

# **SECOND DAN PAPER**

Submission in partial fulfillment to obtain the new rank of

**Second Dan**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper reflects on my journey as a martial artist, educator and leader over the past fourteen years, and reflects on my life as a martial artist after being promoted to the rank of first degree black belt in the UTF in 2000. Although many factors in my life have remained constant, there have been many changes: I have relocated to another state, changed my profession, studied another martial art, earned a second master's degree in education and focused my life towards ending violence and promoting equity. It has been an amazing time of growth and challenge. By extrapolating and reflecting on my life changes, I will simultaneously examine how these

changes have impacted my Taekwon-Do training, my understanding of the tenets, the Principles of Living Force, and how being promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan will impact my training and teaching.

## **Part One: The Principles of Living Force**

Center is something that was brought to my attention when I studied acting in my early twenties. It was not just physical for movement, but also emotional and the place where breath for sound generated. I thought I understood it at that time but over the years, I realized how little I knew about it; I also realized how little I used it in my techniques as a color belt and during my early career as a first degree black belt. Studying martial arts, especially TKD, has provided me with an outlet to truly explore moving, breathing and living from center.

The definition of center on the UTF website states: “When our center of energy coincides with our center of mass we have the **best foundation from which to generate maximum force and to receive outside forces with the least upset to our equilibrium.**” I interpret this to mean that the pelvic region, as our center of mass, can generate force, Ki, through center and breath because this approach activates internal muscles which then support external muscles when they generate or receive energy or force. Our center is our base; breathing from center allows more oxygen to go to the brain during times of stress. Deeper breathing helps us to have better control over our emotions and more breath means more energy for techniques. As I understand it, our center, the center of our bodies, acts as emotional and movement center. It initiates all impulses, movement and breath, our life force. In Korean, center is referred to as *Tan Jun*, and “is a location on the human body approximately four inches below the navel...the gravitational center of balance of the human body, it is also the location where Ki congregates and is thence dispersed throughout the human form.” (Shaw, 1997). In his book *The Ki Process*, Scott Shaw also talks about how the center or Tan Jun expands one inch in all directions. **YES!!** Having a strong understanding and awareness of our own center and that it is three dimensional, as opposed to two dimensional and flat, is a relatively new concept for me. I am a visual and kinesthetic learner and understanding this concept—that the center is three dimensional—has enabled me to think about it differently and to engage my center differently.

Since recommencing my training in TKD two years ago under the guidance of Master Irvin, I have had the opportunity to really focus on what it means to move from center. As the word suggests, connecting to center allows one to feel centered, grounded and strong. What I discovered during my training is that moving from center is not automatic for me in patterns, but that I can do it

more effectively in sparring and self-defense. Moving from center in my patterns is something I have had to consciously focus on implementing. What has helped me connect to center are specific activities, such as “Curl Overs,” as well the practice of contracting elbows, arms and legs back to center. Also, practicing techniques on one leg has helped me access the strength in my center. It is also helpful to have a strong core and to understand how core muscles work with smaller sets of muscles. Tucking my pelvis for all movement and techniques has changed my alignment and enabled me to access center and inner thigh muscles. Lastly, starting the exhale slightly before executing a technique provides me with a strong starting point to help me connect to enter. For me, being centered means being grounded and strong on the inside. As I focus more on center prior to movement, I find I am implementing it more and more into my life. If I am nervous about a meeting or presentation, I touch base with my center, take a deep slow breath through the nose before I speak or react, so in that sense it is a counter force as opposed to a reaction force. **In the beginning you mention “living from center” How do you live from center? Explain more of how center can enhance your life.**

## **INTEGRATED BREATHING**

The deeper I go into my training as a martial artist, the more I realize the importance of breathing from center. For me, integrated breathing is crucial for executing powerful techniques. This is why using a Kiyap is so important. The sound of the Kiyap reveals what is happening with the breath, how much breath is being used in the execution of the technique. If the sound of a Kiyap is high, it can indicate that not enough breath is being used, or that the breathing could be shallow and cannot sustain the execution of the technique. It may also reveal that there is no power going into the technique. Of course, everyone’s voice is different and children have smaller lungs, etc., but a strong breath can produce a loud sound and help create a powerful technique.

