



**Bảo Vũ**  
**1<sup>st</sup> DAN Black belts**  
**Dec, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**

The road to becoming a black belt is never alone. It is a road that one takes to overcome their obstacles, learn the beauty of martial arts, and most of all, grow with others. I have my instructors and the ASKA family to thank for that. Without them I would have not been able to push myself.

I started my journey with my family and friends. Although we were learning together, I started to compare myself to them. From stances and form, to kicks and punches; I was allowing myself to be negative that it has made me I wanted to resign the class. I didn't have confidence to start with. I had misconceptions that karate is physical movement and never a mental involvement. Having that concept in my head, I saw my friends moving up ranks and I was behind them. Seeing them have a new belt color, I wanted to catch up as if we were all in a race. I thought that the ranking of the belt is what defines the person's strength and skill. Master Hien always reminded everyone that a belt is just a belt, but it is the journey that one take is what matters. Taking his words to heart and talking to the instructors that take their time out of the day to spend teaching others, I was able to talk about how I felt and receiving advices.

From the advice instructors gave and the commitment to going to class to learn, I stopped comparing myself to others and wanted to enjoy class to what lessons are presented. From there on, I began to have confidence in myself but also have the driven motivation to push myself to grow. Even through all the doubts and painful moments that could have made me end my journey, I had and still have the support of my family, friends, and instructors to remind myself that I need to keep trying and push it to the limits. When people imagine a person wearing a black belt automatically, they assume that they are at the highest rank and know all of the fundamentals. But now receiving this belt, I am honored and excited to start this new chapter to add on to my journey and help others continue their journey as well.

Bao Vu