

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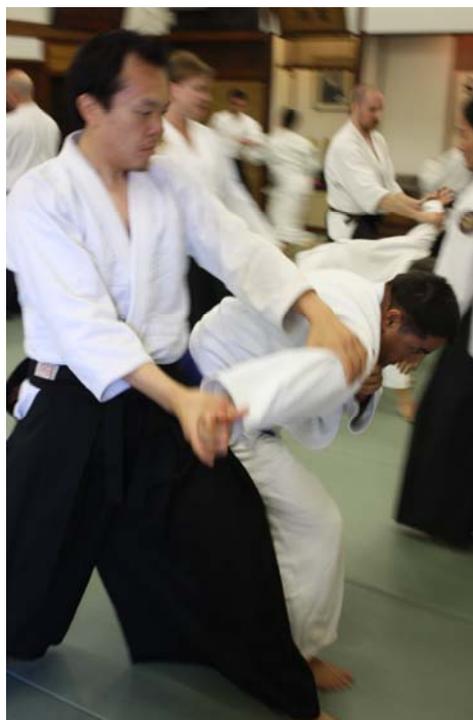
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**Letter From the Editor**  
by Mark Ehrlich  
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

The weather has taken a strange turn recently. Summer always runs hot in Los Angeles, but rarely does it get humid like it has lately due to our sitting on the edge of a vast desert. We've seen some rain these past few days, which most folks not from here would consider barely a sprinkling. Supposedly in a few months El Nino will bring us the serious rainfall we desperately need here.

During these humid days we've kept busy planning for our Nisei Week demonstration. News of this event has seen some of our students go into hiding, while others have stepped forward to volunteer, offering to help by demonstrating, handing out flyers, loaning transport, keeping watch over luggage, and so forth. I find it interesting to witness these two very different responses to the same thing. On the one hand, some of us find the idea of doing a demonstration terrifying; on the other, some of us find it just another thing we do to help the dojo. The varied attitudes I see at the

dojo day after day remind me that the bard had it right, that nothing is either good or bad but our thinking makes it so. Attitude can indeed make or break our progress in training, and in this month's issue of *The Aiki Dojo*, we continue our focus on the keys and impediments to proper development by examining manners and mindsets at the dojo.



Ito Sensei writes on etiquette and its importance not only in our own training but in understanding our opponents' abilities as well. Watanabe Sensei discourses on the crucial difference between training to get good (or feel good) and training to perform the technique to enhance our understanding. And as usual, Sensei revisits us from the archives – this time, I'm afraid, to scold us for our lack of awareness and to warn us of the fine line between profundity and banality in

our approach to our practice in martial arts. I found these articles enlightening and humbling, and I hope you get as much out of them as I tried to do.

Please join us for our demonstration. Take care until then, and I'll see you on the mat!

## Upcoming Events

**August 10th**  
Nisei Week demonstration

**August 30th**  
Instructor's intensive

**September 1st**  
Dojo Closed  
Labor Day

**September 27th**  
Instructor's intensive

**October 25th**  
Instructor's intensive

**October 26th**  
Children's Class Halloween Party

## Begin and End With Respect

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

*Rei ni hajimari, rei ni owaru.* (“Everything begins with respect and ends with respect.”)

The other day I read an article that asked people via social media to comment on the practice of bowing by Japanese train conductors and cleaning crews. I found it funny how many people around the world thought this practice offensive. Most of them opined that bowing had no place in the modern world while others considered it subservient to bow. These people miss the point, I think, when it comes to the custom of bowing and its place in Japanese society. Bowing, to me, seems neither an oppressive nor an outdated practice so much as it embodies a form of etiquette, or *reigi saho*. When bowing, we show our respect and appreciation for not only people but for all things as well. How differently do you think the world would move if we all showed courtesy and respect not only for our things but also for all people?

In the martial arts, etiquette and especially the way or how we bow directly reflects our inner state. As martial artists, when we meet potential opponents, we need to determine not only their intentions but also the quality of their training. Our opponents won't show us their technique or style until they attack, so we need to pay close attention to all the other subtleties they reveal. Well-trained martial artists will carry themselves a certain way, which in turn will indicate their abilities. The theory goes that well-trained martial artists will have axiomatically been good students, and the best students always have the best etiquette. So if someone intends to harm us, she will find it hard to disguise in the etiquette and thus she will reveal her intention. Conversely if someone seems haughty or displays no manners then he likely amounts to someone of low moral standards; thus, while he seems more likely to attack us, he will most likely lack good training. Either way we will likely know what we will face as our opponents show themselves by their manners.

