre know that the key to victory lies in keeping an open mind with the question, "What is this set back trying to teach me?" Life is what we make of it and how it unfolds is our choice. An injury is nothing more than a tool in the constant process of building and assessing our character. As the Greek philosopher Epictetus once wrote, "It is not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." In training, just as in life, a little rain must fall – don't allow it to define you or defeat you; instead, let it become your teacher.



Questions/Comments?

We welcome all questions and comments. Please send us a letter or an e-mail and our team will do our best to come up with an answer. We reserve the right to edit questions and letters for clarity and length.

Please e-mail submissions to:
info@aikidocenterla.com



Our Neighbors, Our Food

by Maria Murakawa, Aikido 3rd Dan

New beginnings at an old LA landmark



What could be as good as one hour towards enlightenment (a.k.a Aikido practice)? While many things may come to mind, food and eating rank at the top of my list. If I can practice for one hour, wouldn't it be great to eat for an hour straight? And what if that involved what Japanese call *tabearuki* – literally translated as *eating and walking*. Traditionally Japanese culture frowns upon eating while walking around in public, so the phrase actually means to try different foods at different restaurants. So I happily set off to one of LA's oldest landmarks, **Grand Central Market** to experience *tabearuki* in our neighborhood. Founded in 1917 in downtown's historic district, it is home to a variety of ethnic eats, mostly of Latino and old style Asian origin. Recently, much like the rest of downtown, trendy new eateries have called the market home, and I set out to experience if they were worth all the hype. So here is a rundown of my one hour at Grand Central Market eating at three different restaurants:

11AM: Valerie Grand Central Market



Famous for their jams and pastries, I was eager to start off my morning with one of their **Valerie's** hand pies and a salted caramel croissant. The kale, fresh ricotta, and smoked tomato hand pie (\$6) was dense with cooked kale, permeated with the smokiness of the tomatoes, and tasted almost too healthy if it wasn't for the ricotta adding a bit of milky richness and the buttery crust encasing the vegetal filling. The caramel croissant (\$3.50) actually looked like a danish, a square of puff pastry like dough with a dollop of thick caramel in the middle, then two corners folded over. It also disappointingly tasted like a danish. I guess I expected more of a French croissant – moist layers on the inside, crusty on the outside. Well, luckily, this was just an appetizer....

11:14AM: Sticky Rice

The produce is organic and the meats are free range at this Thai eatery – another sign of gentrification. The menu is spare – only 3 main dishes with a couple of specials. The dishes are also no frills but full of flavor. I had the Beef Panang with Coconut Rice (\$8). It was simply curry, beef, and rice, but hands down the best meal I had during this hour. The beef, which is stewed for two to three hours is fall-apart tender. The curry is smooth and thick, like an exotic *veloute*: broth and fat, spices and coconut milk blended in perfect harmony. The rice perfumed with coconut milk was not too sticky and clumpy, but each grain was *al dente*, and offered a nice chewy contrast to the creamy curry.



11:45AM: Horse Thief BBQ

The smell of smoked meats has invaded the market, and it even greets you as you drive into the parking structure. **Horse Thief BBQ** is the culprit, as they smoke their dry rubbed meats over oak wood on site for 12 to 15 hours. The brisket (\$6 for 1/4 lb.) is the go to at this Texas – style BBQ joint. Each slice is tender and succulent, falling apart with every forkful before it even gets to your mouth. Sweet and tangy BBQ sauce is on the side to finish off every morsel. As a side I experienced the Mac + Cheese (\$6.50). Corkscrew shaped macaroni was enrobed in creamy *béchamel*, topped with a crust of white cheddar. The cheddar was a good quality, a little more of that with less *béchamel* would've been nice.



So what did I gain from this experience? That actually one hour of practice feels better afterwards than one hour of devouring.



Grand Central Market
317 S. Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90013
www.grandcentralmarket.com



Remembering Yonemochi Sensei

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Students and friends of 30-40 years: there is no greater, and rarer, treasure in life.

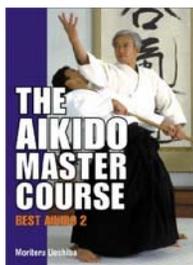
I have known Yonemochi Sensei since 1969 and my respect and appreciation for him only continues to grow and grow. He is not the type of person who has tried to promote himself or has tried to make himself successful and famous. Like a true student of the Way, he has committed his life to serving the Ueshiba family and the Aikikai Foundation as O Sensei's final wish. A life in service of others, especially for a cause such as

Aikido, is by far greater than a life which only focuses on one's own ego and personal agenda. Why has he come so far in the Aikido world? Because he is completely trustworthy and reliable. I hope all my students will learn from this great teacher a lesson, which only so very few in this world can possibly teach.

