

# 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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### Message From the Teacher

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The key to almost all of the things that afflict us today is gratitude. Gratitude? Yes, to be thankful is to realize what one does have instead of what one does not.

Each one of us is born with our own journey that we must venture upon alone. During that journey the bumps and

bruises of life can add up and sometimes without notice. When this accumulation happens, it is easy to get bogged down in negative thinking like anger, hatred or depression which are the by-products of a negative mind. To combat or fight with those thoughts is not Aikido. To harmonize with our thoughts is Aikido.

As Aikidoists, our art dictates that we address confrontation differently. Everyone has heard of the stress responses of fight, flight or freeze. Aikidoist, as a deliberate practice, have created one more response which is harmony.

To harmonize is for two things or more to come together. When these things come together change can occur. This is the rationale behind Aikido. Sensei was fond of this idea as well and put it in the header at the top of this newsletter, 道の為, 世の為, 人の為 which means "The Way of change, world of change and people of change." When we harmonize

with our partners advances it creates alignment and this alignment enables us to "see" things from a different perspective. With a changed perspective we can choose to act differently.



*Mt. Fuji adorned with lovely fall colors*

I am pretty sure that in just about every culture they give some sort of gesture of gratitude before eating. But, why? It could be that before the industrial revolution the abundance of food was scarce. At times, it

might have seemed that one only received food by an almost divine intervention and that created a need to show one's thanks. The Japanese say, "Itadakimasu" when they are about to eat. In the West we saying grace or a prayer before eating. *Itadakimasu* means, "to humbly receive" but that definition has become passé and has been replaced with "Lets eat!"

As martial artists, we place a level of decorum to everything we do because we understand the significance of the situation. There is a saying that I am fond of that goes, "Yaiba ni tsuyoki mono wa rei ni suguru" which means that the greatest warriors surpass all others in etiquette and decorum.

Gratitude, as a deliberate practice, enables us to put things into perspective and to understand the total picture. Please take a moment this Thanksgiving to be grateful for all you have because there are many who go without.

## Upcoming Events

**November 26-27th:**  
Dojo Closed: Thanksgiving

**November 28th:**  
Intensive seminar

**December 5th:**  
Dojo Christmas party

**December 12th:**  
*Osoji*: Dojo cleanup

**December 24-25th:**  
Dojo Closed: Christmas

**December 30th:**  
*Osame keiko*:  
Last practice of the year

**December 31-January 3rd:**  
Dojo Closed: New Year's

## Appreciate the Wabi

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The month of November succinctly sums up the Japanese concept of *wabi*. *Wabi* can be thought of as a way to describe something that has a quiet type of refinement. The Urasenke Tea Master, Sen Shoshitsu IV said, “The *wabi* that we enjoy and appreciate so much in *chanoyu* – an aesthetic that, if described in terms of months of the year, has been said to be embodied in the month referred to, on the old lunar calendar, as the “month of no gods” (*kannazuki*), which would be the month of November on our modern solar calendar.”

*Wabi* is often paired with *sabi* and together they are the concept which is culturally at the heart of Japanese society. Both are difficult concepts to not only define but to bring into context as well. *Wabi-sabi* is used to describe something that is simple yet elegant without a sense of pretentiousness that is caught in the moment between life and death. *Wabi* is not something that one might know but rather something that is realized in the moment. It's like looking at an old withered gate and realizing the beauty of it in its simple design and rundown state. This austere sense of elegance can best be seen in November as the heat of summer begins to retreat bringing with it winter's sense of coldness and, as author Haga Koshiro put it, “its withered beauty.” This withered beauty with its cold temperatures and changing foliage gives November this feeling of fleetingness that can be thought of as *wabi* in action.

To see this theme of change beginning to play out in November brings *wabi*-ness to the forefront of our minds and with it a sense of impermanence or what is called *ichigo-ichie*. *Ichigo-ichie* literal translates to mean *one time, one meeting* but it carries with it a more sentimental feeling of joyful sadness. When we are present to the moment and realize the fleetingness of the occasion, we understand *ichigo-ichie* or that this moment, or all moments for that matter, will never happen again. This realization necessitates that we be present and cherish that experience.

The winters in Japan are incredibly harsh which brings about a certain understanding that life is tenuous and in that same breath that all life has value. In the olden times in order to survive the winter, Japanese people couldn't solely rely on their own efforts

and needed to depend on their neighbors in order to survive. Japan at that time was a huge agricultural based economy which heavily relied on the labor intensive crop of rice. One cannot harvest rice alone and thus need to depend on their neighbors to survive. This idea of mutual collaboration can still be seen in Japanese society today as one of its core values. One has to look no farther than the Japanese's response to the 2012 tsunami to see this idea of mutual collaboration in action.



