

# 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

August 2015

Volume XXXIV Number 8

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## Upcoming Events

**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

**September 7th:**  
Labor Day  
Dojo Closed

**September 26th:**  
Instructor's intensive

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

As the summer days glide by, it seems hard to believe that we've less than six months left in the year. It seems only yesterday that we welcomed the Year of the Ram, yet within a few short weeks vacations will end, school years will begin, and we'll (hopefully) get some relief from the heat. With so many students taking time away with family and friends, we appreciate those hardy souls who continue to keep up their regular practice. In that spirit, I'd like to extend hearty congratulations to those candidates who successfully tested last month. Please use your achievement not as a couch on which to rest, but as a springboard to propel yourself forward and develop further in your training.

Steeped as we think we are in the Way, it takes so little to stray from the path. Something as simple as the weather – first it's too

hot, then it's too cold – will undercut our efforts, but only if we let it. Constant vigilance seems the order of the day, especially when we allow our days to feel so full due to our wasteful misuse of precious time.

In this issue of *The Aiki Dojo*, we look at the various pitfalls to training that prevail today. As with most things, mindset plays a pivotal role: David Ito ponders the Digital Age impact on martial arts traditions and weighs the difference between readily available information versus hard won knowledge. Ken Watanabe gives us an overview of some of Miyamoto Mushashi's epithets and puts them (and us) in the proper context. And once again Sensei comes down the stairs, as it were, to give us his thoughts on student attitudes today, and uses a scroll to ruminate about the best way to discover answers to all of our training questions.

Take care until next time, and come to class whenever you can. I'll see you on the mat!

## The Need for Training

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Is today's digital age of technology and information hurting martial artists? I feel that the Digital Age, for lack of a better phrase



that encompasses everything today, is a tool and like all tools it can either help us or hinder us. Take for instance the ever versatile pair of pliers: a pair of pliers can hold things, strip wires, or pull things out of a wall, but they perform horribly when used as a hammer. My seventh grade shop teacher said something that has stayed with me my entire life thus far: "There is a right tool for every job," and that maxim seems appropriate here as well.

When used correctly, the Digital Age can enhance our lives and maybe even make them easier. For instance, I used Digital Age products to write, research, and format this article. Its output also helps me stay in touch with my community of friends, my family, and my students. In a global way, the Digital Age has been the most instrumental and important influence in my life. I do not think I could live my life as I do or accomplish the things as efficiently as I do today without its innovations.

Yet we can also use the Digital Age innovations incorrectly and consequently become delusional by mistaking knowledge for wisdom and slipping into complacency. That process ultimately makes us more susceptible to a breaking down of the essential skills that all martial artists need.

Sometimes we can forget that there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. The Internet can give us knowledge, but it can't give us wisdom. When we use an Internet search engine to look up something we often merely trust that it is true and are therefore comforted into a blindness that only leads to delusion. Wisdom is only acquired at the junction of knowledge and experience. How can we be sure what we are learning is true, regardless of the source, if we are not constantly studying and actively putting theories into practice on a day to day basis?

Other ways the Digital Age can hinder us as martial artists may not even be readily apparent or tangible. Recently I read a study done by Microsoft that offered insights into how living in the Digital Age might affect our ability to be mindful and live in the present

moment, and how our brains are adapting to constant multi-tasking. The study identified three types of attention: sustained (maintaining prolonged focus), selective (avoiding distraction), and alternating (multi-tasking). They found that sustained attention appeared to have decreased across the sample population and the more one multi-tasks, the more sustained attention can become adversely affected. Another study I read, yes online, was that people's field of vision has started to change because their eyes have grown accustomed to reading phone screens and computer monitors. Supposedly, their fields of vision have started to narrow because their peripheral vision has started to decline. If our minds are distracted and are not present and our peripheral vision is compromised, how can we be prepared to fend off that threat?

Probably the most harmful way the Digital Age is hurting us as martial artists is by limiting our reactionary awareness. How many people walk around, me included, with their heads down staring at their phones? This creates this complacency where we are no longer aware of our surroundings. In situational awareness there is something called the OODA loop (observe, orient, decide, and act) where we decide what to do based on a strategy of observation. How can we be possibly ready for a threat if we are unaware one even exists? A martial artist is always ready, but to be ready one needs to be prepared, and to be prepared one needs to be aware at all times.

The other day, I was talking with a martial arts teacher who in frustration said to me, "I don't think people want Aikido. They don't need places like a dojo any more." I actually disagree because I think human beings need and crave physical interaction.

