

The AikidoCenter of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: AikidoWorld Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Mt. Fuji in the summertime viewed from Hakone.

その門に頭用心衣更え
Sono mon ni atama
yojin koromogae

The change of clothes;
Be careful of your head
With that the door!

– Issa

Message From the Teacher by David Ito, AikidoChief Instructor

Summer is finally upon us. Unlike in Los Angeles, Japan has four distinct seasons. Thus, there is a changing of the guard so to speak when it comes to the season and one's wardrobe of clothes.

People in Japan regimentally shed their winter and spring wardrobes at exactly the same time every year regardless of weather temperament or need.

The Japanese believe that with this change comes with a bit of arrogance based on an old Japanese proverb *mago nimo ishō* or literally "Clothes on a mule pack driver." In English it is akin to "Clothes make the man." The arrogance comes as one thinks that they are someone other than who they are just by changing one's clothes.

Martial arts training is the same. The journey of training is also about change and it also advises against hubris because with pride a fall shortly comes after as illustrated in the *haiku* by Issa above.

As we change and improve there is a natural elation that we get from achievement. This is the worse part of contest and one of the reasons why O Sensei advocated against competition in Aikido. In competition there always has to be a winner and a loser and thus over confidence and foolish pride are born.

Traditional training teaches us to always be humble, have humility and show restraint because, like with all things done regularly, we become whatever it is we do on a consistent basis.

Clothes do make the man, but only from the outside. True change comes from the inside out and only with a sense of honesty that consistent and constant training brings out.

Upcoming Events

June 24-26th:
Weapons Seminar

July 4th:
Dojo Closed: 4th of July

July 30th:
Intensive Seminar

August 9-12th:
Karita Sensei visit

August 27th:
Intensive Seminar

September 5th:
Dojo Closed: Labor Day

September 4th:
Intensive Seminar

Think of Others Before You Act

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Whether we like it or not, our actions have consequences.

Several years ago, a well known athlete was convicted of a heinous crime. His family and friends begged the judge for leniency while the rest of the world demanded castigation. In the end, the judge showed an unjust and probably unfair amount of leniency and the world exploded. So much craze and emotion was stirred up that people on both sides of the case wrote letters, posted their passionate pleas to the Internet and some even protested. Besides the fact that the crime was horrifying, what I think was missed was that this case demonstrated that none of us exists in a vacuum – We are somehow all connected. When I read about this case, I too was outraged and craved punishment and adamantly I still do, but what struck me the most was the letter this criminal's father wrote to the judge. Of course he gave a ton of "good" reasons why he deserved mercy but what was really interesting, on a humanistic level, was not just his justification for mercy but how his son's crime destroyed him and his family too. This seemingly "good" kid who turned out to be villain in disguise not only ruined his life but the lives of everyone around him.

It's a funny thing that we, as humans, think that we are somehow alone in this world. The Dalai Lama once said, "Our ancient experience confirms at every point that everything is linked together, everything is inseparable." We erroneously believe that what we do somehow does not affect others.

The other day I sold some musical instruments that had been accumulating in my basement. I went to *Guitar Center* whose employees treated me carelessly and kept me waiting for two weeks only to value my instruments so low that it made me think they were cheating me. On a whim, I went to *Caveman Vintage Music* in Chinatown. I was met by Eric, the owner, who spent over an hour with me explaining the instruments and in the end gave me 10 times the price that *Guitar Center* reluctantly offered me. Five months later, I got a call from Eric. He had noticed that I never cashed his check. I thought that I had via the Internet and even tore it up. I was blown away because Eric could have easily waited me out and kept the money for himself. Instead he chose the higher path and gave me a call – who does that anymore?

There is an old Japanese proverb associated with proper behavior that was popular with the warrior class: *Nimai no shita wa tsukawarenu*. *Nimai no shita wa tsukawarenu* literally means, "One should not use two tongues." The literal definition is about one not engaging in double talk but also the nuanced understanding is that a warrior's conduct is a representation of their character. The

samurai were supposed to be the pinnacle of Japanese social hierarchy and thus were supposed to conduct themselves with the highest morals and standards.

The reason for this high moral standard comes from this idea in Japanese society of living as a collective. People in Japanese culture form units based on this idea of *amae* or dependence and *giri* or obligation – I think of you, you think of me so to speak. *Amae* and *giri* are cogs in a wheel of reciprocal reliance where all the people within the family or clan rely upon each other. To step out could cause a disruption in the cycle.