What has helped me develop integrated breathing is taking time to inhale from center in the ready or Junbi position, prior to any action or movement. This prepares me mentally, emotionally and physically (mind, heart and body). The breath starts the motor or engine, signaling the body that it is time to move or start. Using integrated breathing was a conscious effort on my part; it didn’t happen naturally, it happened because I consciously focused on breathing from center and breathing through the execution of techniques. Integrated breathing has helped my sparring, and has enabled me to maintain my balance mentally and physically. Breathing also allows me to relax, take a moment to prepare or check in. I find that I use deep breaths in my day-to-day life. If I am faced

with a difficult decision, or situation that is challenging, such as inappropriate behaviors, comments, etc, I inhale through the nose. Taking a breath gives me a moment to pause, think, prepare and then react. It is also part of my self-care. My work as the GirlStrength Director can be stressful, and taking time out of my busy day to take deep breaths really helps to keep me focused, on task and moving forward.

## **FOCUS**

*“It's not what's happening to you now or what has happened in your past that determines who you become. Rather, it's your decisions about what to focus on, what things mean to you, and what you're going to do about them that will determine your ultimate destiny.”*  
---Anthony Robbins

Focus is crucial in all areas of life. As the above quote by Anthony Robbins suggests, what we focus on and what has meaning to us is what shapes our future or destiny. Without focus in our lives we can become distracted and lose sight of our goals or purpose. Having a goal to test for 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree requires me to focus. Focus on patterns, focus on sparring, board breaks, etc., but this is not enough. There needs to be a focus within this focus. For instance, when I practice patterns I focus on different aspects of the pattern. How I am moving from center? Am I using center on all techniques? Where am I losing a connection to center? How am I breathing throughout the pattern? What are my targets for each move? What are the techniques actually doing? This type of focus keeps me mindful as I practice.

Focus in sparring is crucial. The ability to be focused on the opponent/partner, to be totally present in order to react to their movements. This level of focus requires a higher level of awareness, so that one knows what one's body is doing at all times, and how one may be impacting one's opponent. If the focus is only on oneself, and what one is doing or intending to do, then it is very likely that this person will not be successful at sparring.

Focusing techniques on a vulnerable body part is also an important aspect of self-defense and sparring. Having a specific target to hit narrows the focus of energy, allowing more to go into that specific target. If the technique is supported by strong intention, integrated breathing and a connection to center, then it is very likely that this will be a very effective technique. I believe that meditation, visualization, breathing all help to develop a strong mind and focus.

As I mature, my focus becomes more condensed. I have less spare time, so time and energy spent practicing the art must be focused. The UTF's definition of focus resonates with my

understanding: **“The more purposely we can focus our intentions, the more efficient and effective our forces of action, thought and spirit will be.”** I don’t believe I could have accomplished all that I have accomplished, two master’s degrees, overseeing a violence prevention program, being married for 24 years and balancing the practice of Karate with Taekwon-Do without a strong focus and commitment to building a safer and stronger community.

Very good but, how do you create more force in techniques with focus? Explain how focus relates to control of mass and acceleration. **\*\* (it is touched on in the acceleration part of this paper)**

A side kick requires the kicking leg to be relaxed but if the hip turns over too early whilst executing the technique one cannot use acceleration because the technique is no longer connected to center and the technique, so the kick becomes a leg technique. It may seem like I have control of mass in my kick, but I have found that I don’t. When this happens, I have disconnected from center, the sequencing of muscles is out of order, and acceleration is therefore prohibited

Nice discussion of focus, but elaborate on how the concept of “empty mind” relates to this goal of focus. How does that integrate into your discussion about focusing on purpose and process?

## **CONTROL OF MASS**

Controlling mass in a way that mass can be used effectively as a tool or weapon takes time and practice. Some might consider my size, or lack of mass, a huge deficit as a martial artist. I have never bought into this belief system; that the bigger you are the more dangerous you will be. I believe that a small person with the ability to move from center using focused techniques, acceleration and alignment can be equally dangerous. Controlling one’s mass should be a given for any black belt. Sadly, this is not always the case. I believe that control of mass comes from moving from center, tucking one’s pelvis, using integrated breathing, good alignment and the ability to move with balance and control. I notice that if I am not balanced through a transition while doing a pattern than I don’t have control of mass. Shifting center from stance to stance, requires a control of mass, which can be achieved by pulling forward or back towards center.

Sparring with someone that does not have control of mass is a much easier partner/opponent than sparring with someone who has complete control of mass at all times and can execute powerful techniques. One way that I check my control of mass in a pattern is by checking in with how well I am shape holding. If my block or strike has no energy and can easily be moved, it is very likely that I have not connected to center and therefore do not have full control of my mass, there is no energy in my mass. It is not solid, it is not energized. In order to control mass and use acceleration, it is

important to be relaxed, so that the mass can move quickly and easily gaining speed as it moves towards the targeted area.