*"I think Aikido or all martial arts, for that matter, follow along that same line of thought where a good balance can be struck between the cerebralness of the Digital Age and the physical present moment of martial arts training."*

Just look at how popular and commonplace online dating has become which begins digitally, but ends physically. I think Aikido or all martial arts, for that matter, follow along that same line of thought where a good balance can be struck between the cerebralness of the Digital Age and the physical present moment of martial arts training.

Training teaches us how to be here and live in the now. It keeps us grounded and hence staves off delusion. Training teaches propriety, etiquette, kindness, and compassion, which are some things that seem sorely lacking in the world of the Internet. Training teaches us to be aware and how to defend ourselves not only physically, but mentally and emotionally too.

*Continued on page 6...*

## Master One, Master All

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

When students join the dojo, it seems like they have so much to learn. All the new rules, what they can do and what is off-limits, and how to wear the practice uniform . . . so many new things to learn and it can get quite daunting – and that is just before class has started! Once on the mat, all of a sudden they know nothing, unable to tell right from left, up from down; everything becomes awkward, nothing is correct. How will we ever learn all of this?

Miyamoto Musashi, master swordsman and author of *The Book of Five Rings* wrote, “From one thing, know many things.” Good words, but what does it mean for all of us normal students?

It’s easy to interpret his words at face value rather than delve into its deeper meaning. Some students might interpret this quote to mean that learning about, say, cooking will help them get good at playing baseball or performing stand-up comedy. Unfortunately, the harsh truth is if you want to get good at baseball, you must play a lot of baseball; if you want to get good at stand-up comedy, you will have to perform many, many hours of stand-up comedy. There is no workaround, or detour, to progress.



When reading his book, students need to remember that Miyamoto Musashi was not in the same stage of training as they are when he wrote *The Book Of Five Rings*. He wasn’t practicing for his *sho-dan* exam or chasing teachers at seminars. Musashi, regarded as a *kensei* or “sword saint” – a master among masters – was past all that. Students need to realize that he wrote these words from a different place: a higher level of technical maturity and experience than, say, ours.

Some might reason that Musashi practiced painting so he could get some kind of insight into martial arts. On the contrary, it was his mastery of sword that enabled him to transfer that understanding to these other Japanese fine arts.

There is no doubt that Musashi was not only an expert swordsman, but also an accomplished ceramicist, metalworker, calligrapher, and painter, among other things. However, I am sure that after Musashi mastered sword fighting, he did not suddenly wake up one morning ready to paint, write calligraphy, forge sword fittings, and fire ceramics. These skills only became possible because his mastery of swordsmanship granted Musashi the mindset from which he could excel at probably anything on which he set his mind. No doubt he, like he admonishes us in his book, made sure

that he had “thoroughly studied” his subject as a matter of course.

In the dojo, we try to emulate his single-minded mastery of the art, concentrating on the same basic techniques, practicing them over and over and over again. Some basic techniques we practice every day. There are many basic techniques in Aikido that may not seem like martial arts techniques, but are essential to training; their mastery forms a strong foundation from which more advanced techniques can be practiced. Without these Aikido “tools”, progress in the other basic techniques will be almost impossible, because our understanding of Aikido will remain superficial.

When our basics become proficient in one technique the other techniques improve as well. Likewise, when our basics are lacking, or we have developed bad habits, it adversely affects the rest of our practice. For example, when practicing *jo* or *bokken*, students’ bad habits or deficiencies get magnified; their bad habits become much more obvious. A habit easily hidden in the empty handed technique becomes glaringly apparent in a weapons class. It is so easy to see how students’ deficiencies in the empty-handed techniques carry over to weapons techniques.

If we are asleep, stiff, unsure, arrogant, or use too much power, the manner in which we handle the weapon will betray this.

In particular, they say the sword has no mercy. This does not mean the sword is a cruel death-dealer cutting down lives arbitrarily; we regard the sword as merciless because of its revealing nature. In the context of practice, there is no way to hide behind size or strength.

We would do well to realize how important it is to become proficient in the basics. These basics serve as a common thread that runs through the fabric of all the Aikido techniques. When students begin practicing they seem to have so much to learn, so many obstacles to overcome. The Founder of Aikido said, “When surrounded by a host of enemies think of them as one; when facing a single foe think of him as many.” This is the mindset from which the Aikido technique deals with its opponents, but it’s also a good strategy when learning the Aikido techniques in the first place. O Sensei has been quoted to say that in Aikido there are about 3,000 basic techniques. When this number confronts a beginner, mastery – much less a rank examination – seems insurmountable. Yet all of these techniques share certain basic principles and skills with the other techniques. In their own way, students must learn this imposing group of techniques as if they were one technique.

