



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合氣道

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Morihei Ueshiba

1883 – 1969



Every student should become adept at remembering. More specifically they should be very good at remembering O'Sensei.

Winston Churchill once said, "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." In an Aikido sense, the history that we will be doomed to repeat is the time before Aikido when people only used martial skills to destroy one another.

Prior to O'Sensei's time is when *Do* (道) didn't really exist and there was only *Jutsu* (術). *Do* means path or lifestyle and *Jutsu* means technique or skill. Hundreds of years ago, from a battlefield standpoint, *jutsu* was more important because one's life was at stake. Nowadays, modern technology has rendered hand to hand combat useless and so budo had to evolve. The martial arts evolved from being a system adept at killing people to an art proficient at developing the self.

O'Sensei was born in 1883 in the middle of the Meiji restoration (1868-1912) and this was crucial because this was the era where *Jutsu* began to evolve into *Do* or when philosophy began to change the mindset of the person who studied a martial art. We can see this evolution in O'Sensei's development. When O'Sensei was young, he studied several different Budo arts. He studied Kito-ryu Jujutsu with Takisaburo Tobaru, Goto-ha Yagyu-ryu under Masakatsu Nakai, Tenjin Shinyo-ryu Jujutsu with Tozawa Tokusaburoin, a type of Judo with Kiyochi Takagi. During this time, O'Sensei also studied Shinto with his

teacher Tasaburo Nasu and Shingon Buddhism with Mitsujo Fujimoto who also presented him with a certificate of enlightenment. O'Sensei was also heavily influenced by his studies with Omoto-kyo leader Onisaburo Deguchi.

Remember



by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

The culmination of O'Sensei's martial arts study and his interest in religion led to the creation of the modern art known as Aikido. Aikido's core principles are that of self-development and non-violence.

In the beginning of other martial arts, the student's training begins with learning resistance and collision. For instance, blocking is a form of both resistance, as we resist the other person's advances, and also collision as we collide with their advancement with a harder part of our body. Another example is punching as a punch is a form of resistance to being attacked and a form of collision as the fist collides with a vulnerable part of our attacker's body. From this model, the student becomes adept at destruction. Later on, at the highest level of one's training, the ardent practitioner comes to realize *shinmu fusatsu* (真武不殺) or that "True budo does not kill." Hopefully, a student trains long enough to reach this point and has become mature enough to realize that hurting others is self-defeating.

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Remember *continued from page 2...*

Interestingly, Aikido is quite opposite to other martial arts as it begins at the place where most other arts end. In our techniques, we begin with learning how to be in harmony with our opponent as we align with our opponent's power, advances or body with the hope of redirecting that force and using it to our advantage. For instance, when a person punches us, we align our bodies with the power of the strike and utilize physics to redirect that power when it most advantageous for us. Using physics-like concepts such as momentum, levers or balance enables us to negotiate our attacker with ease and appropriateness. For example, at the end range of a strike, the momentum has swung in our favor and the opponent's balance is compromised and this is the place where it is easiest to throw a person, lock up a joint or pin them. These three options enable us to defend ourselves while still employing the least amount of violence which "saves" the opponent from harm but still keeps us safe.

Aikido is the genius of O'Sensei. He was able to synthesize a martial art which doesn't harm the opponent and only works better when the opponent attacks with greater force. The more the Aikidoist is calm and the harder the opponent attacks, the more the techniques are effective. The ability to not cause harm but at the same time remain calm comes from O'Sensei's understanding of non-violence or or "hiboryoku" (非暴力).

O'Sensei's view on non-violence is inspired by the Indian philosophy of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* views violence and aggression as a primal tendency which exists in every human being and so it cannot be eradicated from our minds. Understanding this, in Aikido, we accept the presence of violence but we are also learning to deal with it equanimously where we are not trying to suppress violence but learn how to manage our violent tendencies. Therefore, in Aikido, we are trying to learn how to better deal with situations which previously could only be solved with violence.