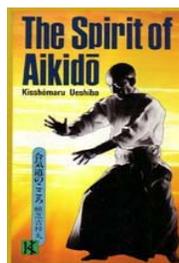
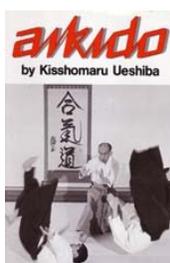
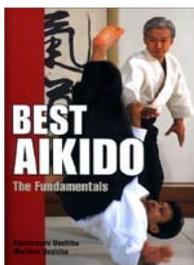
Many cannot see or understand this, I know, because their vision of the greater aspects of life and of this world is much too small and self-centered.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published these remarks, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on April 28, 2004.

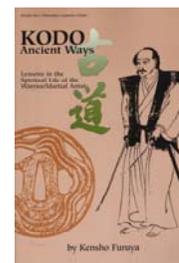
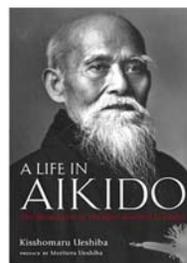
Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



by Kensho Furuya



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

1211 N. Main Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012 USA
Telephone: 323-225-1424
E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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

The ACLA Welcomes its Newest Member!



Theodore Becker

Born on August 29, 2013 at 12:37 PM
8 lbs 4oz and 21 inches

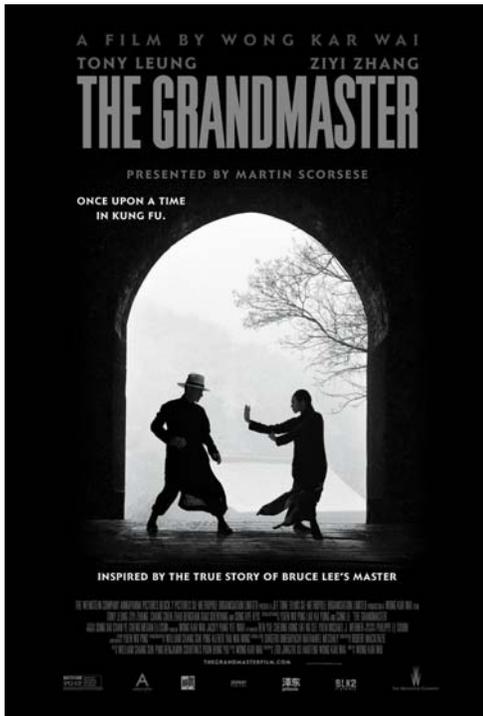
**Congratulations and best wishes
to the Becker family!**

In Memoriam
Hideo Yonemochi Shihan
June 16, 1930 – September 10, 2012



Movie Review:***The Grandmaster and the Call of Tradition***

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor



The Grandmaster was directed by Wong Kar Wai, who wanted to make a movie that resembled the Chinese Kung fu movies of the past. He tried to be meticulous about every detail, from the cinematography to the clothes, and even purposefully used very little wire work and tried to keep the Kung fu authentic by utilizing the talents of real Kung fu masters. The main actors studied their respective styles intensively for two years with those masters to prepare for their roles and the masters kept on set to give expert advice on the fight scenes as well as to how the actors should carry themselves.

In a recent interview, Wong Kar Wai talked about the movie taking place at an end of the era at a time where traditional values were being replaced by more modern, Westernized value system. He explained how he tried to show the beauty and benefit of studying Kung fu with the depth of each of his characters; the formality with which they carried themselves demonstrated their strength and not just their Kung fu skill.

Wong Kar Wai said that he chose the title because a teacher's job is one of a custodian, preserving something for future generations – a kind of legacy. The legacy is not for the teacher, but for the art. Therefore, a grandmaster not only practices the art, but preserves the art for future generations as well. While writing this movie, Wong Kar Wai came up with three qualities that a person needs to have in order to become a grandmaster:

A grandmaster needs to have skill or talent and be a great fighter.

A grandmaster needs to have vision.

A grandmaster needs to be generous in order to share the art with future generations.

The Grandmaster offers a kind of siren song that lures people back to traditional values of a bygone era. As a teacher and a practitioner of Aikido I can relate to the message of this movie in that teaching is not about me but about the legacy of the art. If I make it about me, the art will fail. If I make it about the art, it will survive for future generations.

