Aikido Center of Los Angeles, LLC, 1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Tel: (323) 225-1424 www.aikidocenterla.com



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 & Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai Furuya Foundation

September 2009

Volume XXVII Number 9



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September 4 & 7: Labor Day: Dojo closed

September 26:

Instructor's intensive

November 1:

Children's class Halloween party (everyone is invited to attend)

November 26-27: Dojo closed for Thanksgiving

November 28: Instructor's intensive

December 5: Dojo Christmas party



Ken Watanabe demonstrating Ryuto

True Change

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

"How long does it take to become a black belt?" is the question most people ask when they come to watch class. It is not that people are disingenuous about their training but more that they are naïve about what Aikido is about. They believe that attaining a black belt is the destination or a ticket to Nirvana, but it is really only the beginning.

I took my Shodan test in 1994 and it was the hardest 27 minutes of my life. It was physically and mentally grueling. I spent more than a year preparing for my test and another year serving as *uke* for other people as they prepared for their tests, so I knew what to expect and I knew that it was going to be harsh.

Bokken Practice

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

I think that visiting aikidoka may find our bokken class odd-looking. Many who have learned the Iwama style of Saito Sensei's aikiken probably find it strange indeed. Sensei often remarked that the way he taught bokken was different than what might be called the traditional aikiken as was demonstrated by Saito Sensei. There is no doubt that Saito Sensei was a great Aikido master and that his excellent aikiken is the standard that the majority of Aikido students follow. But it was always Sensei's philosophy that a bokken, as much as possible, be treated like an actual sword; and in turn, aikiken should be treated as if actual swords are used.

Continued on page 4...

Continued on page 2...

August Shodan Examinations



Pablo Madruga Hildago



True Change continued from page 1...



I felt like it was going to be one of those lifechanging events and my daydreams were sown with great hopes and anticipation of life after passing the test. I believed that once I passed, my life would miraculously change: people would say, "Hey, is there something different about

you?" and, with an affirming nod and grin, I would say to myself, "Damn right, I am a black belt in Aikido now!" I really did believe that I would come out of the test a changed man, new and

improved. The rather shy person who lacked selfconfidence going in would emerge from that rite of

"True change rarely occurs instantaneously but instead solve to train builds integresults from accumulated hard work over time."

passage a titan among men. I even had my life all planned out directly after the test; I would immediately go ask out this girl that I had a crush on, and of course she would say yes, having keenly sensed that something was now different about me. That was going to be the first day of the rest of my life.

However, to my chagrin, things didn't quite go as I planned. I did pass and did well on the test, but when I dragged my tired beaten body out to my car, I noticed that I didn't feel any different. Funny, I envisioned this moment being a tad bit different. I even gazed into my rearview mirror and, to my surprise, I looked exactly the same. To my utter disbelief, everything remained the same as it was going into the test. I couldn't believe that nothing happened. Where was the magic? Where was the transformation? Did I somehow forget a crucial step of the test? Dejected, I returned home to little fanfare with no balloons, fireworks, parades or even a party. When I told my mom I passed, she said,



Salim Suliman Criado



"Great job; your dinner is in the oven." After passing the test some things did change, the old me got scolded more by Sensei and beat up more by the other black belts and, regrettably, I never did find the courage to ask out that girl.

I am sure many of you think the same way or have had a similar experience at one time or another. We tend to assume that this type of immature magic-pill thinking happens only when we are young, but I see it all the time in the dojo with new and old students. They think, "If I do this, I will get that." Our happiness becomes contingent upon an event, thing, person, or colored belt. This is where our thinking leads us astray. Receiving your black belt won't give you more confidence; that is something you acquired long ago, many years before you even passed your black belt test.

Sensei used to say that training is its own reward and that it builds spiritual merit. Spiritual merit is the stuff that character is

> made of; having the rerity. Brian Tracy said that integrity is the thing that

ensures character. Aikido training is about building character. True change rarely occurs instantaneously but instead results from accumulated hard work over time. It would be nice if it was instantaneous learning, as if touching a hot stove, but life is not like that. Aikido can be a wonderful lifetime journey. Please don't let your journey end by thinking that getting your black belt will get you something. Please aspire to get more out of your life.

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Published by Aikido Center of Los Angeles 1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 Tel: (323) 225-1424

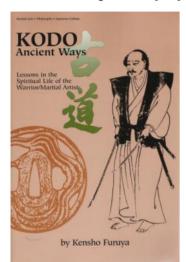
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Kodo: Ancient Ways:

Lessons in the spiritual life of the warrior



by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Highly recommended for all students of the Doio.

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.