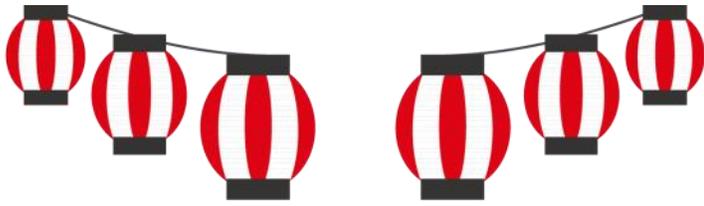
Taking this thinking further, it was thought that a single person's conduct was not only a reflection of their character but also reflected the attitude of their entire family or clan. Therefore, even the smallest violation could result in someone's death or may even put one's entire clan in jeopardy – ever heard of the *47 Ronin*?

An interesting story that Furuya Sensei once told illustrates this idea of group welfare and individual action. One of Sensei's Iaido teachers was Mitsuzuka Takeshi Sensei. Mitsuzuka Takeshi had this crazy moustache that was long and shaped a particular way. The story goes that his mother made him grow it out that way. Her thinking was that Mitsuzuka Sensei's unique moustache would preclude him from being mistaken for someone else it would also mean that his

conduct would be unforgettable and thus he had to act accordingly and not embarrass his family.

All martial artists, like the samurai, are supposed to be a cut above and thus live their lives on a higher level which is a demonstration of that character. An opening or a weak spot in Japanese is referred to as a *suki*. As martial artists we are always trying to close up any *suki* because any opening is an invitation to be attacked. Acting any way we want is a juvenile way of understanding our place in our group, our society or our world and thus it can also invite attack.

Understanding that we are not alone in this world enables us to live out what every great religion and every martial arts advocates – to think of others first. At every moment we are buffed by opportunities to choose ourselves first, but when we realize that what we do affects a lot more people other than ourselves then maybe we can choose a different course of action. Sensei used to say, "Always pretend as if your teacher is watching." With this admonition, one would theoretically always act their best. What would the world be like if before we acted we asked ourselves, "What would mom think?" I am sure like Eric we would act accordingly. Whether we like it or not, our actions effect more than just us. Please think of others before you act.



2016 Obon Matsuri Schedule



Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

July 9-10, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm;
Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Zenshuji Soto Mission

July 9-10, 11:00 am - 8:00 pm

Orange County Buddhist Church

July 16-17, Saturday, 2:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm;
Sunday, 2:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Venice Buddhist Temple

July 16 -17, Saturday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm;
Sunday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Pasadena Buddhist Temple

July 23-24, Saturday, 4:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm;
Sunday, 4:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

July 30-31, Saturday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 5:30 pm;
Sunday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 5:30 pm

West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple

July 30-31, Saturday, 4:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm;
Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Gardena Buddhist Church

August 13-14, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm;
Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm

San Fernando Valley

Japanese American Community Center

June 25-26, Saturday, 4:30 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm;
Sunday, 4:30 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

East San Gabriel Japanese Cultural Center

June 25, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Senshin Buddhist Temple

July 2, 5:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Oxnard Buddhist Temple

July 9, 1:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm



Yamaoka Tesshu (1836-1888)

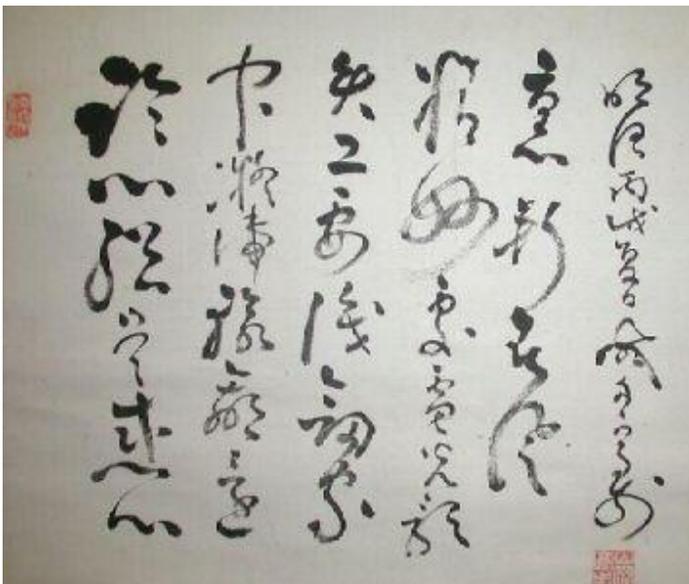
Yamaoka Tesshu was a famous samurai of the *Bakamatsu* era who was the creator of the *Itto Shoden Muto-ryu* school of swordsmanship.

