

Societies' Views of a Martial Artist

A Personal Approach

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Society today in general has an uncontrollable necessity to respond in aggression, when felt threatened or feel the need to lash out to release tension. This sense of manhood separates us from our counterparts. It is almost in the sense of an animalistic hierarchy that the so called toughest, strongest or the winner gains control or has an overriding authority on its community.

Street fights, brawling or plain old scrapping has a profound effect on an individual's self-confidence and most importantly their image amongst their peers. In the position of being a martial arts exponent and the representation of the art of TaeKwon-do there are certain pressures that can be put upon a martial artist.

The ability to succeed in a scuffle at a local bar or night club is a likely threat. An outsider to a martial art is more likely to take the martial artist over their opponent not taking into account several matters that could have a profound effect over the conflict. The opponent may have a number of influential aspects in their favour examples being natural ability, fighting experience, size and strength and most importantly the desire to win against all odds. They are willing to go down with a hell of a battle, and in extreme situations they will keep getting up until they are literally unable to.

The colour and rank of the belt does not necessarily mean that because they are of a higher rank that they would always come out victorious over a lower ranked opponent. In fact I've seen a yellow belt convincingly defeat a red belt. A person totally obscured from Taekwon-Do is of the illusion that belt rank is a true predicament of one's ability, and this just isn't so.

A situation you may be put in is when a scuffle may be about to proceed at a party you've attended not involving yourself the martial artist. You can easily predict that a confrontation is about to take place. Your friends look at you as if you are the controller to confront the situation at hand. You know from your training that the best way to fight is to first of all not get involved in the situation to start off with. And resolving the situation by fighting should be the very last option. The confrontation has now flared up and fists are flying in rage. Do you go in as the negotiator or do you stand clear from the situation? Your friends are now about to approach you as you expected they would. They look at you as if you are the mediator. Your close friends who know you well would know your response in such a situation but others who are aware of your martial arts title but don't in fact know you would expect you to go in with jumping reverse turning kicks and various other evasive techniques, because this is the image that is portrayed in martial arts movies of a martial artist.

When people find out that I practise Taekwon-Do they will often approach me and say such things as "You don't look like you could kick that guy's ass" or most commonly "You're a blackbelt.....yeahhhh". This may also carry a social stigma amongst other arts or so called tough

guys. These people wanting to prove a point by confronting you looking to downgrade you and seeing if you're cracked up to what they've heard you're worth. Sometimes you may think to yourself "I'd love to give this guy a run for his money". I have never publicised to anyone other than family and only a handful of close friends that I am a Taekwon-Do exponent. I in fact find myself constantly lying to people to hide my martial arts identity.

Close friends are always asking me for pointers on "How do you get out of this" or "How can I do this" and "What should my first attack be.....ohhh you know all the vital spots". Choosing to be very modest I always refrain from demonstrating or providing them with any answers and I deliberately change the subject.

After visiting two of my friends who had been in a confrontation the night before for no foreseeable reason. They explained to me how they wished they had a martial art behind them to protect them should the opportunity arise. Both have since joined a kickboxing academy and I have seen how they've grown very naive and ignorant and they are finding themselves in more scuffles. Themselves and their martial art neglects self-control and they are unaware of the consequences of their actions because they're so self-confident with their newfound ability.

As a martial artist I must admit I have grown to accept a heavier level of contact even though our organisation is of a very strong opinion when it comes to excessive contact. I enjoy playing rugby as this also has to do with it being a contact sport. On the rugby field however is where some players choose to release their aggression they have been recuperating. Keeping my Taekwon-Do distal from the rugby field was never going to be a worry until my coach was made aware of the situation when he phoned my house and this was my unexplained absence. He was greatly impressed and persisted in telling the team. I didn't mind the fact that I would be able to share my skills in warm-ups and stretching asking me to incorporate a type of Taekwon-Do/Rugby fitness.

Above I have tried to portray a realistic approach by using personal events that are relevant to myself and possibly others. In this way highlighting some of the ways society has an effect and possibly an expectation on a Martial Art Taekwon-Do student. It may be viewed slightly controversial but any young adult in the same situation may be able to resemble the same principals to aspects of their own lifestyle.