Here's some more background about the movie from the film's website (thegrandmasterfilm.com.)

It begins as the story of Ip Man (Tony Leung), the legendary teacher of Bruce Lee and a master of the Wing Chun school of kung-fu. It becomes the portrait of a bygone era and a lost world.

Ip Man was born in Foshan, in the south of China, to a wealthy family. His wife Zhang Yongcheng (Song Hye Kyo) is the descendant of Manchu nobility. Pursuing a single-minded passion for Wing Chun, Ip Man is often seen at the Gold Pavilion, an elegant brothel that serves as a meeting place for Foshan's kung-fu masters and whose women possess a few martial arts secrets of their own.

In 1936, China is experiencing political turbulence and the threat of division. The Japanese have invaded the northeastern provinces collectively known as Manchuria. Grandmaster Gong Baosen (Wang Qingxiang), whose home is in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, and who is the leader of the martial arts world of Northern China, arrives in Foshan. He had been to Foshan previously to initiate exchanges between the martial artists of the North and those of the South but this time he has come at the invitation of the Southern masters to hold a ceremony at the Gold Pavilion to celebrate his impending retirement.

An integral part of the ceremony involves a challenge and display of martial arts skills with a younger man. During a similar ceremony held at home in the Northeast, Gong's disciple and successor Ma San (Zhang Jin), a Xingyi master, performed this role. Master Gong's daughter Gong Er (Ziyi Zhang), who is the sole inheritor of her father's lethal Bagua-style '64 Hands' technique, also arrives in Foshan to witness her father step down. It is here where she encounters Ip Man. Who is qualified to take up the Old Master's challenge? Challenge leads to challenge, and masters contest masters.

Meanwhile, the ongoing Japanese occupation of the Northeast sets the stage for a betrayal that will shake Master Gong's world. It will also cause Gong Er to make a decision that will change the course of her life.

Gong Er and Ip Man meet again in Hong Kong in the 1950s; a new world populated by old alliances, lasting grievances, and fragments of past lives and desires. Ip Man, despite having lived through difficult and terrible times after the Japanese invaded Foshan, will not be defeated by hardship. He opens a school for Wing Chun in Hong Kong and soon acquires devoted disciples (including, in reality, Bruce Lee) and popularizes this form of kung-fu: it has spread throughout the world and remains popular to this day, taught in countless schools all over the world.

What It Takes to Teach

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Shakyamuni Buddha, The Teacher

This is an interesting painting by Hakuin, one of the great Zen priests of the feudal age. His influence was very wide and his paintings are very well known and sought after. When I visited the museum of Takeda Shingen, I was surprised to see two Hakuin works displayed in the main room.

This is a depiction of Shakyamuni Buddha descending the mountain, looking very haggard and thin from many austere and very severe disciplines. It is from this time that Buddha discovered the “Middle Path” after a great enlightenment.

This Middle Path is a greater, broader view of discipline. In one sense, we undergo difficult training in order to develop ourselves and make our ourselves stronger and more skillful. In the case of Buddhism, it is to discover or unfold our own enlightenment. This can become a very self-serving and egotistical practice so it always demands we exercise great care and awareness.

In the Middle Path however, the emphasis shifts beyond not only the “perfection” of one’s self, but, at the same time, the perfection or enlightenment of all living beings. In other words, we struggle not simply for ourselves, but everyone and everything at the same time. . . . In Buddhism, this is called the Bodhisattva Path or Vow of the Bodhisattva. A *Bodhisattva* is a “near” Buddha or someone who is ready to take the final step into total enlightenment but who, out of compassion for all other human beings, derived from great wisdom (*prajna paramita*), stays back with a vow to ensure that all other human beings become “saved” or “enlightened” first.

Through the ages, this has become one of the great influences of “what is a teacher today” in Eastern culture. There are two great sources of the heritage of the teacher: one comes from Confucianism, and one from Buddhism as I have just mentioned. In Confucianism, the teacher derives from the concept of *chun-tze* or the “scholar-gentleman”. He devotes himself to education and study and uses this for the good of society, and models correct action and behavior by following the examples set by great figures and teachers of the past. In this tradition, we have developed the ideas of virtue (courage, righteousness, loyalty, filial piety, compassion, etc.) and following great examples of the past teachers and masters. This how we have come to respect the past and tradition in our method of teaching. From Buddhism, we derive the idea of enlightenment of the self but, more importantly, the enlightenment of all sentient living beings at the same time.