Effective control of mass can only be achieved through relaxation. Breaking a board requires control of mass. The body needs to be fluid to accelerate at the time of impact, when the body part, such as a fist, hits the board, it is important that the mass is hard and tight, and that the arm and wrist bones, shoulders and muscles are aligned to support the fist imploding the board. A tight, rigid technique will not accelerate effectively and places the burden of breaking a board on the mass of the tool. A technique that is too loose cannot hold its shape and is unfocused cannot implode a board.

In teaching control of mass, how do you disengage the concept and the idea of shape holding from muscle tension? Students can easily understand shape holding to be accomplished through tension—have you found ways to teach to that?

## **ACCELERATION**

*“Researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number of true expertise: ten thousand hours.”* Malcolm Gladwell

Unlike speed, acceleration accumulates speed to generate more speed. Using acceleration effectively, or rather acquiring acceleration, takes practice and focus. The body can accelerate when it is completely relaxed. To achieve powerful techniques in patterns, requires practice and more practice. Today, Gladwell and other scientists are pointing out that experts in their fields such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs in the field of computers, achieved levels of mastery because they had the privilege of practicing with computers at a very early age for very long periods of time; according to Gladwell, they practiced for at least 10,000 hours. Mastering patterns requires time and hours of practice. To implement a pattern powerfully and effectively requires the ability to use acceleration, which requires a connection to center, control of mass and integrated breathing.

As human being, I move relatively fast, but I am not always using acceleration because I am not always connected to center, or activating the necessary muscle groups at the appropriate time, to allow the movement to ripple from center out to the tool to create acceleration. For instance, my side kick. **\*\* here** (A side kick requires the kicking leg to be relaxed but if the hip turns over too early whilst executing the technique one cannot use acceleration because the technique is no longer connected to center and the technique, so the kick becomes a leg technique. It may seem like I have control of mass in my kick, but I have found that I don't. When this happens, I have disconnected

from center, the sequencing of muscles is out of order, and acceleration is therefore prohibited. ) I have had to work on this technique with the kicking leg dangling, focusing on leading with the hip, not the knee, to implement this technique effectively. This activity has helped me feel how acceleration and how control of mass work together.

## **Part Two: Why we have tenets, how they benefit me, the martial arts community, and my broader community.**

*“To unify mind and body, and individual with community” \_\_UTF Motto*

This section of the paper will investigate the UTF’s seven tenets: perseverance, integrity, indomitable spirit, courtesy, community service and love; what these tenets mean to me, and how I have used them in my life, inside and outside the dojang to unify my life and my life within the communities in which I have lived. The UTF’s Mission as an organization is “to spread the teaching of Taekwon-Do as a civilian martial art using the principles and methods developed by Grandmaster Han Cha Kyo” (Universal Taekwon-do Federation, 2014). This idea of spreading the teaching of Grandmaster Han Cha Kyo, is important to me and one of the reasons that I continue to teach and train in Taekwon-Do. As an instructor, working predominantly with children, talking about the tenets and practicing them in class helps create an inclusive, safe learning environment. The tenets remind us of our humanity and the importance of continually developing our character and spirit while we practice and build our physical strength and health.

They are in their purest sense, a set of principles or guidelines that all members of our organization are expected to adhere to, or aspire to adhere to in the dojang and in their daily lives. The tenets, created by the founders of Taekwon-Do and Grand Master Han, remind myself and others, of what is important, and what is expected of them if they choose to belong to our organization or community. What I discovered in my study of Shotokan Karate is that Karate also has a set of five principles very similar to TKD: “courage, courtesy, integrity, humility, and self-control” (Funakoshi, 1973) Three principles are exactly the same, and courage could be interpreted as indomitable spirit, but I find the concept of humility to be very different to my understanding perseverance I will discuss perseverance and humility in greater detail, when I break down each tenet. It was Grand Master Han, who added love and community to the UTF’s tenets because he believed these two principles were essential for growing the art and integrating the art, purposely and meaningfully into the community. This addition makes sense as Taekwon-Do in America was no longer practiced for the purpose of war, or defending one’s country, rather

for the benefit or improvement of one's community. This is why it is important for black belts to teach and share what they have learned, so that more people benefit from the art and practice.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word "martial" means: "of, relating to, or suited for war or a warrior." As TKD is an art, an art originally designed to be used in war, it is appropriate to have an ethical code of conduct to ensure all members use the fighting skills that they have learned in an ethical and appropriate manner. The tenets provide us with a compass, to help us grow spiritually or morally. They help us develop in aspects of our lives, where we may need help or are not strong. For instance, the principle of perseverance, which is a part of every black belt's training, is a necessary life skill to help one succeed, self-actualize and live to their full potential.