Teachers use not only bowing but their students' overall politeness to try and gain a clearer picture of who their students are deep down in their hearts. In Japanese society we call the polite face we show outwardly *tatemae*, and the one we hide that reveals our true feelings *honnen*. Sensei used to say, “You can learn everything you need to know about someone by watching how he trains.” Teachers constantly analyze students, looking or waiting for them to reveal their *honnen*, because with this valuable information teachers will know where to begin the actual training and also how

far and how hard to push their students. Also, trust has always played a central role in teaching and martial arts teachers needed to know the true desires or intentions of students to determine if they could entrust students with the art's secrets and if they would remain loyal. In the end, teachers treasure a student with a good heart more than a student with natural ability; and thus, etiquette points the way.



Students use etiquette to show their level of training as well as to demonstrate to their peers and teachers the desire they have to learn, which again goes back to teachers trying to find good students they can teach and who deeply want to learn. Actions speak louder than words, and knowing this, teachers look at student behaviors and the students in turn try to put forth the best manners they can. How badly or how far will students who don't want to observe the etiquette go in their training? In my experience, not far. Those people tend to peak at a certain point from which they can never progress. Humility and humbleness signal how open and willing we keep ourselves in order to learn. Knowing this, students do their best to show their earnest and open nature, not only by bowing but by how they carry themselves and the etiquette they observe.

Today we don't fight in duels or engage in battles, nor do people *dojo yaburi* (come and challenge dojos), so the need to observe the subtleties has gradually become lost. In the martial arts they say that a true teacher can read students and know what they hold in their hearts. Knowing that our teacher keeps watch and keep testing us, we try and put forth our best manners and utilize them as deftly as we can. This shows our teacher how much we want to learn and what we will do to get the teachings. En route to mastery, we master the etiquette first, which explains why our ability to demonstrate the proper etiquette enables us to show our ability level without even stepping on the mat. The course of learning begins with etiquette as students show their earnestness through their demonstration of etiquette and manners, and it ends with students becoming people of virtue, honor and loyalty as they demonstrates manners and respect for not only all things and all people but for ultimately themselves as well. The saying, “Everything begins with respect and ends with respect,” goes well with the proverb *Yaiba ni tsuyoki mono wa rei ni suguru* (“Great swordsmen surpasses all others in decorum.”). The final test comes when students demonstrate their level of propriety or politeness when their teacher is no longer there, thus showing that the lesson has been learned – our teacher taught us to become better people. In order to become people of worth, let's please treat ourselves and others with respect and remember to mind our manners.

## What is Good?

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

My teacher Furuya Sensei told us a story about the time he heard someone's piano performance at a party. This person's flashy piano playing and showmanship impressed almost everyone. That is, everyone except for a group of piano teachers; experts who could see – and hear – the lack of proper technique as well as the basics of piano playing.

The idea of what is "good" often stands at odds with what is correct. Remember, the idea of "good" is subjective and is based on many factors; there are all kinds of "good".

What is good to us may not be up to a more experienced and knowledgeable person's standards. To the layman, that party guest's piano playing was "good". However, as entertaining as it was to the guests, to the piano experts who also saw the performance, it was less than the ideal.

Naturally, students who begin practicing martial arts want to get good. After all, film students don't start filming a project wanting it to put the audience to sleep;

art students don't begin their work with an "I want this to be mediocre" attitude, and cooking students don't start preparing a meal with the goal of disappointing their diners. Overall, students don't usually begin their study and practice with the single-minded thought, "I want to suck at this!"

Students must nonetheless take care and avoid trying to become "good" at the expense of doing the technique "right". Some students concern themselves more with looking or feeling "good"; a self-centered, quick-fix idea of "good" rather than a long-term accumulation of knowledge and wisdom in the technique.

Beginning students often try to practice the technique with speed and strength that is beyond their skill level. Inexperienced students will use too much force so the technique will feel "good", or "strong" enough, to them. After all, look at all the hard work I did just to throw my partner to the ground!

Yes, it's important for a technique to be quick, powerful, and above all else, effective, but it should not come at the expense of basics such as timing, footwork, posture, and balance, not to mention being open to our opponent's counterattack. Outwardly, the

technique may appear strong but at its core, its strength is superficial. It's easy for students to become attracted to flashy, outwardly complex techniques, reversals, and counter-techniques, and if there's a spectacular *ukemi* involved, all the better! These fancy techniques seem more fun to do – and think of all the attention you'll get and how awesome you'll feel!