*Continued on page 7...*

## Effort and Sacrifice

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

After teaching for 40 years, and now I am 56 years old, I have not had a vacation in over 20 years and I haven't had a salary at all in over 30 years. I have become tired and lazy. I feel exhausted, my stomach hurts, and some old injuries from practice have come back to haunt me.

I have known many teachers who have practiced so hard in their lives and they have all died very young. Many have become alcoholics or on drugs. Many have suffered from numerous injuries from hard training which come back very painfully many years later. I know of several teachers who kept up hard training although they knew they were ill and only shortened their own lives very greatly. I know of several teachers in my lifetime who have committed suicide out of frustration because of their students or the failure of their dojos. As much as I can say they are wrong and scold them, I also feel very greatly for them and they have all my sympathy and prayers. In an older time, as in O Sensei's time, we can't even imagine how hard life was compared to today.

Finally, and I think I share this with other teachers, as much as I love teaching and practicing Aikido, teaching you, as students, is not the great pleasure you yourselves think you must be. Teachers are not always kept warm and fuzzy by your presence all of the time. Students today are selfish, greedy, power hungry, and willful. You don't practice hard enough and always have excuses for everything. Most of all, you hardly pay attention in class and still think you know everything. If I don't repeat myself three times at least, you never understand what I say! Most students do not come into the art with any great talent at all, and never ever realize how much they owe to their teacher's efforts and sacrifice.

I was educated at some of the best universities in the country and hardly make what I am worth salary-wise. I never married or had a family and since my own parents died very young, I am all alone in the world. Luckily for my students, I am a priest and like to live alone and be by myself. It doesn't cost much for me to live as a single person in the dojo. I don't have my own apartment to save money and I don't commute to my house to save time so I can work more each day. I don't drink, gamble, or take drugs and I wear very cheap clothes, so we save a lot of money there. I am a bookworm and self-anointed scholar and have collected enough reference and study materials to last my whole lifetime. Someday, I may even get a real bed in my office so I don't have to continue to sleep on the floor. Anyway, I would rather be close to my books than take up space in my office for a bed, so I sleep on the floor or in my chair. In other words, I am a very cheap, extremely inexpensive teacher!



Luckily, most teachers have it better than me, otherwise there would be very few teachers around today. Go out and try to find a True Teacher! See how many there are around.

Did we ever think to act as good students to our teachers, or do we just pay dues and expect the world from them? Why do teachers get old or stop teaching? Do we really need to ask?

In reality, I am able to rest a little more these days and recover my health as my senior students are becoming very fine teachers and I can give them more opportunities to teach the class. They fill in for me nicely and I often think that they are better teachers than me. Whatever anyone says, I feel lucky that I can grab some rest here and there after all these years. I am of the old school and I will be here until I die, no one can understand or appreciate what I teach these days. I don't want to work hard and struggle any more; I want to relax and think about the finer points of the art, and chat pleasantly with my few students. I am so lazy!

There was once a young student in search of a great master archer he had heard many legends about. He searched everywhere and finally knowing that the master lived alone on top of a very high mountain, the student struggled to climb it and finally reached him.

He immediately took out his bow and handed it to him and said, "Master, I know you are a great genius with the bow, please teach me."

The old master looked at the bow and said, "What is this?"

In martial arts, this is a great story passed down for hundreds of years. True mastery transcends even the art itself. Someday, if I master Aikido, I probably will not know what it is about at all!

If any of your teachers no longer want to teach, you have probably made them too tired and frustrated with all of your questions. Why don't you try to be a little nice to them for a change? Maybe you can encourage them to teach you more. After many years, when you see each one of your teachers pass away and be gone forever, you will think that you want to say to your teachers, "Take it easy, rest, be here for a long time to come."

I never ever heard anything from my teachers except "thanks" once in a while. Nowadays, as I am older and more tired, I ask a lot from my most senior *uchi-deshi*, "do this, do that for me". Many times I don't thank him at all, but I am always thinking, "If he was not around to help me, I could not live one more day." I wonder these days, if any of my teachers ever thought that about me?

Continued on page 6...

