



武道
21/12/23

NATSUOKA KARATE
COMMUNIQUE

INAUGURAL YUDANSHA CLASS



On Saturday December 2nd, 2023, the Natsuoka Karate Organization hosted a black belt class at our Toronto Metropolitan University Dojo.

Training as a Black Belt is a different type of training. As a yudansha member, you are already investing hours per week outside of the dojo researching, performing kata, and designing exercises for others, but karate is by its very nature, an interpersonal art which requires that we continue to challenge ourselves with like minded capable people who share a common vision. Finding dedicated and inspiring people to work with isn't easy, but over the years, I've had the great fortune to meet many people who exemplify this description. While training with them from time to time certainly has benefits, bringing together a team of these leaders to work hard on a dedicated theme for two and a half hours is an enriching experience!

For our inaugural yudansha class, the kata Seisan was the focus.

This was an excellent opportunity to compare two distant styles of the kata. In exploring applications, we emphasized multiple opponent scenarios with some elaborate combinations against two simultaneous attackers. Sensei Chris Stafford generously shared the teaching load with us by introducing standing grappling techniques that blended perfectly with the joint locks, strikes, and throws with multiple attackers.

In addition to the leadership team from Toronto Metropolitan University Karate Club, black belts from Toronto Goju Ryu, McMaster University Goju Ryu Karate, Seikikai Karate, and the Natsuoka Annex Karate Club were in attendance. A huge thank you to everyone who participated and created a great learning environment.

We look forward to seeing more of you join us next time!
please contact sensei@natsuoka.com for more information



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SHU~HA~RI 守破離



The concept of Shu-Ha-Ri is an important way to understand the three levels of mastery associated with all subjects of study.

- The first level, Shu, is a novice level in which no knowledge exists. At this point, the teacher directs the student, and the student does their best to absorb exactly what is being demonstrated and taught. Here we learn the ideal form of the technique in a controlled setting.
- The second level, Ha, is an intermediate level in which core knowledge exists. Further growth can now only be attained through questioning and challenging in an open, but respectful, dialogue with a more experienced instructor. This is where students apply their knowledge to unanticipated situations to deepen their understanding.
- The third level, Ri, is achieved when one has adopted an understanding of the art and seeks to contribute to its evolution by building upon its traditions and history. Here the ideal form is transcended such that the practitioner embodies the technique itself.



Each level is an important part of the journey. It is impossible to debate a topic one knows little about and attempting to build on a weak foundation of poorly understood techniques generates ineffective outcomes. Hence, we must progress through the stages incrementally.

The journey itself takes time, focus and intensity and yields an understanding of the art being studied. As instructors helping students through these levels, supporting a student's journey through Shu-Ha-Ri also aids in our own growth and understanding as we ourselves must contemplate the questions and experiences of others in our formulation of lessons, drills, and alternatives.



Mastery would seem to describe a final state, but the more one learns, the larger the body of knowledge that is revealed. There is no stage when one is finished on this journey as new unconquered mountains of growth appear. As instructors, we need to continue to have the courage to challenge new horizons, allow ourselves to learn, don white belts, and recognize that the gift of a mistake is to learn from it. We expect this of our students, and we should demand this of ourselves.