No one likes to feel stupid. Nobody likes to feel they don't know what they're doing. This is a natural instinct that insures our survival. Who wants to be the weakest link in a herd of buffalo when the neighborhood lions start getting hungry, right? Because of this, some students who become impatient to get on the road to

mastery overcompensate by using too much strength to make the technique appear effective. Other students might do the technique too fast thereby neglecting their footwork, their position in relation to their opponent, or other important parts of the technique, simply for the sake of looking "good". The mantra, "Better, Stronger, Faster," is not necessarily the correct mindset to a student's long-term progress.

Smarter, more thoughtful students forgo the feeling of being "good"



and know that in the beginning, the techniques will feel anything but strong or powerful. They will know that in the beginning, these techniques will feel both awkward and ineffective. Smart students will accept that they will experience in their training a long period of feeling less than competent before getting "good" and know that it's more important to try to catch onto the correct technique instead of being satisfied with a "good" that is only superficial; icing on an inedible cake.

The basics of any art are often the plainest, most boring, exercises in a student's practice. There are many kinds of very simple basics techniques in both Aikido and Iaido that we do in every single class; repetitious and just plain boring to do. Students might think, "Let's do the REAL stuff!!" It's easy to feel drawn to the more complicated techniques – in the student's mind, the meat and potatoes of a particular art – rather than basic drills. However, these same sundry basics will enable a student to gain the valuable skill sets that are applicable to the entire art and beyond it.

Don't worry about getting "good"; concentrate on getting it correct. With a little hard work, thoughtfulness, and plenty concentration, "good" always follows naturally.

# Congratulations, Carol Tanita!



**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**  
**SAN GABRIEL VALLEY COUNCIL**  
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 Friends of Scouting present

**2014 Outstanding Citizen Awards Dinner & Dance**  
*recognizing*

*The Honorable*  
**GARY YAMAUCHI**  
*Vice Mayor, City of Alhambra*

*and*  
**CAROL TANITA**  
*Community Volunteer*

for their contributions in making the community a better place

with live music by *Kokoro*

*Friday, August 22* San Gabriel Hilton Hotel, 225 W. Valley Blvd., San Gabriel  
 6 pm Reception  
 7 pm Dinner and Program  
 9 pm Dancing 'til midnight (Admission for Dance only 9 pm)

Honorary Dinner Chairs: Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustee Mike Eng, Alhambra Mayor Stephen Sham, El Monte Mayor Andre Quintero, Monterey Park Mayor Anthony Wong, Rosemead City Councilmember Pally Low, San Gabriel Vice Mayor Jason Pu, Alhambra School Board President Bob Gin, Garvey School District Board of Trustee Bob Bruesch

**TICKETS:** Dinner & Dance \$100/person or \$1,000/table for Gold Sponsor before August 7  
 Dinner & Dance \$ 75/person or \$750/table before August 7  
 Dance ONLY \$ 25/person in advance before August 14 or  
 \$ 30/person at the door (for individuals)

For more information, contact: MMA Finance Chair Oriana Chan (626) 616-9587 or [Oriana.W.Chan@wellsfargo.com](mailto:Oriana.W.Chan@wellsfargo.com)



If you're looking for good food in Little Tokyo, please support our friends at JiST Café.

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Tuesday-Friday: 5AM-3PM  
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## LET'S STUDY JAPANESE!



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### SPECIAL NISEI WEEK OFFER August 10th & 17th

One trial lesson (40min) for \$20  
 (Originally \$35)

**Fuji School**  
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[Oh-fuji.com](http://Oh-fuji.com)



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## 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.



# Karita Sensei Teaches Tai Chi





## In The Community...

### Natsumatsuri Family Festival at the Japanese National Museum



#### ALL DAY ACTIVITIES

The annual summer celebration featuring traditional Japanese and Japanese American performances, crafts, and activities.