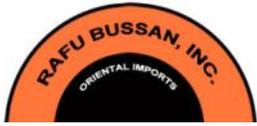
In order to create a system of mutual collaboration this depends heavily on a reciprocating cycle of action coupled with gratefulness and appreciation. One may not give up themselves if the other wasn't readily appreciative. In tea ceremony, this mutual collaboration is referred to as the *host-guest* mentality. The host, thinking of their guests, tries their best to make the most of guests' experience. Understanding the host's sacrifice, the guests do their best to show a level of appreciation in recognition of the host's efforts. Each of the people thinks not of themselves but in regards to the other's welfare.

When we are young or inexperienced we think that we are solely important and that we are at the center of the universe. We cannot see the efforts or the sacrifices of not only others but our parents and teachers too and we are consequently selfish in our outlook and actions. As we get older or more experienced, we come to understand that we only exist as a result

of the interdependent endeavors of others where one can see that gratefulness begets action and action necessitates gratefulness. To survive is to put others ahead of oneself and because another does so we need to be grateful for their efforts.

This idea of mutual collaboration is at the heart of Aikido. Aikido was designed as a partnership where one only has to look at the first kanji in Aikido or 合 or *ai* in order to understand this. *Ai* is often translated as harmony but that is the interpretation. *Ai* is defined as “to come together or to meet” and that, generally speaking, involves more than two things. In order to do Aikido, we need a partner to take our *ukemi*. The *uke* sacrifices themselves for the benefit of the *nage*. In order to get good at Aikido, we need them and we cannot get good without them. To make ourselves better we need to make others better in the process or in other words the better they get, the better we get.

*Continued on page 6...*



# Rafu Bussan, Inc.

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Check Out Our Website For Future Announcements:

[www.rafubussaninc.com](http://www.rafubussaninc.com)



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## Cheap, Fast, or Good: Pick Two

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

How long does it take to get good? That is a question on the minds of many martial arts students. How much time will it take and how much effort will I have to sacrifice before I am good enough to use the technique against an attacker?

There's an engineering adage – "Cheap, Fast, or Good: Pick Two" – otherwise known as the project management triangle. Most projects we do can fall under these three constraints: scope – the quality and features of the project, time – the completion of the project before a deadline, and cost – what we have to pay or sacrifice to finish the project.

Cheap, fast and good isn't always possible. If a bridge was built quickly and under budget using inferior materials, quality will suffer and the bridge may be undependable. Likewise if a first-rate bridge were built quickly, it would be very, very expensive in terms of the amount of manpower and man-hours needed.

There isn't a client in the world that wouldn't want the best bridge or skyscraper built as quickly as possible for the lowest price. In short, the ideal is cheap, fast, and good, but realistically only two sides of the project management triangle are possible.

Likewise some martial arts students want the same thing: to reach mastery as quickly as possible and with the least amount of effort. They want to get good, but want to take the easy way and don't have the patience or the mindset to work at earning something. Instant mastery, a quick-fix, easy and convenient.

Nowadays we can take a photo with our smart phones and, instead of waiting for the film to develop, see if the photo is any good right away. If we wanted to watch a TV show, we don't have to wait for a certain time to view it, we can stream the episodes any time we feel like watching. Even before the Internet information age, we enjoyed hot noodles in three minutes and a bowl of oatmeal in only one. Instead of writing a letter, we have email. There is instant messaging, Minute Rice, and one-hour photo developing.

If people in the past, even fifty years ago, could see us today we'd seem like royalty to them; anything we wanted, available at our whim. Thanks to progress, it takes less work today to get the same thing that took seemingly forever twenty years ago. With this kind of convenience, it's easy to take certain parts of our lives for granted. We don't have to pick our own apples, churn our own butter, or raise our own chickens to get eggs. We could just go to the nearby market. Instead of spending hours at the library combing through shelves of books, one can do a Google search and magically have all the information you want at your fingertips. With all of these conveniences we really do seem like royalty.

Traditionally, a student was expected to spend lots of time and energy searching for a teacher, convincing this teacher to invest time in them, and then train for years to perfect their technique. Nowadays, students want to know how long it will take to become good?



One of the more difficult aspects of teaching is to instill in the student the proper attitude for training. Nowadays, people feel more entitled and deserving. They are less willing to put in the blood sweat and tears of martial arts training. Today, with so much information available on the Internet, it's relatively easy to take the online shortcut and learn everything about martial arts without

putting in any of the effort. Like building a skyscraper or a suspension bridge, students want to get good quickly and with the least effort possible.