**The start of part two was very well put. I'm not sure much more needs to be said!**

### **Perseverance (*In Nae*)**

*"Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th."--Julie Andrews*

Perseverance is about having the desire and will to succeed when there is also the chance that we will fail. Failing is not fun; getting back up on our feet very difficult. Ralph Waldo Emerson describes perseverance: "Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail." In Taekwon-Do, perseverance is mastering the art of Taekwon-Do, which requires mastering oneself, which is a life long journey. I have used this tenet many times in Taekwon-Do and throughout my life. I have used it when a board didn't break. I have used it when I have failed a test. I have used it when I have been unhappy with an outcome, giving a presentation, teaching a class, and so on. Part of perseverance is looking back and reflecting on what we can do better or improve upon the next time around. Perseverance definitely has aspects of humility, the tenet used in Karate. It doesn't feel good to fail, and there is a vulnerability or a loss of ego after one has not succeeded, or failed a specific goal or test.

Using perseverance shows that it is human to fail, and that achieving success in an art means persevering when one has failed. Perseverance comes into play in the larger community, where there may be inequities or where social injustice is occurring. A racist comment or a sexist joke, for example, requires the listener to take action. This might not stop the person from having prejudiced thoughts or biases but by calling people out each time it happens; over time, it reduces violence because it send a message of no tolerance for this type of behavior. Will violence immediately end because of this action? Most likely not, but over time and by



persevering to end oppression, violence can be greatly reduced, but it takes perseverance and integrity.

Relating perseverance to the risk of failing is part of the story, but don't you think that another part of it is resisting the pull of boredom, fatigue or laziness that can make the repetition practice difficult for many students? That fight with the self can be formidable, but is quite different than the struggle against fear of failure.

### **Self-Control (*Guk Gi*)**

*“By constant self-discipline and self-control you can develop greatness of character.”--  
Grenville Kleiser*

Self-control is a tenet that I use every day working with teenagers and adults. To be in control of our behaviors, words and emotions is crucial to building healthy relationships in all aspects of our lives. Obviously black belts must exercise self-control when working with juniors, either physically, in a sparring situation, or in situations such as giving juniors feedback on their form or techniques. Too much feedback or criticism can stymie a junior or student who is struggling to learn a new technique or concept. The tenet of self-control in relationship to others can be tied to integrity Using integrity helps us decide, or reminds us that we must use self-control in a specific situation.

### **Integrity (*Yom Chi*)**

*“Just being honest is not enough. The essential ingredient is executive integrity.” --Unknown*

This is another tenet that has improved my life. Doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. I must admit, I still pick fruit out of raisin bread or fruitcake, when no one is looking, but I have developed a higher consciousness around what it means to use integrity. There are many synonyms for integrity: “character, decency, goodness, honesty, morality, probity, rectitude, righteousness, rightness, uprightness, virtue, virtuousness” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014). For me, the words that resonate the most meaning are honesty and rightness. It is a person's ability to do what is right at that moment in time and to use it requires sound moral judgment.

Many years ago, when my partner Ray and I lived in New York City, Ray found a wallet in the street with tickets to a Broadway show, a credit card and cash. We decided to hand the wallet in with the credit card and tickets, but we kept the cash. Today, I would not keep the cash, but hand in all of the belongings found in that wallet. Not because I couldn't use the extra cash, because it is the right thing to do. In this situation, the community would have benefited if we had handed the money over. The woman may have had a better visit in NYC, and it may have propelled her to return again because she had such a positive experience and encountered honest people. By taking the money, we may have reinforced a negative image of NYC.

In the dojang, it is crucial to use integrity when working or giving feedback to juniors, especially white belts. As a senior you want to help them improve their skills but if feedback is constantly negative, or too much feedback is given at one time, a student may become discouraged. It is important to use integrity in these situations, get to know the student so that you develop a relationship of trust, and provide constructive feedback in doses appropriate to the student's ability to learn. Integrity in this situation means coming from a place of love and genuine concern for the student's growth, so that the student's confidence continues to grow, impacting his/her life inside and outside the dojang. Using integrity in this situation helps to set this person up for success in life.

### **Indomitable Spirit** (*Baekjool Boolgol*)

*"Success means going from failure to failure without the loss of enthusiasm." Winston Churchill*

Indomitable spirit is related to perseverance but has more to do with courage and overcoming our own inner fears. We all have it, in varying degrees. For me, it has been a quality that has helped me achieve goals and overcome obstacles in my life. I had a fear of math since middle and high school and when I had to take a math test for my teacher's license, I was frightened I wouldn't pass the test. I hired a tutor and learned, I could do math, algebra, etc.. I just needed time to understand it and to find strategies that worked for me. I will never teach math, it is not my certification, but I know I can do and use it if I need to.