- **Omikuji** What does your future hold? Find out through *omikuji*, a Japanese fortune-telling method.
- **Natsumatsuri Photo Booth** Don a traditional *happi* coat and get your picture taken against a fireworks-filled sky, a common sight during Japanese summer festivals. (*One print per family. A Members' Express Line will be available for JANM members.*)
- **Paper Lanterns** Create your own string of paper lanterns, a popular festival decoration.
- **Baseball Buttons** Design your own baseball button to show off your team spirit and celebrate our exhibition *Dodgers: Brotherhood of the Game*.
- **Paper Hats** Make a colorful paper hat to wear while you enjoy Natsumatsuri!
- **Ruthie's Origami Corner** Make a festive origami kimono with Ruthie.
- **Face Painting** Get in the spirit of our exhibition *Perseverance: Japanese Tattoo Tradition in a Modern World* and have your face painted by Party Face Magic. (*For children only. Line ends at 4:30 p.m. A Members' Express Line will be available for JANM members.*)
- **Toddler Room** A fun place for our youngest guests to hang out (with an adult who brought them).
- **Scavenger Hunt** Follow the clues and look for special items throughout the museum to win a prize! (*While supplies last.*)

For more information: <http://www.janm.org/events/2014/natsumatsuri/>



### 2014 Nisei Week Japanese Festival Calendar of Festival Events

#### July 13 (Sun)

**Nisei Week Japanese Festival Opening Ceremony** – (Invitation only)\*

#### July 26 (Sat)

**Baby Show**, Centenary United Methodist Church, 9 am – 3 pm\*

#### August 9 (Sat)

**Nisei Week Japanese Festival/JACCC Plaza Festival**, 10am – 6 pm

**Golden Circle Dinner**, Double Tree by Hilton, 5 pm (Dinner)\*

**Coronation Ball**, Aratani Japan America Theater, 7 pm\*

#### August 10 (Sun)

**Nisei Week Japanese Festival/JACCC Plaza Festival**, 10 am- 5 pm

**Grand Parade – Little Tokyo**, 4 pm

#### August 11 (Mon)

**Awards Dinner – Double Tree by Hilton**, , 6 pm\*

#### August 13 (Wed)

**Pioneer Luncheon**, Double Tree by Hilton, 11:30 am\*

#### August 16 (Sat)

**Nisei Week Japanese Festival/JACCC Plaza Festival**, 10 am- 6 pm

**Nisei Week Rubik's Cube Open**, JACCC Plaza, 9 am – 1 pm

**Day-Lee Foods World Gyoza Eating Championship**, JACCC Plaza, 3 pm

#### August 17 (Sun)

**Taiko Gathering**, JACCC Plaza, 10 am- 4 pm

**Ondo and Closing Ceremony**, 1st Street, 4 pm

\*Fees and/or registration required.

*Everyone please come out to support the  
Japanese American Community!*

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



### Introduction to Zen Meditation

5 Thursday evenings

Aug. 14 through Sept. 11, from 7:30 to 8:45 p.m.

This class series provides an introduction to Zen meditation for beginners. It is open to people of all faiths.

The classes include a presentation of the basic principles of Zen and zazen meditation, and discussions of how to practice Zen in daily life - while at work and at leisure.

Each class includes zazen meditation, beginning with 10 minutes during the first class, and working up to 30 minutes at the end of the series. Each class also includes walking meditation.

For more information: [www.zenshuji.org](http://www.zenshuji.org)

## Swordsmanship: The Dying Art

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

This evening I came down for the sword class and immediately, I felt so discouraged and frustrated. Is it just me? Maybe I am just not a good teacher! Or perhaps my kind of swordsmanship should no longer get taught or maybe I just can't teach correctly. . . . Students studying sword just don't catch on. This is all I can conclude, so sad!

Everyone sat there waiting to do sword class I guess, but just a little sloppy. Not even in a straight line. To sit in a straight line is not simply to look nice at the beginning of class; it is to keep constantly aware of where everyone is and where we ourselves sit in relation to others. No, everyone just sat down in their own way – so self-satisfied and totally asleep, totally unaware. Sitting there with a sword, it seems so basic to put the sword down by our side at the most appropriate place so that we can easily reach for it without even looking or a second thought. This is the one of the first lessons we learn, yet no one tonight appeared aware of where their sword was in relation to themselves. They put it down anywhere – who cares? Even if no one taught us this, our natural sense to be aware and ready would tell us this naturally. But, how can this happen if we are asleep? This is simply wrong and simply does not make any sense to me and simply contradicts everything we try to learn in swordsmanship.

Of course, these days everyone just wants to swing the sword around and play *samurai* movie star or *ninja* spy – that is all there is to it. I am not here to host people's fantasies. Swordsmanship means something much different.