What is a teacher? In my own dojo, I would like all my assistants to throw away their previous concepts of a teacher. Teaching in Aikido, or any martial arts for that matter, as I understand it, has nothing to do with politics or power. Being a teacher is not to show one’s superiority or authority or privilege to others; that mindset only becomes self-serving anarchy.



When we get promoted or begin to wear the black belt or go higher in rank, we can easily begin to feel arrogant and proud and try to influence or show off to junior students. This is very bad and despicable. I really hate to see this behavior in the dojo. Some people think that advancement means they have carte blanche and can do anything they please in the dojo or with other students this – attitude is very bad as well. Today, many teachers use their position politically to increase their influence or power or prestige. This is not the job of a teacher, only that of a performer or politician.

Teaching requires humility and the strong desire to achieve this enlightenment in all sentient beings; teaching, in effect, becomes a discipline in selflessness and humility. In this respect, teaching becomes a great form of spiritual discipline.

Even after much difficult and hard training, Shakyamuni Buddha remained unsatisfied and still sought after the great enlightenment. When he discovered that everyone and the whole world is connected integrally and our own enlightenment is that of all others at the same time, he found great peace and completion.

Nowadays, I need more and more assistant instructors to help teach students in the dojo and to send out abroad. To become an assistant instructor requires great technical skill and expertise in the art of course, but other human qualities as well. In teaching, we cannot just model techniques and strength, but serve as a model of a good human being and demonstrate the qualities of what makes a good Aikidoist.

As the senior teacher, I need assurance and trust from my assistants. I would like to feel comfortable that I can leave my precious students with these people and not have to worry about anything at all, because I know that they will teach well and to the best of their ability. I know that they will not start doing strange and exotic antics simply to show off their skill or push people around to demonstrate their authority and power. A good assistant is modest, not pushy; strong but gentle; wise but not arrogant; a hard-worker but sympathetic; and strict, but compassionate at the same time. All of these qualities are hard to find in a person, so the person who teaches Aikido is a very special one, indeed.

Teaching Aikido is a great responsibility and embraces the spirit of the Vow of the Bodhisattva to save all others before one’s own self. I hope you will feel inspired by the Hakuin’s painting of Shakyamuni descending the mountain all tired and worn, because only through this kind of effort can one become a good teacher for his students.

Editor’s Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, on his daily message board on June 14, 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

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced*

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Intermediate

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 Advanced*

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

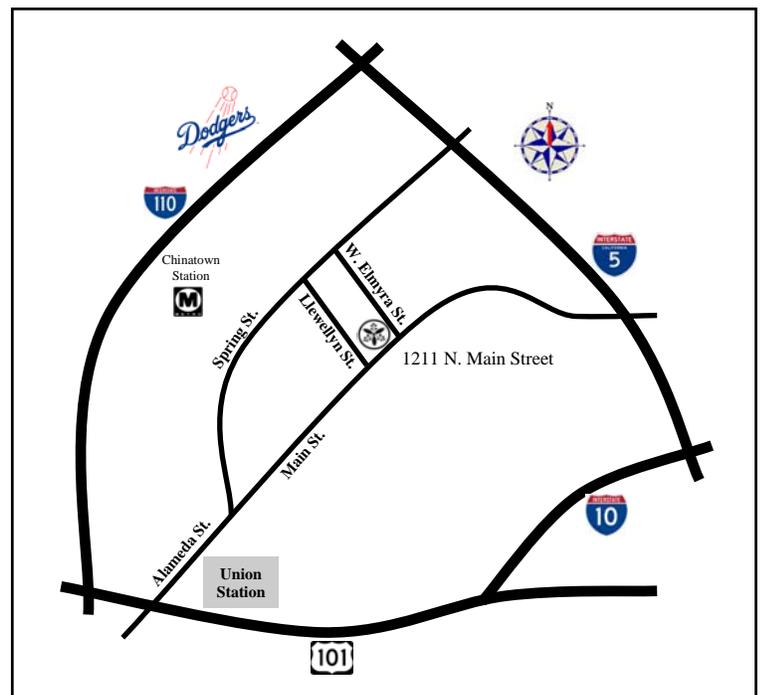
Sundays

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.

Official Branch Dojo:



Aikido Kodokai

Salamanca, Spain

Chief Instructor: Santiago Garcia Almaraz

www.kodokai.com

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles does not recognize or is affiliated with any other dojo, school, or entity.

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.