Yamaoka Tesshu is considered by some to be one of the last great samurai. There is a saying that to be a true samurai, one had to master at least three arts. Yamaoka Tesshu was not only a master of swordsmanship but of meditation and calligraphy too.

This calligraphy contains the words that Yamaoka Tesshu used to say to all of his students:

“How could you cut the wind with one stroke of the sword? Your cut must be like a streak of lightning. If you lose your sword-work, it would simply mean you are a mediocre swordsman. You must realize you are just an idle fellow and are stagnant. I herewith strongly give you my instruction.”

Tesshu’s students are still reminded of these words even today.



Thank the Dust

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

A large part of traditional martial arts training is cleaning the dojo. Every day involves some kind of cleaning, so much so that students often find that they are cleaning something that has already been clean! The dojo's maintenance requires constant attention: wiping down the wood floors and mats, dusting the weapons racks, *tokonoma*, and other dojo fixtures, and generally keeping the dojo clean and ready for training. In the old days, the level of training at a school was gauged by its cleanliness. One just has to visit a martial arts school and take a quick look around to figure out how high or low the level of training was there.

One constant foe in a dojo is the dust. We clean something only to see a thin layer of dust appear the next day, often only hours later. Dust accumulates anywhere it has a chance to settle and it's a seemingly non-stop battle to keep it at bay. Compared to other problems of a dojo, the dust is a small inconvenience yet my Aikido teacher, Rev. Kensho Furuya, used to say, "Our next dojo will be a dust-free dojo!" and then we'd joke about the fancy air filtration system that we'd install if we ever moved to a new space.

A dust-free dojo might be convenient, but with one less thing to clean we might lose a crucial unseen hidden aspect to our training. The dust seems like an inconvenience; just another chore to complete before and after the "real" training. However as minor an inconvenience as dust might be, if we eliminate it, then what else do we eliminate for our own convenience? Arriving to class on time? How much do we lose for the sake of making things easier for ourselves?

Dusting the dojo is a small thing but in the martial arts, victory is often decided upon a very small detail and within the smallest margins. Something like dust is easy to ignore or overlook; it's not really hurting anything in the dojo. A dusty dojo is not life or death, but the attitude that allows the dojo to become dusty; that is the problem. It's not a hardship to dust. If things get dusty, then they get dusty. No problem, right? However, allowing it to become dusty is a reflection of our mindset or more importantly our training. Out of neglect or carelessness, neither attitude is conducive to proper training. If we notice something is dusty and do nothing about it, what does it reveal about us?

Like a strong *uke*, the dust keeps us honest. Without the dust constantly covering the inside of our dojo, it's too easy to become complacent; to lose our edge. In a way, the dust is our training partner; it's a constant battle to keep it at bay. It would be awe-

some to have another minor thing not to worry about – to not have to dust every day. In fact, it would be great if the dojo somehow never became dirty at all, but then it ceases to be training.

As things get easier for us, we become complacent and our senses diminish. Remember when we didn't have smartphones? We memorized all of our important phone numbers, addresses and dates. Now we never have to remember anything because our phones remind us. When I was working in a bank, we'd see countless bills pass before our eyes. So many to the point where we

didn't need a counterfeit machine to tell the genuine bills from the fake ones. It took a tremendous amount of training to develop our eyes and develop our keen senses. Today, they have a machine for that. But, what is really getting lost?

As things become easier through technology or convenience, we lose this sense of what is important. Because we have running water at our disposal, it's easier to take it for granted, but as soon as a plumber turns it

off to make repairs, then what? All of a sudden this lack of water becomes an issue, something we have to think about before we cook, bathe, or use the toilet.

Like the dust, our training partners are not there to inconvenience us but to help us get better and stronger. There is a saying in Japanese, *Oni ni kanabo* which means "To make something strong, stronger." Sometimes we might train with a partner who is not to our liking; maybe they're too stiff, too strong, or too inexperienced to give us a "good practice." However, part of the training is learning how to deal with these small adversities and how to surmount them as well. Training with someone who is an "inconvenience" to us is really where the real training happens and where true learning occurs.