When I looked at everyone sitting there, I could easily see that in a sudden attack, they would all die, no one will even come close to getting their sword. They would all die so easily. As Musashi said, "How sad to see the dead bodies on the battlefield and their swords are still yet in their scabbards!" When I see students sitting so inattentively, I don't see human beings sitting there, I do not feel any energy at all. It feels like seeing ghosts or something dead, not like swordsmanship at all. Finally: If you are sitting there, don't you know I am attacking you, don't you know someone is attacking you? No? You don't care?

Awareness means being in the moment, ready to move at any mo-

ment, knowing everything around you, being centered or becoming perfectly clear. This awareness, in turn, means swordsmanship – not swinging the *bokken* like an aerobic exercise or playing *samurai* movie. Even when we are not moving, by cultivating this level of awareness, anyone could sense the sharp edge of our sword. Alas, no one understands or appreciates sword today.

Or course, there is no longer the *samurai*. He was abolished. We do not wear swords anymore, so the use of the *samurai* sword has been dead for over 100 years. We long to capture their spirit and the wisdom of the sword – no impossible! We just want to play out our fantasies and entertain ourselves, too sad! Sitting there so self-absorbed, this cannot be swordsmanship at all! No one wants Sensei to teach them sword, so what do they want me to do?



Ken Watanabe demonstrates a kata from Chuden as Sensei provides commentary at one of our summer demonstrations in Little Tokyo.

I guess I would become a much better and much more popular teacher if I could accept, just like my students, that we just play meaningless games with each other in our lives – and swordsmanship counts as one of them.

When I first gathered together many of my old articles so many years ago, I called this first collection of mine, *Kagotsurube*. I love this term and I think it expresses the great paradox of the sword today.

*Kagotsurube* is the name of a sword of exceptional, exceptional cutting abil-

ity. It refers to a literary passage describing a battle, in which bodies fell like "water out of a well bucket made like a basket". Since these words were written this term came to refer to many exceptional fighting swords. Yet, in reality, a well bucket made like a basket, although the name of a real cutting sword, is also, at the very same time, the most useless thing in the world. . . .

It is easy to turn our martial arts and our training into something totally silly – at the same time, it can become something so incredible profound. If we do not exercise extreme care in our training, especially in something like martial arts, the thin line between the ridiculous and the profound becomes very, very fine. We must constantly attune to this danger in everything we do and in how we think about our training. Is our practice real and meaningful and embody wisdom? Or are we just being ridiculous? As in everything in this world, the two are tied more closely together than we can possibly imagine. . . .

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, on June 6, 2003.

# Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

## Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class

10:15-11:15 AM Open

## Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

## Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open\*

## Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

7:45-8:45 PM Weapons\*

## Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

## Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM 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

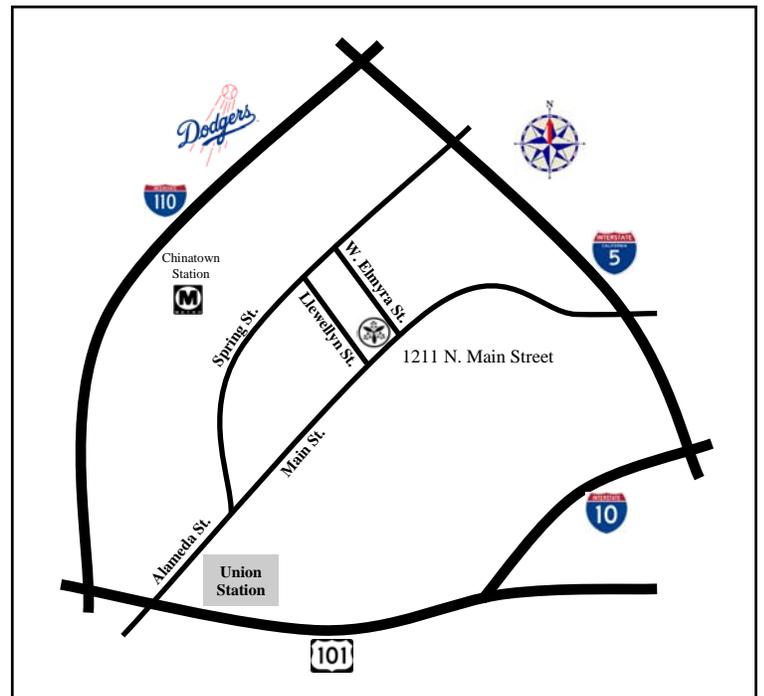
## Sundays

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.*



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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.*