The Aiki Dojo Newsletter

Publisher: David Ito Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich Photographer: Larry Armstrong

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Hacienda Heights, California Chief Instructor: Tom Williams

Aikido Kodokai

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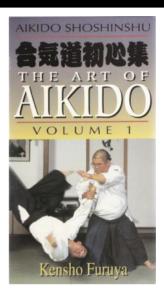
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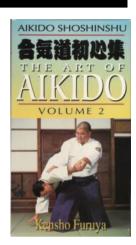
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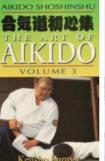
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This video series is considered the most comprehensive and detailed instructional video on Aikido available today. Clear depiction of each technique and very detailed explanation of all of the fine points.

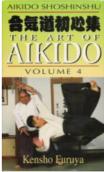




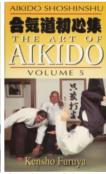
Basic Techniques Throwing & Joint Techniques, Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo



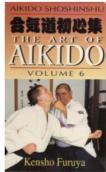
Ukemi-Breakfalling Basics Continued Free Style Techniques Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



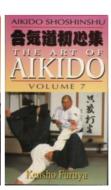
Katatetori Ryotemochi: Ryotetori: 2-hand attack. Reigi-saho: Etiquette. Koshinage-Hip throws



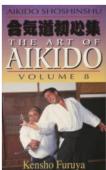
Suwari-waza. Gokyo. Hanmi-handachi. Kokyu-dosa. Katatori: Shoulder attacks Multiple attackers.



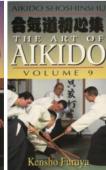
Tsuki: Strikes & punches Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side of the head & neck



Ushiro Katatetori Kubishime: Chokes from behind. Ushiro Ryotetori, Ryohijitori, & Ryokatatori



Atemi-waza: Striking Defense against kicks Tanto-tori: Knife defense. Aiki-ken: Sword Training.



Jo: Basic short staff Fundamentals Complete 1st Degree Black Belt (Shodan) Examination

Bokken Practice continued from page 1...



Sensei lecturing at the dojo on the topic of Japanese swords

In addition to the original purpose of aikiken, which is to improve one's Aikido technique. Sensei felt that lessons of actual swordsmanship could be learned as well. Obviously there are movements in aikiken, and Kendo as well, that one would never do in real swordsmanship, but to the greatest extent possible bokken training should reflect the same principles necessary for good swordsmanship. Sensei felt that a bokken could be just as dangerous as a real sword and should be treated with the same respect. Sensei's bokken teaching was not only influenced by his Aikido training at Iwama, but also

his Kendo and Iaido training. It is important to understand the basis of a different approach and philosophy in our training, especially when we train with other sensei.

When we observe Saito Sensei's cut, he teaches that the hands arrive at the end of the movement and then the tip of the bokken follows. Sensei always made it clear that this technique was for safety purposes to insure the cutting motion stopped before contact was made. Sensei taught that we should cut as we would with an actual sword, but stop short of contact, with our hands and tip arriving and stopping at the same time. This way requires great control of the bokken and sword to insure that injury does not occur. This is an important distinction: the primary purpose of moving the sword is to cut, even if there is no sharp edge to the bokken.

Another large difference is the degree in which the tip drops in the back when raising the weapon to cut. Many aikidoka, especially those following Saito Sensei's techniques, will drop the tip of the bokken very much, almost to the point of touching their backside. Sensei related a story when he was studying Kendo: during practice, one of the students made a kirioroshi men attack against his Kendo sensei, dropping the tip of the shinai way behind his back. His sensei quickly countered with a powerful tsuki to the student's throat protector. The student, according to Sensei, was instantly airborne, knocked back ten feet from his original attack position. The lesson was quickly learned: an attacker is in the most vulnerable position when the sword tip drops behind the back, especially to a tsuki counterattack. The more it drops, the longer the attacker remains in that open position. Of course, one sees many sword demonstrations both for Iaido and tameshigiri with the tip dropped below the head; Sensei's comment on tameshigiri was that the rolled-up straw was not about to cut back, so it was safe to drop the tip.

Many years ago, Sensei and I went to see a demonstration of Iaido by a teacher who was promoting a book he had just published. Each technique was methodical, with each overhead cut done with the tip dropped way below the back of the head. Each of those cuts made an impressively loud "swoosh" sound. After the demonstration, Sensei asked me what I thought of it. The first thing I said was that I thought his form was very good, but I didn't get a sense that it displayed a martial art. "Exactly!" was Sensei's response. He felt the technique lacked its martial aspect when the tip was dropped; the opponent was "lost" in the process. Obviously that day in Kendo practice made a lasting impression on Sensei and was influential in how he would teach in the future.