Ahimsa teaches us that humans engage in violence out of ignorance because they are suffering. Human beings attack because they are suffering and are ignorant to the real reason for their suffering. O'Sensei understood this and advocated that the attacker is suffering and in need of compassion instead of destruction. From this understanding, Aikidoists realize that



there is no real attacker, only a person suffering, and so they strive to give the attacker compassion. The Aikido that O'Sensei created is then the physical manifestation of the philosophical understanding of *ahimsa*.

This year marks the 54th* passing of the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, who was affectionately known as "O'Sensei." When O'Sensei passed away, he was 86 years old. This year, O'Sensei would have been 139 years old.

The other day, I was reading an article when the word *saeculum* popped up. *Saeculum* is an Etruscan word which means "the amount of time between the moment it happens to the time when everyone who experienced it or remembers has passed away."

Based on the concept of *saeculum*, when all of O'Sensei's original students will have passed away, O'Sensei's Aikido will be in danger of being forgotten. If O'Sensei is forgotten we may accidentally forget his philosophy of non-violence. Therefore, it is really important for students to remember O'Sensei and his philosophies.

Today, there is a lot of talk about competition or changing Aikido to make it more effective or real. The only question we should ask is "Would you do

that if O'Sensei were alive?" If the answer is no, then act accordingly. Our desire to compete or hurt people is born out of our egos. Our egos are afraid and that fear makes us want to engage in competition out of our need for validation or using Aikido to hurt people as a way to allay our fears. Engaging in either would mean that we have lost O'Sensei's teachings. Aikido is a tool for self-development where we teach ourselves to be better human beings.

The only way we can become better human beings and maintain our desire for non-violence is to remember. If we can remember O'Sensei then *saeculum* won't happen. If we forget O'Sensei then we risk losing the lesson and Aikido will become nothing more than an effective way of hurting people.

Aikido is way more than a means to destroy the world. O'Sensei said, "Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat an enemy. It is the way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family." That is why we must remember O'Sensei and that is why we must become adept at remembering. •



To truly follow the Way requires balance. The balance that I am talking about is creating an equilibrium between being a good martial artist and a good person. It is easy to think that they are mutually exclusive but at our highest level they are not.

When one has been following the path of Aikido, or any Budo for that matter, one will see many things, some good and others not so good. We will meet teachers who are kind and compassionate and others who are tyrants. We will meet some who are wholeheartedly engaged in their dojos and others who are merely phoning it in. We will meet others who are very skilled but very arrogant teachers who can't make a connection with their students and others who are less skilled but are able to make great connections with their students. Some other people we will meet will be humble people while many others will be arrogant or brash. Likewise, some places that teach Aikido will be schools dedicated to the student's success and there will be many others who consider their schools as commercial centers seeking only economic benefit or to raise their personal image.

The hardest part will be trying to decipher who is who and what their true motivations are. I do not say this as a criticism, or as a reproach, but rather as a reflection of what exists in the vast world of *Budo*. Today, more so than ever, it is hard to live the Way and that's why Furuya Sensei often used to say, "The Way is hard." Each person has to decide which way they want to be and we cannot criticize or disqualify one person's option of