Each time we dust, it is an opportunity to hone our senses. Asking ourselves, "Is dusting actually effective?" is not the point. Better questions might be, "Is it getting clean or am I making it worse?", "Am I actually paying attention to what I am doing?" or "Am I concentrating in the moment or am I just distracting myself?"

Don't think of the dust as a chore but as an opportunity to hone ourselves. When we say "onegaishimasu" to each other, we say it not only to our practice partner, but we say it in appreciation to everything that helps us in our training: to the mat, to the electricity that keeps the lights on, to the roof over our heads during class, to our teacher, and yes, even to the dust.



2016 Weapons Seminar



Schedule of Classes

June 24th (Friday)

- 6:30 – 7:30 PM: Aikido
8:00 PM: No Host Dinner

June 25th (Saturday)

- 6:30 – 8:00 AM: Jo Basics
8:15 – 9:15 AM: Breakfast
9:30 – 11:00 AM: 31 Jo Kata
11:15 AM– 12:15 PM: Bokken Basics
12:30 – 1:30 PM: Aiki-ken
6:00 PM: Seminar Social

June 26th (Sunday)

- 7:30 – 8:45 AM: Introduction to Iaido
9:00 – 10:00 AM: Brunch
10:15 – 11:15 AM: Aiki-ken
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM: Tanto-tori

Schedule Subject To Change Without Notice.

\$100.00 per person.

Everyone is invited to attend.



The Furuya Foundation and the AikidoCenter of Los Angeles

The Furuya Foundation and the AikidoCenter 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 AikidoCenter 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.



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In the Eye of the Beholder

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

In my friend's discussion group, there was comment about this *tsuba*. For all intents and purposes this is just an average *tsuba*, actually rather plain and many would comment that it is also a little "ugly" and definitely "crude." I think in a group of *tsuba*, no one would give this one a second glance. I often see *tsuba* like this

tossed into the "garbage pile" of *tsuba* at sword conventions.

Actually, this is a 1st generation *Yamakichibei* and quite well-known and scholars have studied and referenced this in books for the last century. Whereas no one would pay \$50.00 for something like this here in most circumstances, this particular piece recently sold for \$30,000.00!

We always look at things from our own perspective today and we are intelligent to make the right choices usually. We do this in Aikido as well. One thing, I would to point out is that the "samurai aesthetic" and "point of view" of the ancient masters is far, very far different from the world we are brought up in and their sense of the world or world view is also very different.

This *tsuba* does not have the artistic technical skill and technique of

later artists and there is no gold or intricate design element which attracts the eye. Simply put, there is no "flash" and the obvious appeal that even an untrained eye can understand and appreciate. Aikido and many of the traditional martial arts are very much like this *tsuba* as well.

When we study *tsuba*, we begin to appreciate the wonderful quality of the iron like in this example. The design is simple but, for a trained connoisseur's eye it has an appeal which clearly illustrates the age in which it was made. The wonderful, unrestrained freedom of design, combined with the excellent quality of iron cannot be duplicated today. The one tiny openwork flower is perfectly placed to give the *tsuba* balance and yet it shows a quality of life and movement unlike later artists who revel in perfection of technique and lack the internal inspiration. When such a *tsuba* like this is placed on a sword, the entire sword shows the pride and the great inner strength of the samurai. It is truly a remarkable masterpiece.

Even in 40 years of collecting, I have never come close to such a masterpiece as this. Such *tsuba* and their makers inspired legions of *tsuba* artists after the 1550's when it was made through the history of Japanese art.

When we can appreciate the eternal and quiet beauty, we can glimpse just slightly in to the mind of the warriors who first created the martial arts that we practice today.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on February 7, 2005.

BUDOKAN

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The drawing will take place at Seoul Sausage Restaurant (right across the street from where the Budokan will be) on Monday, November 28, 2016.

Winners need not be present to win.

For every raffle ticket sold by the Furuya Foundation and the AikidoCenter of Los Angeles, the dojo will receive \$4.00.

Please contact Gary Illiano at gary.illiano@runbox.com to purchase tickets or email the dojo for more information.

For more information about the Budokan or the raffle, please contact the Little Tokyo Service Center at BOLA@LTSC.ORG

Always Have Faith

by Reverend Kensho Furuya



Long ago, I had a student who never seemed to quite catch on. I remember repeating myself to him over and over again, day after day, month after month and year after year, in each and every class. Sometimes, I wondered if he would ever catch on. It was very hard and very frustrating at times to teach him. Suddenly, one day, on his own, he began to change as if my message and advice finally began to sink in and, my goodness, how much improvement he made – almost overnight!