Becoming a black belt requires not only an understanding of indomitable spirit but the ability to help juniors connect to their indomitable spirit. I have found this happens during sparring, when I work with juniors. Sometimes a junior shies away, flinches or shuts down, physically or psychologically, because they are sparring with a black belt. Providing a level of success for the student, finding the right balance of challenge while at the same time allowing

them to experience success gives them confidence and the courage to take more risks and use their indomitable spirit.

When I was teaching in Madison, WI. We used to take the students on an annual TKD campout to Lake Kegonsa. I will never forget doing water training, when one of the students began to panic as we went deeper into the lake. I told her I was with her and that I would not let anything happen to her. She could still stand in the water but she was very frightened. We were near the net, so I told her she could also hold onto that if she needed help. She made it through the training and from that moment on, was never afraid to do water training again. She used her indomitable spirit. Providing challenges and encouraging students to take challenges, face their fears is an important part of our training. The risk to fail, to make a mistake to make a fool out of ourselves makes us mentally and emotionally stronger. As Winston Churchill failing again and again, without the loss of enthusiasm. I believe it is part of my duty as a black belt and educator to help my students face their fears, find and strengthen their own indomitable spirit in order to “be a champion of freedom and justice, and to build a more peaceful world.”

### **Love (*Sarang*)**

*“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”--Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Love is crucial in every aspect of our lives. Love is caring, showing you care with your actions, words and beliefs. I think we cannot be effective leaders if we cannot love our students. Learning a martial art takes commitment, a love of learning and a love for the art. Adults and children who show up for classes and promote are expressing a form of love for the art. Adults and children are busy, they have a multitude of choices and have a multitude of responsibilities, they do not have to take TKD classes. It is important to honor this commitment, while also providing a practice that is challenging for them at their level. It is our job as teachers to nurture this and honor the commitment they have made to themselves and the art. It can be hard to make a commitment that will challenge you physically, mentally and emotionally. Many people don't make it to black belt and many fall away after they receive the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> degree. It is important to show students that we appreciate the commitment they have made to the art and improving themselves. I could not teach martial arts if I did not love doing it, practicing it and teaching it. I don't think I would be as successful as I am today, if martial arts had not been in my life.

I also teach girls and boys violence prevention techniques and skills, and I also train women to teach girls. This summer will be training men to teach boys. One of the most rewarding compliments I received as a teacher was “I love watching you teach, you are such a

fun, kind teacher.” It was rewarding because I think adults and children learn best when they are relaxed and having fun. They also feel safe to learn when they trust the teacher. I want students to be successful to understand what I am teaching and why I am teaching a technique or specific topic. I know that if I don’t provide an environment that is structured and positive, that encourages questions and learning that I have not done my job as a teacher.

Teaching to me is an act of love, an act of caring and helping others achieve their life goals and dreams. Helping adults and children succeed is incredibly fulfilling. Love is giving and receiving, giving and taking. Teaching in its purest sense is love in action for all participants. There are so many ways to show love: kind words after a student has had difficulty with a class or test, acknowledging their growth, taking time to find out what is happening in a student’s life can make a real difference in the junior/senior relationship. Reaching out and taking time, shows you care and can help them overcome personal challenges they may be facing inside or outside the dojang. I believe the student is more important than the curriculum or content. All human beings deserve love, dignity and respect. I think the greatest challenge is to show love to someone you don’t like or respect. I struggle with this, and have experienced seniors in both TKD and Karate who have violated my trust or mistreated me or other students.

Of course, it is always important to talk about these situations with either the person involved or a senior, but once you have been harmed, or the relationship has been damaged, it can be difficult to forgive the person that has harmed you. So it is difficult to always use love and to make sure it is in all our actions. Love is connected to empathy—a desire to understand the struggles or difficulties that another person may have experienced— the ability to put the needs of others before ourselves, which can be hard. The tenet, courtesy comes out of love.