Values

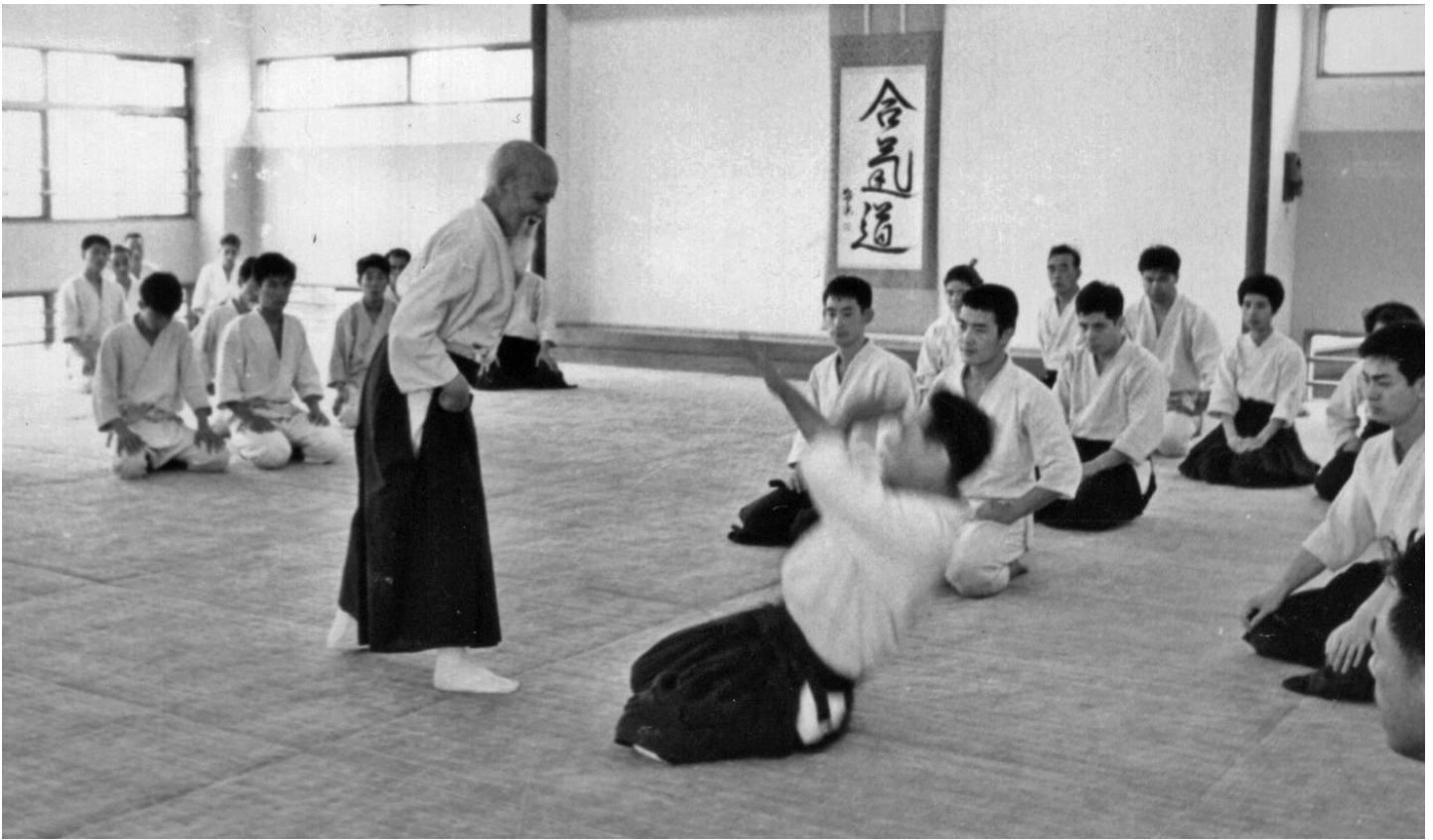


by Santiago Garcia Almaraz
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

how they choose to manage their dojo or a school because we don't know why they chose to do it that way. In the end, our decisions are influenced by our training, philosophies, economic situations and personal issues. All of these factors become the baggage that we carry around in our lives. What we see being taught and how it is being taught is just superficial and there are many more teachings, responsibilities, instincts and strengths and weaknesses at play. Therefore, to do our best requires that we transform ourselves internally and that requires more effort than the simple fact of learning how to teach some techniques.

I believe that I was very lucky to have found my teacher, Rev. Kensho Furuya. One of the main things that drew me to him was his lineage. Sensei can trace his lineage back to O'Sensei which enables me to as well. What Sensei learned from his time with 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba was how to not only be a good Aikidoist but also how to be a good human being. Training under Sensei, he showed me that the technical part of knowing the art, its fundamentals, movements, and techniques, were just parts of Aikido's technical ability which is important but more importantly I learned how the techniques are intrinsically linked to the values and behaviors of being a human being. Those values and principles govern our Aikido practice, and by extension they should govern our lives as well since that is the true purpose of Aikido as espoused by O'Sensei.