In the past, before the days of the Internet, phonebooks and advertisements, joining a martial arts school was not easy. There more illustrious the style, the higher the standards. Often the prospective student had to be introduced by someone in the school and that was just the beginning.

Traditionally, the student had to go through *te-hodoki*, or the untying of hands where basically the student is made to wait until they are accepted into the school. The prospective student was made to wait for days or weeks, or was ordered to complete some kind of menial task before the teacher deemed the student ready for training, thus untying the prospective student's hands so they could begin training. A probationary period fraught with something burdensome wasn't to test the applicant's skill, but to test their spirit and attitude. There is a joke that goes like this: the best way to get to really get to know someone is have them surf the internet with a slow, antiquated dial-up modem. If the student expected to get good quickly and easily, this probationary period was designed to test their spirit and to weed out the ones with that kind of attitude.

Technology has made certain aspects of our lives easier. However, in the martial arts, technology gives no advantages. Technology will not make it easier for the student to catch onto the technique. Mastering a martial art as sophisticated as Aikido or Iaido will take a long time and require a huge amount of effort. Nowadays it seems that fewer and fewer people are willing to put in the time and effort into the training. Now more than ever, it seems that people are in a rush to get the prize at the end, and if they are denied it, it's never their fault.

Martial arts like Aikido and Iaido are the opposite of Instagram and Cup-O-Noodles; there is no instant gratification, there is no fleeting satisfaction. However, with hard work and perseverance, it is possible to possess something that no one can take from you.

Cheap, fast, or good, there is no substitute for the time, effort and patience spent training to develop any skill regardless if it is Aikido, or Iaido. Please train regularly, but please also train wisely.

## In The Community...

### Gardena Community Center to Provide Winter Fun Camp and Oshogatsu Cooking Workshops

#### December 6<sup>th</sup>: Peruvian Nikkei Cooking

Back by popular demand our Nikkei Peruvian cooking workshop on Dec. 6 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm in the Nisei Veterans memorial Hall!

We will be using a necessary ingredient in Peruvian cooking- potatoes! Learn how to make papa rellena and causa...Nikkei style!

This workshop will be taught by Paulo Asato of Persuasions, and costs \$30.00 for all ingredients, recipes, and test tastings!

This workshop is open to 30 people only, and spots fill up quickly, so make sure to sign up today.

#### December 21-23: Fuyu Fun Camp

School's out for winter break! Looking for some fun, cultural and educational activities for your children to do during their winter break?

Sign up today for our Fuyu (winter) Fun Camp! This 3-day day time camp is great for students in 1st-6th grade! We will have fun activities, crafts, and games from 9am - 3pm.

For this 3-day camp the cost is only \$100.00 per child! We are accepting only 40 students at this time, so please sign up quickly. Additional after-camp hours (3pm - 5pm) are available for an additional cost of \$40 per day.

#### January 10<sup>th</sup>: Oshogatsu Cooking Workshop

Learn about oshogatsu and traditional Japanese foods served during the New Years with this special workshop taught by popular food blogger, Sylvia Gunde!

She will be showing how to make popular oshogatsu food; this workshop is great for families

You can join in on this amazing workshop Sunday Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 PM in the Nisei Veterans memorial Hall!

Check out Sylvia's food blog at: [sylviageatery.com](http://sylviageatery.com). Individual price is \$30.00, but any parent-child duo gets the special price of \$50.00 per couple! We only have spots for 30 folks, so sign up today.

For more information visit: <http://jci-gardena.org/> or contact the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute at [info@jci-gardena.org](mailto:info@jci-gardena.org) or (310) 324-6611.

### Modern Twist: Contemporary Japanese Bamboo Art at the Bowers Museum

September 19, 2015 to January 3, 2016



Bamboo is a quintessential part of Japanese culture, shaping the country's social, artistic, and spiritual landscape. Although bamboo is an abundant natural resource, it is a challenging artistic medium with less than 100 professional bamboo artists in Japan today.

For more information visit: <http://www.bowers.org/index.php/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/416-modern-twist-contemporary-japanese-bamboo-art>

### Children's Oshogatsu Workshop 2015 Monday, December 28, 2015 at 10:00AM



at JACCC  
244 S. San Pedro Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

By sharing traditions with our children, we can pass on not only the rituals but also the spirit of the holidays for the new generation. Engage your child in this one-day Oshogatsu workshop, where children will participate in hands-on craft activities and demonstrations led by local artists and community members to create lasting memories and foster cultural values that your child will cherish for years to come. Workshops are designed for children ages 7-12. Registration is limited to 30 participants, and ticket is required. Space will be filled on a first come first served basis.