We can help some students to improve immediately with our advice and teachings. Some students need to help themselves before they can catch on to whatever is being taught. And some students won't catch on at all until the time is right for them.

I think it is important to see each student's ability and as a teacher learn to catch his timing as well. Most of the time, finding the student's timing is very hard and so the only thing a teacher can do is have faith and continue to teach them as best they can.

I know some teachers give in to the students and give them their way – in the long run this never works out.

When I was working for the publishing company, I was editing a book for a teacher of another martial art. When I was examining one of his *katas*, I noticed that one of the photos was incorrect and didn't match the explanation. I called up the author and asked him to come down to take another corrected photo of the move for the book. He said, "It is too much trouble to change the photos, just change the text and I will start teaching it with the other foot." I was so shocked!

I have seen this happen many times as we change the training or the technique simply out of convenience. Sometimes, the students complain and we, the instructors, make it easier or simply avoid the technique. Sometimes, for the students, we get lazy and teach watered-down techniques, fearing that they will leave if the training is too hard. We do anything to be "buddies" with the students even if it means sacrificing our own beliefs, art and training. Ultimately, this is not right and will only cause problems in the long run.

Everyone benefits when we work toward the higher standards of the art itself, not by bringing down the art to satisfy our whims or to adapt to our own convenience or petty ideas.

I think if I had given up on this student he would have never reached this moment of remarkable transformation. I have had this happen many times with many different types of students so I am able to be patient even if it takes ten or twenty years to correct one mistake.

As teachers, we must teach students as correctly as possible whether they like it or not. A teacher, like a ruler or measuring stick, never changes according to what it is measuring no matter how long or short, light or heavy, or thick or thin.

The mind must remain flexible and pliant in all things and in the way it thinks at every moment, but it must also be like a thick iron bar, which will never bend to outside pressures or influences.

Teachers should be like a samurai sword, its edge is perfectly straight and its shape is perfectly curved, but at the very same time that is why it cuts so well.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on August 22, 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

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

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*

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM Intensive Seminar* †

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Open

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

† Intensive seminar is offered the last Saturday of every month and is open to any Aikidoist regardless of school or style who is at least proficient in forward and backward ukemi.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

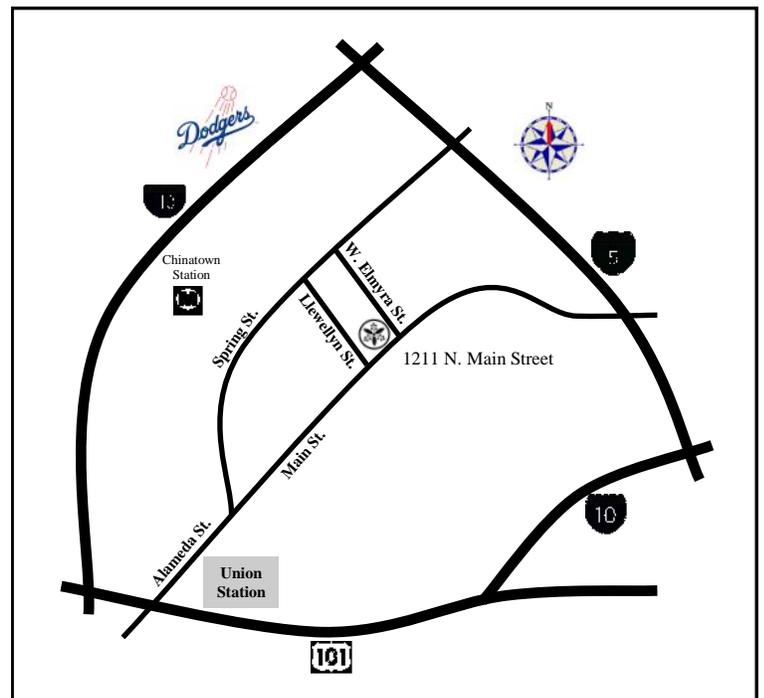
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



The AikidoCenter of Los Angeles has been awarded
Hombu Official Recognition by the
AIKIDOWORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

AikidoHombu Dojo - Aikikai Foundation

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
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*We are a not-for-profit, traditional AikidoDojo
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.*

Editor-in-Chief and Publisher: David Ito



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at

1211 N. Main Street

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Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@Aikidocenterla.com

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

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

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