Because Sensei was exposed to different forms, he encouraged other traditions to be taught in bokken class, not just aikiken. This is why we have added other forms to the curriculum. The inclusion of these forms can give one a broader view and understanding of swordsmanship's timing and spacing, *maai* in Japanese terms. Without understanding this space/time relationship, practicing kumitachi forms becomes meaningless. It is important to understand the difference between inclusion and infusion. Understanding each tradition on its on without mish-mashing techniques is important and non-confusing. This is sometimes difficult to do in an age when the word "mixed" is sometimes considered better or more advanced.

I have always found it counterproductive to get into a debate over what form is right and what form is wrong. Each tradition has its own differences, which defines it. Each has its place in the understanding of swordsmanship movements. Does one school of tea ceremony excel over another just because of differences in folding a napkin? Even in the same tradition such as Muso Shinden Ryu Iaido, we find that something as fundamental as the grip can be interpreted differently. Yet there are these long and sometimes acrimonious debates, especially in the anonymity of the Internet, over whose martial art school or technique is better. To me it is pointless and a waste of energy.

While there is nothing wrong with having a proprietary feeling toward and pride about the techniques you are being taught, don't fall into the trap that yours is the one and only way. There are always going to be different philosophies espoused by different instructors, dependent on their prior experience with their own teachers. In the course of visiting other dojos and other teachers visiting ours, you will all get exposed to different teaching philosophies. One can learn these and appreciate them as another approach to the technique. As long as these differences do not compromise your fundamentals, it is right and proper to practice them in that context. That is why it is important to understand other teacher's backgrounds so you understand their teaching perspective. That is certainly why we are fortunate that Sensei devoted his life in the study of many martial art philosophies and their practical application into the techniques.

Aspiration and Hunger

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Without respect for tradition, you will lose it. If you lose the tradition, you lose the heart of the teachings. We believe we only throw out what we don't need, but in actuality, we discard what we don't understand. Why are we afraid of what we don't understand? In reality, we are afraid of understanding itself, because understanding dissolves the ego. Our egos are the greatest gift

from God, because our egos are the key to our mortality and the mysterious path to our own humanity.

Nowadays, I have to change my thinking and I believe that "aspiration" is not enough for students. Or, perhaps, students only understand aspiration to learn at an intellectual level only. It is not deep enough to do any real good. Nowadays, I think students need to be "hungry" for the art. When you are hungry and do not get something to eat, you begin to feel pain in your stomach and head. You begin to get weak and feel bad inside. This is hunger. When you feel hunger for Aikido then we call this hunger real "Aspiration!"

We live in such a great country here that no one knows what hun-

ger is. This is a great thing because I heard that over 65% of the young children in this world today go without something to eat, and very many are starving to death. From where we are in this beautiful country, we can hardly believe such a fact of life. Although it is good to forget or relieve physical hunger, I think it is good to have "spiritual" hunger. I am afraid to say that more than 65% of both children and adults, like ourselves, are starving to death from "spiritual hunger." We know how to cure physical hunger by food, but we still have many problems trying to feed so many. My friend spends so much money, time and sweat to send food to children in her home country in South America but she still encounters so many problems with politics and people. Curing spiritual hunger is much more difficult and a much more subtle problem. We are starving spiritually but do not feel or recognize the pain it causes!

The other day, someone asked me how to practice and get the most out of it. I think this is an obvious question but such a simple point really eludes most of us! To this degree, we have become so misdirected and confused about our training! I simply said to practice hard and enjoy it. These are not my words; they come from Sen-no-Rikyu, the patriarch of the Japanese tea ceremony who lived about 450 years ago. A student asked him, "What is the secret of mastering the tea ceremony?" Sen-no-Rikyu said, "Simply make your guest the very best cup of tea ever." In our Aikido, each time we practice, we should make it

the very best practice we ever had, just as the student was advised to make the very best cup of tea for his guest each time. This is true mastery of the art of tea; this is true mastery of the art of Aikido! There is nothing else outside of this!

A very hungry person will take what is in front of him and eat it right away and be so grateful! Aikidoists today pick and choose, chitchat about this and that, like they are royalty at a huge banquet! Because Aikidoists are not "hungry" they can afford to pick

and choose and in this process, they become lost and misguided. The very hungry man will go directly to the point! Can you understand what I am talking about?

When I was practicing tea, I tried to make the very best cup of tea I could each time but there was always a mistake, there was always something missing. There was always something I overlooked or forgot about. If something unexpected occurred, then I would get completely messed up! I think Aikido students feel the same way today in practice. There is only one cure - practice!