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Values continued from page 4...

This idea of balancing being a good martial artist with being a good person is not normal in our society. Today, the world we live in is just an extension of the other activities that we engage in like sports, work, or arts where the art or act is separate from the human being. We commonly see professional athletes or CEOs whose values and ethics are not intertwined with their ability, skill, or paycheck.

For instance, if you are a good soccer player and you score many goals, a good actor with many awards, or a good martial artist with lots of different trophies or medals then those things are elevated above your behavior as a person. In our society, many of these successful people are admired and idolized for their triumphs but in their private lives they are a completely different person who is an abuser, drinker, addict, or something even worse. Many of these people are bad examples for not only everyone around them but for children who look up to them. This is one of the reasons why O'Sensei advocated against competition. Competition causes us to focus on externally winning and attaining praise but not internally on improving ourselves.

Obviously, we cannot change society nor can we be angry with people because they do not follow our values, but we as martial artists and teachers need to be good examples. It is up to us to be better, to live a better way, the way O'Sensei taught. O'Sensei said, "The source of Budo is God's love – the spirit of loving protection for all beings. Budo is not the felling of an opponent by force; nor is it a tool to lead the world to destruction with arms. True Budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the

peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature."

Understanding O'Sensei's words, it requires a certain amount of responsibility. I believe that we have a responsibility to be living examples of O'Sensei's philosophy to "keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature." In order to do this, we need to strike a balance between being a good martial artist and being a good person. This responsibility belongs exclusively to us as instructors, professors, seniors or those who say we follow the Way. This balance has to be struck with our attitudes, teachings, and with directly following O'Sensei's values in our dojos and as practitioners. I know that it is difficult to fight day in and day out against certain habits and directly collide with the trends of the day, but we have to make an effort and we must be disciplined to demand high standards for ourselves and in our classes.

Being a follower of O'Sensei's teaching is not easy. I have always understood that being a teacher and directing a dojo or a school is more than just giving simple advice or teaching techniques. Being a teacher is a responsibility and a source of pride, a way to be part of the growth of our students and to sow and cultivate values that today are extinct. We are Aikido and this bears responsibility. Above all, we must help our students with more than just words, by setting an example and being a reference for them with our daily actions. We have to be better than just saying we are better or by deftly throwing people down. We have to demonstrate that we are following the way of Aikido – O'Sensei's Aikido. To follow the Way means that we must live with balance, not only as good martial artists but as good human beings as well. •

I was perusing the online world the other day and I happened upon an article explaining the benefits that balance and mobility have on someone's quality of life. It further discussed how important they are especially as we grow older. Without balance and mobility, and the accompanying strength to effectively use both, one can become quite helpless and dependent on other people for almost everything.

In the beginning, we might have a particular idea of what it means to be strong. We might think that being strong in martial arts means having lots of physical strength – maybe get some tattoos and work out until you get six-pack ab muscles. Maybe being a strong martial artist also means speed. With this idea, we believe we should practice fast and with lots of physical strength.

As beginners, we want to comfort ourselves with the knowledge that our technique is effective. When I began training, I used too much strength just like all beginners. I wanted to be “good”. I wanted to be “strong”. I would try to practice how I imagined a martial artist should – strongly - yet whenever I tried to throw or pin I always lost my balance or footing. From the outside, you couldn't tell who was the one doing the falling. On top of that, my throws and pins were not very strong! In my attempt at being “good” I hurried through the technique and I used too much physical strength.

Being both fast and physically strong can't hurt. Those two aspects of martial arts might seem like a big part of being a martial artist, but they are a small part of our training. We train to use strength and speed appropriately with the correct focus. An unfocused warrior without balance and mobility would be as good as dead. The last thing they would want is to trip and fall while fighting!

