



Kairi Hoang
1st DAN Black Belt
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Six years ago, I was nine years old, contemplating with my cousin, Timmy, who took Taekwondo from another organization at the time, whether or not I should join ASKA. On one hand, I thought it would be interesting to become educated in the martial arts, but on the other hand, I was apprehensive about joining due to my gender, and not fitting within the expected gender stereotypes. He, along with my mom, encouraged me to try it, thus influencing my decision in joining the class. At the time, I didn't see it as an opportunity to improve myself, but a time for fun and games.

As time flew by, I gradually became lazier and less interested in improving my skills in Taekwondo. I messed around and I didn't take the class seriously. I overestimated my abilities and became arrogant. It wasn't until a couple of years of doing this did I realize my mistakes.

Throughout the years, my mom was always there to support me, driving me to class and patiently waiting for the two and a half hour class to end. She stayed in the parking lot, doing her work or taking a nap, but always there for me, every week. Eventually, she decided to join and do Taekwondo herself. Unknowingly, her decision helped me become a better person, changing my attitude towards Taekwondo and personality for the better. I'm really grateful for my mom because I wouldn't be where I am without her guidance and support.

I truly believe I began to realize the significance of many different aspects of my life, including karate, when I became a second-degree brown belt. Gradually, I took karate more seriously, began to strive for goals, and became more compassionate as I matured and grew with my peers. I appreciate the influence karate has had in changing me as a person in general.

Finally, the black belt test itself. Honestly, I didn't feel prepared, mentally, but with the support of my friends and family, I had the confidence to go through the test. The first hour was techniques and step-ups/step-throughs. During this hour, I had begun to feel light-headed and tired, but I was persistent. For me, it became a challenge with my own body and capabilities. I continued to power through the actions, relying on muscle memory, until Master Hien requested a break for my sake. Afterward, the test continued very well, but it was not easy.

In the end, I realized that this was only the beginning of my journey. I will venture forward with an open mind and an open heart to accept the learnings that will appear along the way. I'm so grateful for those who stood by me then, now, and in the future. Those people, whether friends or family, helped me overcome obstacles I wouldn't have been able to by myself. I hope to continue growing and learning with my friends and family as well as assist others in the right path.

Sincerely,
Kairi Hoang