For more information visit: <http://www.jaccc.org/#home>



Thursday, December 10, 2015. 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Oshogatsu: The New Year is one of the most important holidays in Japan. Come celebrate with us in our traditional way! You will learn Japanese vocabulary and basic expressions related to New Year's as well as New Year's customs. Draw New Year's greeting cards using calligraphy and play traditional New Year's games. Beginners and people who have no experience with Japanese are very welcome! Japan Foundation: 5700 Wilshire Blvd. #100, Los Angeles, CA 90036 18 years old and up and \$10.00 per person

For more information visit: <http://www.jflalc.org/courses-newyear.html>

# 諺 Kotowaza: Japanese Proverb

だんだん上手になってくるよ！  
*Dan dan jouzu ni natte kuru yo!*

**You'll get better as time goes by!**



The English equivalent was penned by W.E. Hickson, "Tis a lesson you should heed: Try, try, try again. If at first you don't succeed. Try, try, try again." As human beings, we are hardwired for adaptation and change. Our bodies and our minds have a plasticity to them which enables them to

adapt to any situation and all it takes is a little determination to do so. Mastery's best ally is perseverance and its biggest obstacle is time. If one wants to get better, all they have to do is simply just keep going and things will eventually get better.



## Dojo Christmas Party

December 5th at 6:30 pm

At the Smoke House in Burbank

**Sign-up today!**

*Limited to 50 people*

## In Memoriam



### Teruo Miwa

We are deeply saddened by the news that our friend Teruo Miwa passed away suddenly on October 11, 2015. We are grateful for his friendship and kindness over the years. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family. Teruo will be sorely missed.

Appreciate the *Wabi* continued from page 2...



It is hard to see something or someone else other than ourselves and infinitely harder to put them first. Every religion or philosophical construct at its core dictates that we put others first. Training in Aikido necessitates that we make it about the other person. In order to do that we must first disperse our self or ego and think of someone other than ourselves. Those who cannot will never get good at Aikido. When we start to look around and open our eyes to how much we are dependent on others for our existence, we are humbled. Sensei referred to this in the parable of the rice stalk, "The young rice stalk proudly raises his head toward heaven; the mature rice stalk humbly bows his head at the earth." Seeing things farther than our own noses is not a foreign concept to the Japanese traditional arts. In *Noh* theater it is called, "Riken no ken" or in trying to see what the audience sees in order to create a better performance for them. In tea ceremony, it is called *sugata* or being able to see the invisible character hidden beneath the bark.

In the US, November is about giving thanks. In Japan, November or *kannazuki* is about seeing the positive in something seemingly negative or the *wabi*-ness in change. There is a famous poem by Fujiwara Ietaka that the creator of tea ceremony, Sen Rikyu, often quoted when discussing *wabi*:

To those who long only for flowers,  
 fain would I show the full blown spring  
 which abides in the toiling buds of snow covered hills.

As Aikido people, we are called to see the *wabi*-ness in life. Good or bad are a matter of perspective. We choose to see that abundance exists all around us even when being confronted by an opponent. Our opponent is not our enemy but rather someone who is ignorant and thus in need of compassion. To destroy this person is to misunderstand this idea of mutual collaboration and the imperfect perfectness of *wabi* in this moment. We survive because others do and thus we should be grateful. Please appreciate people and things for they won't be around forever. *Wabi* is then nothing more than seeing the beauty in something and being grateful for it. Thanksgiving happens more than just this one special Thursday every year. Please try and be a little more grateful all year round.

## In the Old Days

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

In the “old” days of the Los Angeles downtown district, one could actually feel the heartbeat of the city in the early morning hours. Big trucks pushing their way through these dark downtown roads in the early hours from the flower market, produce market, garment district or jewelry marts spider-webbing out all over the entire nation. Downtown was at its busiest during these wee early hours when most of us are still in slumber land. Twenty years ago, there was Vickman’s, the Pantry, Cole’s, Nick’s by the railroad tracks, Phillippe’s, the flower market restaurant and several others which accommodated the truckers and early morning inhabitants. All of which opened from 1:00 or 2:00 am and closing around 10:00 am in the morning, all serving great breakfasts and good coffee at very cheap prices. Today, only a few are left. Nowadays, only Phillippe’s opens at 6:00 am, the rest have gone by the wayside and the survivors now abstain to more conventional hours.