Nowadays we don't have to worry about surviving a battlefield. Yet balance and mobility are essential to our practice and advancement in the art. We want to be able to move freely and easily with the widest range of motion while practicing the correct mental focus. From this idea of being able to move freely, we practice the correct movement so that our strength can come forth effectively. At the same time that we practice developing our movement, we also practice keeping our balance and our posture so we can develop a sense of complete stability and begin to move our body as a complete unit.

In practice we want to think of emphasizing movement, balance, and proper focus over strength and speed. Furuya Sensei used to admonish us that if we lost our balance or posture when doing the technique, we were using too much strength. It might feel counterproductive, but we should use only as much strength so long as we can maintain our balance and posture.

The same idea applies to when we are being thrown or pinned. When we are taking *ukemi* for our partner, we want to emphasize moving with the technique, feeling connected to our partner, and feeling how the technique not only breaks our partner's

balance but our own balance as well. As we are being thrown or pinned, we are also practicing how to move effectively to protect ourselves while being in this unbalanced state. This is not only to develop our movement and protect ourselves from the technique but it is also how we learn to read our opponent's energy.

As we continue practicing, our movement becomes naturally stronger as our posture and balance develop. Our focus refines our movement so that as freely as it might appear to move, the movement has precision. Our technique becomes clear, dynamic, and stable. From practicing mobility and balance we can begin to understand how our center is used, both while we do the technique and while we are being thrown.

Remember that the power and strength in martial arts, particularly in Aikido and swordsmanship, is developed through this state of dynamic stability and correct focus. The energy in the technique comes from our center, generated from our footwork, and extends into our arms all the way into the fingertips of our *te-gatana* or “handblade.”

We also use our mental focus to

help manifest the correct movement and apply the appropriate energy

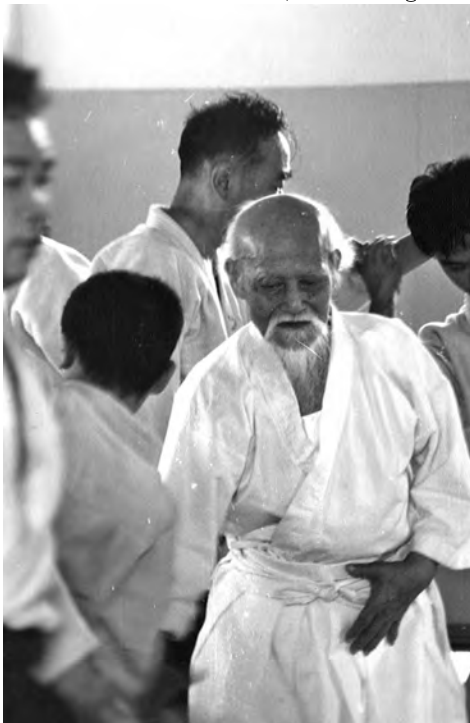
Practicing strong and fast is fine for when we are young and fit. It is instant gratification, training-wise. However, when we lose our physical ability – our strength and speed – it is almost too late to begin developing our movement, our balance, our focus, and our timing.

Experienced practitioners know that physical strength and speed, as important as they are, are not the end-all-be-all of martial arts training.

Sensei would always tell us that strength and speed develop naturally. Without developing our movement, balance, and mental focus, it can be very difficult to develop either in our technique. It is tempting to want to be good and strong as soon as possible – to throw or pin our partner however we can, but the path to any semblance of expertise does not start with using lots of upper body strength while rushing through the technique.

Real martial arts training is designed so that one can practice it their whole life. Incorrect training, if done for many years, can end up damaging our bodies instead of strengthening it. When our strength and speed are gone, our balance and mobility shouldn't fade away as well.

Power in martial arts begins with, and is built upon, movement and balance. Hopefully, after we have practiced correctly for many decades, we will end up the same way. •



The Power of Aikido



by Ken Watanabe
Technical Director

Several years ago, my friend, another Aikido teacher, said to me, “I think that I won’t have many students in my dojo like yours. I have adopted your method of ‘correcting’ students during training.”