## In The Community...



NISEI WEEK™

### Nisei Week

**August 9-23, 2015**



**August 15 (Sat):** Golden Circle Dinner, Double Tree by Hilton  
Coronation Ball, JACCC/Aratani Japan America Theater

**August 16 (Sun):** Grand Parade – Little Tokyo

**August 17 (Mon):** Awards Dinner – Double Tree by Hilton

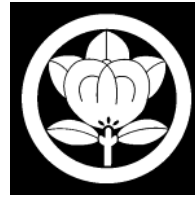
**August 19 (Wed):** Pioneer Luncheon, Double Tree by Hilton

**August 23 (Sunday):** Ondo and Closing Ceremony, 1st Street

#### Other events throughout the week:

- Car Show
- Sumo performance
- Martial Arts performances
- Taiko performance
- Fashion show
- Japanese Cultural Exhibits
- Odori Dance
- Hula dance
- Fashion show
- Queens reunion
- Baby Shows

For more information go to: <http://www.niseiweek.org/>



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### Karita Sensei Sword Lecture

**August 5, 2015**  
**6:30 PM**

**How To Care And Clean  
A Japanese Sword**

*Schedule and curriculum subject to change without notice*

**This class is free and open to the public**

### Karita Sensei Tai Chi Seminar

**August 4, 2015**  
**6:30 PM**



Learn how to:

- Use the body softly
- Throw the mind and ki/氣
- Use the body

*Schedule and curriculum subject to change without notice*



### The Need for Training *continued from page 2...*

There is a famous story by Zen monk Thích Nhất Hạnh about washing the dishes to wash the dishes titled, “The Cup in Your Hands” that kind of sums up why there is and will always be a need for training in this Digital Age:

In the United States, I have a close friend name Jim Forest. When I first met him eight years ago, he was working with the Catholic Peace Fellowship. Last winter, Jim came to visit. I usually wash the dishes after we’ve finished the evening meal before sitting down and drinking tea with everyone. One night, Jim asked if he might do the dishes. I said, “Go ahead, but if you wash the dishes you must know the way to wash them.”

Jim replied, “Come on, you think I don’t know how to wash the dishes?”

I answered, “There are two ways to wash the dishes. The first is to wash the dishes in order to have clean dishes and the second is to wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes.”

Jim was delighted and declared, “I choose the second way – to wash the dishes to wash the dishes.” From then on, Jim knew how to wash the dishes. I transferred the “responsibility” to him for an entire week.

If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as they were a nuisance, then we are not washing the dishes to wash the dishes. What’s more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact, we become completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can’t wash the dishes, the chances are we won’t be able to drink our tea either while thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus, we get sucked away into the future – and we become incapable of actually living one minute of life.

### Effort and Sacrifice *continued from page 4...*

Although today I have become a well-known teacher of sorts, I always think that my happiest days in training were when I was with my teacher, following him around, always trying to catch his Aikido. When he asked me to do something, I was so happy and honored that he would ask me. Nowadays, we don’t have this mentality – how sad!

Nowadays, to fold the teacher’s *hakama* is kind of a chore for the senior students. Sometimes, when I see my *hakama* folded by them, it is kind of sloppy and not tight, so I only shake my head and try not to look at it too closely.

At Hombu, one great teacher asked me to take care of his *hakama* after his mid-morning class several times a week. “What a great honor,” I thought and I felt so excited and thrilled. Of course, students today seem much smarter and sharper and realize that this request amounts to only another meddlesome chore.

Once a long time ago, I asked one of my students how he was doing in his new job. He said, “Oh, it is quite easy and there is not much to do. Often I can go home early.” He sounded so proud that he found a comfy job. I could only shake my head: he thinks that he has an easy job, but I realized that his company and boss do not have enough confidence in him to give him a lot of work and responsibility.

Getting back to the subject – if your teacher feels tired, let her rest. Be good to your teacher, since she won’t be there with you forever, and finding another good teacher in this day and age is not easy at all!

**Editor’s Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on September 2, 2004.

## 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.



**Master One, Master All** *continued from page 3...*

For example, in Aikido we have many techniques that are described as either *irimi* or *tenkan*. *Irimi*, or entering, appears to be a straight movement while *tenkan* appears to be a turning movement. When practicing *irimi* techniques we must make them distinct from *tenkan* techniques; mixing the two indicates a glaring deficiency of Aikido basics. Yet, there is an element of *irimi* in the turning movement of *tenkan* and there is a little bit of *tenkan* in the strong entering movement of *irimi*. Realizing the similarities in both simplifies learning and cuts the number of techniques in half.

Simply knowing this intellectually without realizing it through practice is not enough. Only through constant training and experiencing the techniques hundreds of thousands – maybe millions – of times, can we finally see and truly know, once the art settles into our bodies, how the techniques all interrelate. If we tried tackling the Aikido techniques one by one, practicing and perfecting each technique individually, learning all the techniques will take too long; more time



than we have. But if we practice and try to see the similarities between the techniques, the goal of mastering Aikido becomes more attainable. Why cut 10 carrots, one carrot at a time, when you can cut ten carrots all at once?