Speaking of tea, many years ago, the Grandmaster of tea came to

this country to give a demonstration of tea and we all went to study this art from him. As he approached the tea kettle and sat down, he and we, at the same time, realized that he had forgotten his fukusa or small towel used to wipe and purify each tea utensil. This is a great, unforgivable sin! We were all in shock! As if nothing had happened at all and as if it was the most natural thing in the world, he stood up, left, and returned with his *fukusa* tucked in at his *obi*, just as it should be, and began to prepare the tea. How impressed we were! Another time, another teacher sat down to begin the tea ceremony and when she removed the lid from the tea kettle, realized that there was no hot water! She became paralyzed in shock and we all realized what had happened! Suddenly, she began to yell at her students for such a mistake. When I saw this, I knew that she was not shocked at all and entirely composed at such a mistake because she is a real veteran. I knew she was yelling to wake up all her sleeping students. Again, when you are "hungry" for the art, you cannot sleep! It is just like trying to fall asleep when you are physically hungry! I feel in both instances, the teachers did the correct thing!

The next time you come to the dojo, please be awake and be hungry!

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared, in slight ly different form, as a posting on Sensei's daily message on the ACLA Web site on September 30, 2002.



"When you feel hunger for Aikido then we call this hunger real 'Aspiration!"

Visiting Spain and Portugal

by Tom Williams, Aikido 4th Dan Chief Instructor, Hacienda La Puente Aikikai

We had the pleasure of visiting with Santiago Garcia Almaraz of Aikido Kodokai in Salamanca recently during part of our trip to Spain and Portugal. Santiago Sensei generously picked us up from the train station and delivered us to our hotel. Then he arranged a special Aikido class the next morning at his dojo.

The Salamanca dojo is very nice. Similar to our old dojo, it is compact and filled with beautiful things in every nook and corner. The windows that line two of the walls let in soft, natural light. We had a bit of rainfall that morning, so the streets were wet and the morning air cool.

As class progressed, the temperature and humidity level in the dojo rose with the level of activity. We covered kihon waza: ikkyo, kotegaeshi, irimi nage and kokyu nage. The class has been very well trained by Santiago Sensei and caught the minor points of emphasis I had for the basic technique.

After class, we went to a shopping area for lunch. I think it was a little different experience for some of them as we asked for salads rather than the usual meaty meal and ended up at a salad/pasta buffet. (At least the one vegetarian in the group was at home. He didn't have to push the meat aside on his plate.) I had to explain what 1000 island dressing was to one the guys and he seemed to be willing to try it next time. If you like steak and pork, though, it is quite incredibly good!

Salamanca is a beautiful city. Situated on a hill above the Tormes River and accessed by a Roman bridge, it is a medieval university town with one of the nicest plazas I've ever seen. The people are friendly and energetic, the food absolutely fantastic and the compact city center easily walkable.

Before Salamanca, we had been in Madrid. That, too, was a fun place with crowds of people out and about; no sign of recession that I could see! I had the chance to train at Aikido Madrid in the dojo of Tomas Sanchez Sensei, although Sensei himself wasn't there that night. It was a good, vigorous

workout, Aikikai style, and afterwards we went out for beer and tapas with the instructor, Octavio, and another senior student. We spent an enjoyable late evening talking about Spain, its current state, politics, taxes, immigration, etc. -- the same issues we deal with here. It seems globalization has shrunken our world considerably. Finally, Octavio's wife called him to find out where he was and so we said our goodbyes as the taxi collected us and took us home. Great times with new Aikido friends, as usual.

We continued our trek to Porto in northern Portugal, an old city founded on the bank of the River Douro and steeped in the port wine trade. We took a river cruise 110 kilometers up the Douro to the wine region and disembarked in Regoa, a center of the wine growing region. Portugal is awesome and a bit more rugged and rustic than most of the parts of Spain which we visited. The seafood was superb, and of course accompanied by vinho do casa. We stayed a bit south of Porto just outside of a seaside town called Espinho. It is a very nice surf town with a number of good breaks nearby. Unfortunately, this wasn't a surf vacation, but a return trip will definitely be in order to check that out!

From Porto we caught a train to Lisboa. Built on a series of hills, Lisbon is a fantastic, old, frenetic, multicultural port town. We visited many of the well-known neighborhoods on foot, exploring castles, cathedrals, and narrow hilly streets in ancient city sections. We also took the train outside the city center to the seaside resort of Cascais and the mountainous, World Heritage site city of Sintra. We'll be back to Lisbon for sure, since we loved it there.

Many thanks to Santiago Sensei and Sanchez Sensei for their hospitality, and helping to make this trip a memorable one!





