

COMMITMENT. DEDICATION. PERSEVERANCE.

By Bu Kwan Jang Nim James "Jim" List

To the average person martial arts is about fighting. About beating up the bad guy who killed your brother. About flying through the air while throwing 500 kicks. About speaking like a fortune cookie fortune. These perceptions about the martial arts have been perpetuated by movies and TV shows. And as cool as it is to see Bruce Lee take out a whole dojo full of bad guys, martial arts movies usually fail to address the deeper aspects of the martial arts.

One of the things the movies typically fail to make clear is that achieving the skill and quality of a Black Belt takes years, not 10 minutes. Martial arts is about commitment and dedication. The journey to Black Belt requires you to learn new skills, change bad habits, and adjust your way of thinking. At the risk of sounding cliché, it is about unlearning what you have learned and then relearning it. The first year of martial arts training is all about learning new skills, the second and third years of training also require you to refine and perfect those skills. This can be a trying time, while you are still learning new things it no longer holds the thrill it did when you first started. The instructors become more demanding, classes become more physically challenging, and every little technique you perform is critiqued. When you reach this level, typically around Brown Belt, the idea of quitting the martial arts usually appears. Ask any Black Belt if or when they ever thought about quitting or when they ever took time off of training and more than likely the answer will be Brown Belt. I even took three months off when I was a Brown Belt. But the dedication to the martial arts and the commitment to achieving a Black Belt is what drove me and all the other Black Belts to continue, or resume, training.

Achieving the rank of Black Belt is well worth the effort put into. And the more challenging the journey the more rewarding it is. A number of the top instructors at USA Martial Arts, including BKJN Ramir, SBN Steven, and myself did not reach Black Belt during our first attempts. We were cut from the teams for a variety of reasons: attitude problems, lack of effort, poor technique. Many people quit training if they don't reach Black Belt on their first attempt, to me this shows an unwillingness to make the effort to achieve their goal. I believe many of those same people also quit anytime they fail to do something on the first attempt. Doing so creates a pattern of quitting, of never achieving a desired goal because facing the fact that they need to make changes means admitting that they are not good enough as they are. **LIFE IS ABOUT CHALLENGES!** Facing those challenges, overcoming those obstacles, and coming out on top in the long run means that we become better people. People who are never satisfied with the status quo. People who constantly challenge themselves to become better tomorrow than they are today. In this way achieving Black Belt is a metaphor for life, and many of the lessons learned during that journey can directly translate into our lives away from martial arts.

Commitment. Dedication. Perseverance. These words are pretty common in the world of martial arts. They can just as easily be applied to a scholastic effort, a job search, or a career goal. And in each case the more challenging and difficult the journey, the more rewarding the final result. For these candidates, one goal has been achieved. What's next? Second Degree? Third Degree? Fourth? There is always another challenge. Are you ready for the next one?