



Practice Life, Art, Peace



The following is a compilation of all the essays written by the black belt candidates. Each candidate's final essay will be posted after the test. The winning "Best Essay" will be read at the final ceremony.

"[Y]ou do not become a black belt over night, but rather develop into one throughout your training. . . To me, a black belt is much more than a day's work, or our entire training for that matter. [It's] a promise the candidate is making that they will continue to train as hard as they have been training to get to this point. . . [It] is not an accessory, it is a lifestyle for which we have been training many years to achieve."
-Niklas Brake

"A black belt means physical mastery of yourself, and willingness to be a community leader. . . [T]he lessons I have learned about the community and how to be the best I can be will stay with me forever. . . [A] black belt is the kind of state that one can reach only after a long path of training, [and] if you persevere and try your absolute best, you can make it." -Oliver Geib

"The belt itself represents integrity, respect, leadership, strength, control, wisdom, and hard work. . . I have learned that actions always speak louder than words. . . If I want to encourage students to keep on the path to becoming a black belt then I know I need to show them what it means to be one. . . [by] being a role model that overcomes challenges, demonstrates integrity, and treats others with respect."
-Katie Beausoleil

"This journey has been the most rewarding thing that I could ever have imagined. . . The most important lesson that I have learned over the course of this experience is that there aren't many things that you can get through by yourself, you have to have a team there with you. . . I want to be the kind of leader that leads by example and helps the students to get better at everything that they do. . ." - Audrey Cortés

"There is hard work, determination, blood, sweat, and tears dumped into the journey that brings me, my teammates, and any other Black Belt worth having to where we are now. . . The Black Belt comes from six or seven years spent getting here. And it will continue past the time the cloth is around our waist. It will carry over to every aspect of our lives through its discipline and the lessons we have learned along the way." - Sarah Bishop

". . . I have control over my mind, body, emotions, [and] physical control. . . [W]hen we see a problem we don't shrink away; we stand up and face it. . . I can face physical trials and hardships with a high head and a willing mind. . . [I]n my journey through life I have dug deep and found what I needed to continue. This is what a black belt means to me." -Tony Tolman

"[B]eing a black belt is more than being able to perform spin hook kicks. . . You must be able to respect people and your environment; have confidence in yourself, as well as others; and you must also be disciplined physically, mentally, and emotionally. . . [A] black belt is more than just a physical object; it is the beginning of a lifelong journey of helping the world and improving yourself." -Hannah Geib

"[T]here is more to a black belt than just that outside appearance. . . It's a feeling of accomplishment. . . The belt color is not the important factor. . . I maybe did not fully understand the entire meaning at first, but each day I worked hard, improved, and learned more about that meaning. . . [T]his accomplishment is not an ending, it is a beginning to learn more and start the next journey. First Degree anyone?" - Douglas Gross