I had to laugh! It is “bad business” to correct a student in training because they will always get offended or upset and eventually run away. I told my friend, “No, no, you shouldn’t do that too much, I want you to have a successful dojo.”

However, he confessed to me, “Well, I was never corrected during my own training and eventually, I found it very frustrating. I wanted to be taught, and I wanted to know what I was doing wrong.”

I think this is fair. How can anyone learn without corrections and advice from the teacher? “Not correcting the student” has nothing to do with the process of education and practice, it is only a consideration of what is good business and making money.

As I mentioned, “If I give a student a test, and whether the answer is right or wrong, I mark all the answers as correct. How will the student know what they have done right and what they have done wrong?” Doing it this way, students cannot learn anything at all.

Then I held up a red box to him. What if you asked me, “Is this red?” And I said, “yes.” But what if you ask me, “Is this blue?” and I also said, “yes.” What have you learned? Nothing, you have only become more confused. Eventually you will realize that the teacher is not honest or that they don’t care.

A dojo is for learning, not for the business of making money. Yet, how can we run the dojo without income to pay the rent, utilities, insurance, etc., etc. – this is not easy to do and it is so very, very tempting to find the easy way out. Of course, there are some starving teachers holding on to the Path. And there are some who are only here for the money and profits. There are a few geniuses who can do both.

For the last few days, I have speaking to everyone from the standpoint of the teacher. I think a student needs to know what goes on in the teacher’s mind and how difficult it is to run a dojo and teach the students – harder yet to uphold integrity and honor and follow this Path.



Not a Business



by Rev. Kensho Furuya

such a poor student who can’t learn – how can we develop from here?”

The only thing I can say, or advocate, is what my teachers told me whenever I got stuck: “Go back and re-discover the original joy of Aikido practice – at a time, when you weren’t worried so much about rank and power or your own prestige.”

Forget about the endless chit chat that only confuses the air.

Forget about competing with others and only be mindful of your own step – step by step.

Forget this small, selfish, narrow-minded self and allow your True Self to emerge from within.

Finally, O’Sensei’s teachings sound easy and beautiful to the ear, but they are so hard to realize in action and in one’s behavior, both in mind and spirit – go back to your original mind and remember the first purpose of why you entered the dojo. •

Editor’s note: Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on September 6, 2004.

It is always easy to criticize from the sidelines where we have no investment and have nothing to do at all. It is more difficult to talk about mud when we are right in the middle of the mud itself!

Today, wherever I look around, I see nothing which makes me happy in Aikido. Everyone is putting down everyone else. Saying bad things about O’Sensei and Aikido only to create controversy or draw attention to one’s self. No one speaks of the proper way of training – they are all worried about the length of the *hakama* and discuss this endlessly over and over and over. It is so sad to see.

We should all think, “Drop everything!” We should drop everything in our minds and begin with a clean slate – go back to the source of Aikido. Playing with muddy water, the mud will always be unsettled, and the water will never get clear. Go back to a time, before all the mud and dirt, to a source where the water is naturally clean and clear and fresh!

Even in my own dojo, when I see students with a poor attitude, it makes me so sad. I think to myself, “I am such a poor teacher who can’t teach and there is

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

Dojo Coronavirus update:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles has lifted the face mask mandate for all persons vaccinated or not. Anyone who still wants to wear a face covering in class is welcome to do so.

IMPORTANT DATES

- April 23-24: O'Sensei Memorial Seminar
- April 24 (Sunday): O'Sensei Meinichi - memorial service at 11:00 AM
- April 30th (Saturday): Intensive Seminar
- May 14th: Little Tokyo Sparkle volunteering
- May 28th: Intensive Seminar
- June 25th: Intensive Seminar
- October 10-20: Spain trip

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, gender identification, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays

10:15-11:15 AM	Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Regular Class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
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Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM	Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM	Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Regular Class

Thursdays No Class

Mondays

6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
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Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
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Tuesdays

No Class

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar by Invitation only.

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM	Regular Class	7:45-8:45	Regular Class
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Saturdays

7:45-8:45 AM	Regular class
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The Aiki Dojo

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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

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