### **Courtesy (Ye Ui)**

*“Talk to strangers politely... Every friend you have now was once a stranger, although not every stranger becomes a friend.” — Israelmore Ayivor*

Courtesy is an outward show of respect. The structure of TKD helps to promote courtesy and respect in the dojang. Bowing to seniors to show respect. Bowing before we enter the dojang to show respect to the training space are ways of teaching students respect for what we do. It shows the principle of respect in action, not just talking about it. I know that we bow to the flags before stating the student oath, which is an act of respect, for the heritage of TKD, but I am struggling with the idea of bowing to flags, because it can be perceived as an act of nationalism

and historically the flag has been used as an identifier in fascist states. The US flag is also associated with the military and I believe this is misleading. TKD is not about war and fighting. It is about developing a warrior spirit that is strong and powerful, a spirit that can override or deter an enemy or perpetrator from using violence. Perhaps this is not the place to raise this issue but I believe simply bowing to instructors and then saying the student oath would serve the same purpose in the dojang as bowing to flags.

Being courteous to all we meet and interact with means we are treating everyone, regardless of their race, gender, age, religion, sexuality, ability with dignity and respect. If our true purpose is to build a more peaceful world, than we must always use courtesy, in all aspects of our lives. It is important to instill this in our students, or remind them to use it if they forget.

### **Community Service** (*Sawe Bongsa*)

*“Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” - Albert Einstein*

This is how we show love and courtesy to where we live and the people who live in our community, neighborhood, city or country. Community service is an act of love, given with no expectation of receiving something in return. I have in my life time performed many acts of community service, walking or biking to raise money for organizations that serve community needs. Teaching our students about community service, or better still, providing opportunities for them to practice community service is very important. When I was the Theatre Director for UW-Rock County, I organized performances for senior citizens in nursing homes. Throughout the year, I would provide opportunities for students to perform for senior citizens who couldn't come out to attend plays. This not only lifted the spirits of the residents in the home, it also provided young college students with opportunities to make contact with seniors and show them that the art was not just about them, but could be used to help others. In Madison, I rode my bike with students to raise money for Child Abuse Prevention in Wisconsin. I also cleaned parks with students. In Portland, I volunteered my martial arts skills for one year to teach women self-defense.

Community service to me is not just about organized events. It is doing acts of kindness for strangers and people we know, such as neighbors or acquaintances, or friends. This can mean, picking up trash in front of our house, interrupting violence or violent interactions by strangers (domestic violence, sexual harassment, racism, heterosexism, misogyny, etc), sending a gift or money to someone in a time of sorrow or need is an act of community service.

Community service requires students to look beyond their immediate family and friends. To extend their awareness to others who are in need. I think this is the ultimate act of patriotism – or love of one’s country. Teaching TKD and Karate is a community service. For almost all of my life, I have taught martial arts for free, with the intention of building a strong community. I believe it is crucial to instill this tenet into our students, for them to understand that we are responsible for not only taking care of our own needs but also the needs of others who may be less fortunate, oppressed or underrepresented in our communities.

Helping students understand community service, also helps them understand their own privilege and that if their parents are bringing them to TKD, paying for them to take TKD classes then they are privileged, not every family can do this. This is why making TKD affordable and accessible to community members is very important, so that it doesn’t become a privileged art that only some members of the community can afford.

There is uneven attention given here to the experience of students with the tenets. The personal discussion of your path with the tenets is good, but in thinking about student development, what more can you say about the obstacles to building these and how to help clear the path for them?

### **Part Three: Explain how being a black belt has impacted your life**

In this section of the paper, I will try to give a comprehensive overview of how being a black belt has impacted my life. I never dreamed of being a martial artist as a child, although looking back on how I interacted with life, climbing trees, running gymnastics, softball and other sports, studying the martial arts suits my learning style, spirit and nature. I have had the good fortune to earn to practice, and continue to practice, two martial arts, Taekwon-do and Shotokan Karate. This has given me a new lens to look at my training in the UTF, while also providing me with a different set of physical, emotional and spiritual challenges.

I earned my black belt in 2000 and by that time I had had numerous instructors and teachers, many role models, some that taught me what not to do, and others who I looked up to and admired. I had commenced my training in Chicago and obtained the rank of black belt in Madison, WI. The move to WI was a huge life change. I started graduate school, which took an enormous amount of my time and started teaching acting to children and adults. During the first year, I sought out TKD classes through the university, although they were teaching TKD it was very different. Both schools or clubs emphasized the physical nature of the art, they were very focused on fitness and cardiovascular training. The self-discovery, reflection and spiritual components of the art were missing. One school in particular focused on fighting. I remember on

one occasion during a sparring session, I fell down and someone sparring nearby actually stepped on me. This person didn't even notice he had stepped on another human being.

