

It's been about six weeks now since I was first asked to consider taking responsibility for the Dojang. I immediately realized that I could not handle that responsibility on my own. It was fairly easy for me to identify who I thought was best suited to share that responsibility with me, I just picked the one person I thought was better qualified to do it than me. So I asked Master Mayham if he would consider partnering with me. We both agreed to take a few days to consider the decision as it was one neither of us took lightly.

While we were taking a few days to let the gravity of the decision to sink in, I did a great deal of soul searching. I spend time thinking about what was ultimately best for the school long term, I pondered what it was about Iron Dragon that made me feel that it was so special, and I tried to pinpoint what it was about our school and program that fostered such dedication in the students who trained there. I spent several days when I was training at the school, looking around, watching others train and listening in an effort to see if I could identify some sort of single overriding concept that I could identify as "what is Iron Dragon really all about?".

It was when we were all lined up doing one-steps that I had my epiphany. Master Mickens had just finished giving some instruction to the class, and as he is often prone to do, attached to the instruction was an important bit of wisdom. I can still hear his booming voice reverberating through the Dojang as he emphasized the statement "IT'S NOT ABOUT FIGHTING, IT'S ABOUT LEADERSHIP". That statement struck a chord with me and I realized that the core wisdom in that statement was the one overriding concept I was looking for.

To me leadership is not about saying you are in charge of something or about giving orders. It is about responsibility, and it is about providing an example for others. It was those thoughts that allowed me to make up my mind that assuming the responsibility for Iron Dragon was the right thing to do. I believe Master Mayham may have followed a similar process, because it was just a short time later that he communicated to me that he felt it was the right thing for us to do as well.

Not to speak for Master Mayham, but I believe he would agree with me that, the way we really view ourselves, is as trustees. We have both trained under Master Mickens for a very long time now. He has imparted to us a great deal of knowledge and wisdom along with the martial arts training he has given us. We feel an obligation to protect the knowledge and traditions that make up what we know as Iron Dragon Martial Arts. We have just finished our first Month as Trustees of the Dojang and hope that our fellow students are able to sense our dedication. We look forward to working to improve and protect the Dojang to ensure that many others after us have the opportunity to train and more importantly to understand the "It isn't about fighting, It's about leadership.

...W. Raper