JAPANESE LESSON

Ogenki desu ka?: Are you in good health?

Pronounced: Oh-geh-n-key-deh-sue-kah?

お元気ですか?

日本語

Genki means *in good health*. Ogenki desu ka? translates from Japanese as *How are you*, *How is your health* or *Are you well*? The Japanese use Ogenki desu ka? in the same way Americans use the phrase *How are you*? The kanji for gen 元 is made up of the top line representing heaven —, the second line symbolizing earth — and the two legs symbolizing man \land . The other character you might recognize as ki 気 with the radical for steam or energy 气 and the radical for rice \divideontimes (note: this has been modified over the years from 氣 to 気). In Japanese as with most cultures it is not polite to reply with anything other than Genki desu or *I am fine* because you don't want to burden others with your problems.



Sample dialogue:

Mr. Jones: Brown san, Ogenki desu ka? Mr. Brown: Okagesama genki desu. Mr. Brown: Jones san, ogenki desu ka? Mr. Jones: Watashi mo genki desu.

Formal vs. informal

Ogenki de irasshaimasu ka? (formal) Okagesama genki desu. (formal)

Genki? (informal) Un, genki. (informal)



Dojo Training Tip





Tip: Smelly Uniforms

This summer seems more humid than years before. The rise in humidity leads to more sweating and even sweatier keiko-gis or uniforms. Nothing is worse during these hotter months than when your uniform starts to stink. You start to sweat and that's when you start to smell an unappealing aroma. You look around, but then that sinking feeling sets in

when you realize that smell is you. It happens to everyone and it is easy to fix. I am sure you wash your keiko-gi and maybe even use bleach from time to time. After you wash your uniform it might smell good, but as soon as you start to sweat, it starts to smell again. The mildew or bad smell coming off your uniform comes from bacteria and it is aggravated if you accidentally forget to take your uniform out of your bag when you get home and leave it in there for awhile. Sometimes bleaching your uniform may remove the smell, but it likely comes right back. Not to mention using bleach shortens your uniform's durability and longevity. This is a problem that is common to household towels. An easy solution is to add one and a half cup of white vinegar to your detergent and wash your uniform in hot water. Studies show that white vinegar kills most bacteria, molds and viruses. It is an easy way to remove that set-in uniform odor.

I suggest this six-step process for tough, smelly uniforms:

- 1. Add one and a half cups of white vinegar to your detergent.
- 2. Use a fabric softener.
- 3. Wash your uniform in hot water.
- 4. Add an extra or extended rinse cycle to your wash.
- 5. Dry your uniforms on warm or medium <u>twice</u>. (hot causes them to shrink)
- Repeat the whole process again if necessary to remove residual mildew or vinegar smell.

Other things you can do to keep your uniforms from smelling are:

- Hang up your uniform when you get home if you are not going to wash it right away.
- Refrain from wearing your uniform more than once without washing it.
- Try spraying your uniform with Febreeze if you are going to wear it more than once.
- Wear an under shirt. (it should be white)
- Don't wipe your face on your sleeve. (It's bad manners anyway.)
- Wash your uniforms with vinegar at least once every three months or as needed.

Aikido training schedule

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class 10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals 6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals 6:30-7:30 PM Open 7:45-8:45 PM Weapons

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Bokken

Fridays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals 6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open 10:40-11:40 AM Open

6:30 AM Instructor's Intensive: last Saturday of the month.*

* This class is not open for visitors to watch.



Meditation Class

Saturdays: 12:00-1:30 PM

(This class is open to the public and is free of charge.)

We are directly affiliated with: AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Aikido So-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.

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles 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 ACLA 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.

Iaido training schedule

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays:

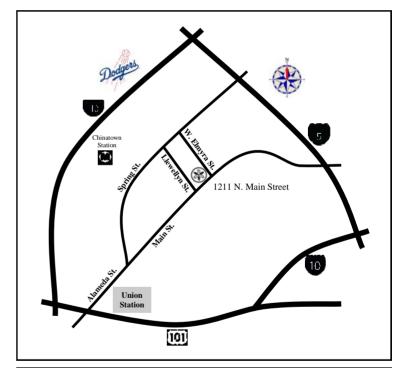
7:15-8:15 AM Beginning 8:15-9:15 AM Intermediate-Advanced

Sundays: 7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays: 6:30-7:30 PM (Bokken Practice)

7:30-8:30 PM

No classes on the last weekend of the month.



(%) Finding Our Dojo (%)



We are located at 1211 N. Main Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: (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 anytime during any of our Open or Fundamental classes. Please come early.