When we first moved to Madison, Ray and I drove over an hour to take classes with Dr. Lonna Brooks and Mr. Joel Winnagrad in Rio, WI. It was under their guidance that I tested for the rank of black belt. At the same time, Ray, started opening TKD sites in Madison, teaching elementary aged students who at schools and community centers. During the first year, Dr. Brooks and Mr. Winnagrad were helping to oversee the development of the sites. However, due to differing leadership styles and ethics, our relationship with the Rio school ended. Master Helman was assigned the role of assisting with the growth and development of Madison sites. For most of my seven years living in Madison, WI, my training was primarily with children and most of my time was spent teaching. It was in Madison that my identity was being shaped and where it became obvious to me that my calling was to teach and that my role in life would be connected to social justice education

It was also in Madison that I started to focus on using theatre as a tool for transformation and change. Taekwon-Do helped me realize that it was important for young people to move and use their bodies as a way of learning. I used TKD warm-up exercises in my acting classes and I started using acting activities in TKD classes to help build cooperation and trust within the group. My worlds were merging at that time. I think my black belt status gave me inner confidence as a teacher.

After I finished graduate school, I accepted a position at UW-Rock County in Janesville, WI, running the theater department on campus. Again, my ability to train and teach TKD was limited to Saturdays or evening classes. I resigned from this position in 2004 and continued teaching acting in Madison for adults and children. My work in theatre led me to a mother who ran a martial arts school. Maria Banchik, she was trained in TKD but also Shotokan Karate. Ray and I started taking classes at this school and developed a close relationship with her and the other instructors. At the time we were still teaching TKD classes to children, many of whom were now seniors and close to the rank of black belt. Ray and I had wanted to leave Madison after I finished graduate school, but decided we couldn't do this until we had black belts in place to run the school. In 2006, Ray and I moved to Portland, OR. A new chapter of our lives began.

### **Shotokan Karate**

The first thing I did after finding a job in Portland was to seek out a Taekwon-do School. I tried to find a nearby school that had similar principals to the UTF and that provided

scholarships for low-income students. I investigated three different schools, and studied at the school on Belmont for approximately 3-4 months. The instructor, talked on the phone while he taught classes and made negative comments about immigrants. I struggled to leave this school because it had strong female leaders and I liked the students; however, this man was not a teacher I wanted to emulate or could look up to, so I left.

Maria Banchik suggested that I check out Shotokan Karate. She said it was very traditional, no contact and focused on creating power and using good form. I took her advice and started taking classes at Portland Shotokan. There were numerous similarities. The school emphasized good form and movement over brute strength and Oshima Sensei, founder of Shotokan America, who lives in California, was known for his kind gentle nature as well as powerful techniques. This gave me some comfort. One of the principles of Shotokan is to see yourself with strict eyes, and to reflect on your own personal actions. However, there is no consideration of character in becoming a black belt. As long as you meet the physical and mental requirements, you pass. This was surprising to me.

I soon discovered that the basic Katas, patterns, had similar moves to TKD patterns. Which made sense as General Choi was forced (**I NEVER HEARD THAT BEFORE**) to study Karate. Han Nidan the second Han (Han Katas are considered junior Katas), has movements used in Won Yo and Do San. Chon Ji is very similar to the very first Kata Taikyoku Shodan. In some ways I felt like I had found the beginnings of TKD movements and the similarity of these movements was also comforting.

More importantly, the dojo had strong kind leaders, who appreciated the experience and focus that I brought to my training. I decided to stay because of the leadership, even though I disagreed with some of the practices, the lack of awareness around gender equality and the focus of brute force by some of the seniors. (Ironically, many of the seniors who were there when I started have left.) It was a hard decision for me to stay. I wondered what Grand Master Han would say about a student studying a Japanese Martial art. I struggled with this for a long time. I emailed Master Langlis at one point and had conversations about this with Master Irvin. I also struggled with the differences in the schools. Not all black belts were good teachers. For some black belts, men were seen as stronger, therefore better than women, regardless of their form.

It took me at least 3 years to learn how to use my body differently in basics, kata (patterns) and sparring. However, hardest part was not learning new movements, but rather relearning how to move my body in a different way. The stances were similar but different,



narrower and not forward facing. The body does not face forward in a front stance. The sparring is about “Aremi” passing through your opponent, not defending your opponent. Rather attacking your attacker as soon as he/she has the intention to attack. This makes Karate more aggressive in some ways. The idea is to use the most efficient technique to take your opponent down.

The one thing that remained constant was an emphasis on center, often referred to as hip in Karate. Using the entire body for techniques as opposed to disconnected arms and legs was another similarity. I would say starting from scratch, as a white belt in SKA, was one of the greatest gifts to me in my training as a martial artist. I had to pay careful attention to how my body was moving to change my own habits. Also, starting as a white belt gave me the luxury of only focusing on my own training, instead of always teaching. This led to enormous growth in my techniques and form. I enjoyed being a beginner again.