It takes very little to veer off the proper way of practicing, so we must take great care not to deviate from the correct practice. Aikido principles are applicable not only when facing our opponent, but in many aspects in our life seemingly unrelated to martial arts. The trick: we must realize and understand these principles through training.

In the dojo, it's important for students to train in the basics, improving their technique rather than depending on so-called tricks, or using lots of power. Ultimately, good training doesn't simply make us strong or good at martial arts, but good training teaches us how to learn. Once we master how to learn, how to train, how to observe, and how to persevere, anything becomes attainable if we want it. From one thing, it is possible to learn many things. Regardless if you have practiced for decades or days, please remember this in your training.

**Thoughts on a Scroll**

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

“As the moon rises high in the sky, the shadows of the castle disappear.”

We have many questions about life and about our practice. If we think about them very seriously, most important questions such as these cannot be answered so quickly or easily. Through our experiences in life and in our Aikido, however, these questions will naturally get answered as we progress. Over the years, you will find that Aikido in the long run of many years does not depend on how many techniques you master or what school or style you belong to but staying on the true path of Aikido faithfully and with commitment.

In this age of Internet and high-tech computers we have become accustomed to “instant” everything! Some people may consider “instant ramen” a good meal only because it can be made in three minutes. I once went to a hamburger stand many years ago and saw a sign: “If we can't get your food for you in 30 seconds, you get it free!”

I read it and thought to myself, “I don't really want it free, can you take maybe four or five minutes, and do it right?”

When I see people today, everyone rushes around doing this and that with no time for anything. Everyone tells me, “I'm so busy, I'm so busy!” Yes, it is important to work hard and build a good life for yourself. At the same time, we have a profound paradox that in building a good life, we compromise our very same lives by being pulled back and forth with much too much on our plates and in our heads.

Answers may not come our way according to our own schedule. Answers come when they come, as part of the natural process of our training from day to day. We often forget that our commitment to training, the natural day to day fact of our lives, the natural process of increasing this and decreasing that day by day, is all part of the answer to what we are truly searching for.

The castle does not think of being enveloped by dark shadows, nor does the moon think to brighten the castle walls at night. On its own, by itself, without purpose or attachment, all gets accomplished as it should in this world. Please continue to practice Aikido hard and it will come without thought or desire.

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on February 23, 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 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

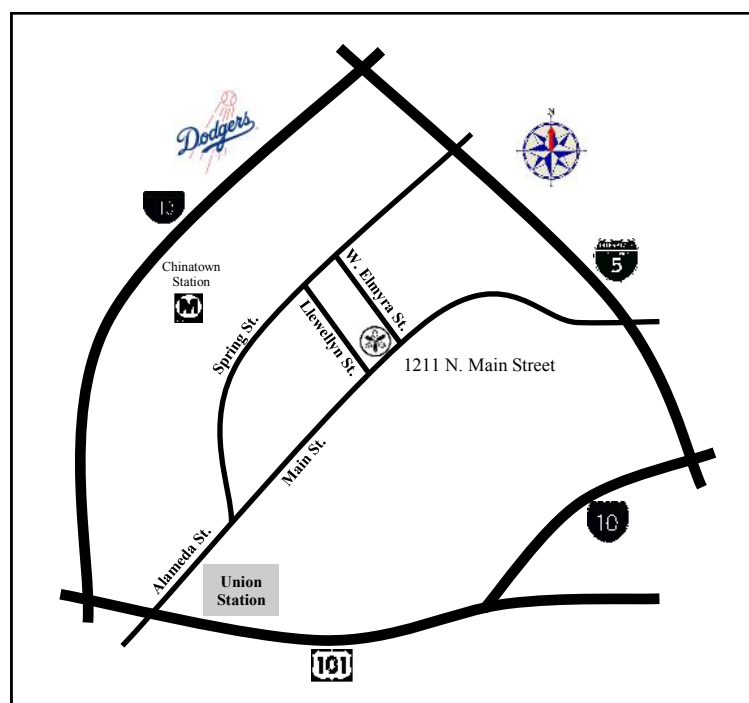
## Sundays

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](mailto:info@aikidocenterla.com)

We are across the street and one block northwest from the Chinatown Metro Station.

**The entrance is on Elmyra Street.**

**No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:**  
*You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.*