Phillippe’s, opens the earliest, is one of the oldest, landmark restaurants in the city, founded in 1908. Coffee is still \$.09 cents! They are the alleged to be the originators of the well-known “French-dip beef sandwich.” I was having breakfast there this morning and having had a big Thanksgiving luncheon with a few of my students yesterday, I skipped dinner last night so I was hungry. I suppose, over the years, I have become a “familiar face” to all the other familiar faces I see there regularly.

As I was sitting there at one of the community tables having my breakfast and coffee, a very elderly Chinese lady, perhaps in her 70s or 80s, came by and sat down across from me. I have seen here there many times before. She looks very lonely and destitute, dressed just a little bit better than the homeless on the streets. I know why she sat down near me; she was eyeing all of the food I had left on my plate. I have seen her do this before, sitting down and gobbling up left-overs frantically just after the customer leaves and before the guy comes by to retrieve all the dirty dishes. I was wondering whether to leave quickly so she could eat, but I hadn’t

finished my coffee yet. I was wondering if I would offend her by offering a dollar or two. While in my thoughts, a family passed by, a young man and wife with their two little sons. I saw her attention shift to the little kids and suddenly she reached out her scrawny hand and patted the closest on the head, mumbling, “What a cute little darling, I love you, little boy!” Of course, there is nothing more precious to an elderly Chinese lady than grandchildren – this lonely old lady most likely had none of her own. The kid reeled back in terror at the old lady’s advances and the parents turned their attention to the old lady, not angry, but with straight focused eyes. The old lady suddenly got up and ran to the other side of the restaurant. This all happened in just a few seconds right before my eyes. The parents grabbed their kids closer to themselves. A few minutes later, the old lady quickly darted passed me and out the door, but not fast enough for me to notice that she had been crying.



Unreservedly, we must teach our kids the dangers lurking about on the streets today and to never talk to strangers. Yet, such a young kid, of four or five years old or so, as I saw today, has already learned to be in terror of all around him, even harmless, lonely, old ladies. It is said that love is the most powerful force we know. Yet, love in many cases makes us so vulnerable and weak. We

prepare ourselves with arms and strengthen our forces, but ultimately, it is only a sign of weakness.

We talk about “sword of life, sword of death” but it is only on the level of idle, meaningless chit-chat. We should be ashamed of ourselves! O Sensei spoke of love in Aikido but we still haven’t a clue as to what he meant. Why an elderly woman in our society is so poor, lonely and destitute that she is forced to eat the food of others and show affection to a strangers’ kid. Why a young boy, so innocent and naive, is already trained to suspect and hate others in fear. This is the kind of society we live, this is the kind of world we have created for ourselves. This only indicates that we do not understand what Aikido really means.

**Editor’s Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on November 30, 2002.

## 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.



# 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 Intensive seminar:

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

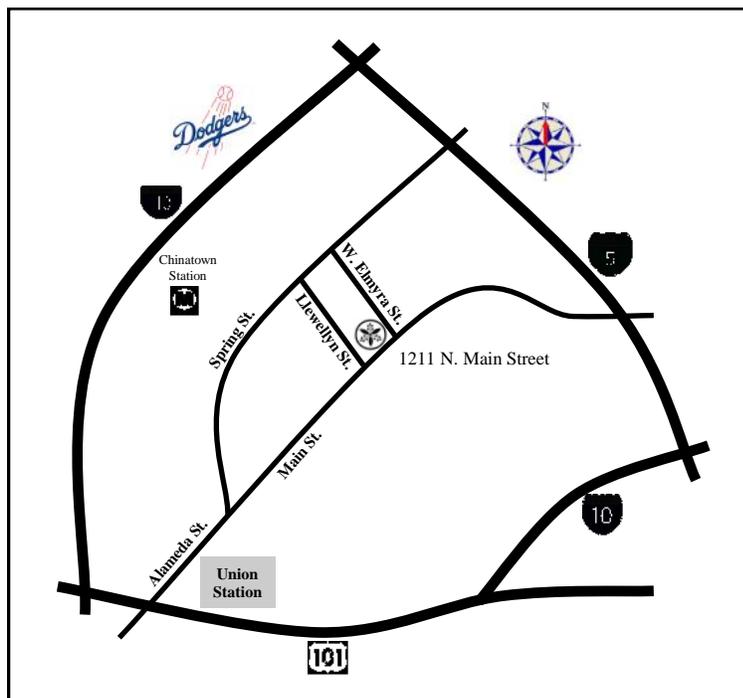
**Sundays**

7:45-8:45 AM

**Thursdays**

6:30-7:30 PM

*No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.*



**The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded Hombu Official Recognition by the AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

公益財団法人 合気会

**Aikido Hombu 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**  
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**

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.*