I tested for black belt in California, in 2010. I failed the first time and was very disappointed. I was told I still moved differently, and with not enough center. I tested again the following year, stronger in my body and mind. All black belt tests are given after 3-4 days of vigorous boot camp training. You are basically, exhausted when you test on a Sunday morning for your black belt. In Shotokan, they also announce the results right after the test. I remember standing at the table after my second attempt thinking, “This was my best. If I don’t pass, maybe it wasn’t meant to be.” I knew deep down I had passed. I knew I had grown stronger and trained harder because I failed the year before.

I tested for Nidan, the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, in 2013 and passed. Again, I noticed a huge difference in my approach and attitude; Firstly, the special training aspect (all testers must complete special training, 3-4 days of strenuous physical training) provided me with some mental challenges. The day before the test, the black belts were scolded for poor sparring techniques. We were given changes to our Kata or patterns the night before the test at 10:00 pm. I was exhausted and when I tested for Nidan at 9:00 am the next day, after completing an early morning training, I had nothing left. I didn’t care about the test, I just did my best. I remember standing at the table waiting for the results thinking. “I don’t care if I pass, because if I pass or fail, the result will be the same. I will be in the dojo next week to train.” I did pass and felt that I earned and was ready for the rank of Nidan.

## **Back to Taekwon-do**

What about TKD at this time? In 2010, Ray started offering classes in TKD again. I was at graduate school, part-time, while working full-time overseeing the GirlStrength Program, a

violence prevention program offered through the Portland Police Bureau. When I graduated from Portland State University, in 2012, with my master's in education, I was finally able to help Ray teach TKD classes again. I began helping him teach at two different sites, while still training in Shotokan. Ironically, I had to start relearning TKD terminology, patterns and protocols. Many of the protocols in Shotokan are different. There is no bowing to seniors, there are no flags, you do not refer to seniors as "sir" or "mam" etc.

In June, 2012, we were very fortunate as Master Irvin relocated to Portland. We were thrilled as we were reunited with one of our most influential TKD teachers. Since his relocation, I have been taking weekly black belt classes, which focus on connecting to center and generating power from center in all techniques. Under his guidance, Ray and I, have started implementing new activities and approaches to teaching juniors. Activities that focus on connecting to center, shape holding and engaging core (contraction and expansion), pivoting on the balls of one's feet to turn, etc.

In September of 2013, I became the main instructor at Roseway Heights School and held my first test at this site in March, 2014. I also assist with the children's class on Tuesdays at Beaumont school as well as the adult class on Tuesday evenings. Looking back, the self-defense training that I learned in TKD, led me to apply to become a volunteer self-defense instructor for WomenStrength Program offered through the Portland Police Bureau. It was my work in this program, that led me to apply for the GirlStrength Director position in 2008. This position has enabled me to use my teaching, drama and martial arts skills in my professional life as I work with women, teenagers and children. The utilization of all my skills makes my job highly rewarding. I not only teach girls and boys violence prevention skills, but I also train women to teach these skills. My TKD training provided me with role models and teachers that had integrity and impeccable character. Finding a school in Portland was difficult because I had high standards for teachers and when I did not find this in the TKD community, I tried other martial arts.

I have gained enormous insights into how to move my body effectively and efficiently, I have developed a stronger mind and spirit through my dedication to the martial arts. I am very grateful for all the martial arts teachers I have had in my life: Master Irvin, Master Helman, Master Langlis, Phil Welker and Stuart Iwasaki. These teachers have encouraged me to grow and succeed and are some of the most upstanding individuals I have encountered in my life.

**Part Four: How will being promoted to second degree impact your training and teaching**

I don't think I will be doing anything different if I am promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt in the UTF. I will continue to work on improving my techniques, teaching children and assisting with the training of adults. I want to see the UTF sites grow and flourish in Portland, OR, as I think Grand Master Han would have wanted to see the UTF grow. I hope to assist Master Irvin in the documentation of the new activities and exercises that he has created to help students move more effectively and efficiently with good alignment and connection to center. I think his work and desire to help students connect to center is fundamental to maintaining healthy practices and training. Practice that incorporates body awareness is important for all students and ultimately leads to less injuries or trauma for the body. I am already seeing the benefit of integrating warm-up activities such as "Curl Overs" into my classes. These activities can also be added to working on basic techniques. I want to help juniors move from center at the start of their training, not when they become a black belt.

Lastly, I will continue to teach because I believe passing the art to our juniors is an essential ingredient to keeping the art of TKD alive.

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