

## The Warrior Within

South Africa consists of many different cultures and within these cultures stem many different martial arts systems like for example the Zulu tribe who are well known for their stick fighting art. For long before Bruce Lee was born, lived an African Martial Warrior named King Shaka. Shaka founded a unique fighting style, which ensured that even to this day the Zulu nation is revered as strong, powerful fighters. Shaka had made such an impact on the lives of the Zulus that the "ripple-effect" has been carried through to every tribe living on South African soils from generation to generation. The story of Shaka lives in the hearts of many and has been told for over 2 centuries and is still being told today.

Probably the most famous Southern African in history, with some historians describing Shaka as a tyrant, a monster and inhuman beast and other derogatory terms, it should be remembered that life in Shaka's time was not like ours today. A harsh land called for harsh measures, Shaka was quick to use them. He ruled his kingdom fairly and in many cases with compassion. But those who disobeyed him met with harsh, almost inhuman punishment.

Shaka implemented a new system of military organization that incorporated regiments from defeated tribes. When a chiefdom was conquered it became a territorial segment of Shaka's kingdom-at-large. The warriors became a part of his royal army and were drilled and fought beside combatants from other chiefdoms.

Shaka's Zulu warriors or 'Amabutho' were truly legendary and stories of the grueling and often cruel training are innumerable. However, Shaka never expected his men to do anything he couldn't or wouldn't do himself, and he set the example. Forced marches of up to 70km per day carrying weapons and surviving on what they could find in the bush, proficiency in handling their weapons and the methods of dispatching the enemy were the order of the day. Shaka had soon discovered that the crude sandals traditionally worn by Zulu men hampered his speed and agility and as a result the army marched, ran and fought bare foot - on sharp stones, through thorn bush, in deep sand, rivers and every type of terrain possible. Another innovation of Shaka's was the short stabbing spear ("iKlwa/assegai") a great improvement on the longer handled throwing assegais that broke when used against the enemy at close range. The forging of his own spear is a story in itself, involving magic, secrecy and tradition. Coupled with the large hide covered shields, the stabbing spears were wielded with deadly effect on the enemy, accompanied by the terrifying war cry Si-gi-di! Perhaps the most successful of Shaka's great battle tactics was the fighting formation he devised. Known as the "horns of the buffalo", it was supremely simple. The warriors forming the "horns" encircled the enemy, while the "boss" or "chest" took on the main weight of the attack. Reinforcements were held in reserve behind the safety of the "chest". Total warfare became King Shaka's policy, causing a ripple effect, which affected a vast area of Southern Africa for years afterwards.

South Africans are known as a very competitive nation even within the martial arts circles; nowadays the need to win no longer seems to be as important as the will to survive.

For many years South Africans have lived in rivalry with race fighting against race and color against color. The changes that have taken place over the last decade have been many and through many changes the African Warrior lives on. With a functional and realistic method of training martial arts, people begin to understand and appreciate the meaning of life as they learn the meaning of death. This may sound strange to those who are aware of the brutality with which many lost their lives and experienced the heartache and sorrow of death during these changing times.

Many were ruthlessly killed for not boycotting certain shops. Killers waited outside while a mother went in to buy oil and soap-powder and she was made to eat and drink that as she came out, as punishment - never returning to her home and family. Many were "necklaced" in front of their children leaving them orphaned and adding to the great multitude of street children. Even fathers who belonged to the "wrong" political party would be stoned to death, with rocks and boulders, their skulls crushed in front of many onlookers and supporters.

Crime has reached epidemic proportions. Our urban societies are becoming breeding grounds for criminals and our homes are changing into locked fortresses with our freedom of movement being

curtailed by the ever-present threat of vicious attack. Crime over the last 10 years has changed dramatically, none more so than the prevailing killer/victim trait where the chances of being senselessly killed by a stranger are on the increase. The chances of becoming a victim of robbery, burglary, car theft and hijacking have more than tripled over the past few years.

There are large parts of our country where life is tough and our youth are out of control. The Gauteng area is an extreme case, but this is the direction South Africa as a whole is taking. The economic base in Gauteng began to decline in the mid-seventies and has been doing so ever since. This decline has spread through much of the Southern African region since the early eighties.

If we study this economic decline and the persistent rate of unemployment, we can see the interaction of crime and the weakening of society and family life, in which more and more children are being raised by single parents and where family life is adversely affected. In South Africa this pattern has been the "extreme" way in which things have been moving and public opinion is that this will continue. Gauteng is the perfect example - general threats to order continual strikes, rising crime, hijackings, burglaries and senseless murders. The overall view is that the level of violence is higher than it has ever been in the past.

The major problem is that, with our laws and punishments being so protective towards the criminal, society at large has little chance of regulating crime, and if South Africa's crime rate continues to grow, it will reach a point where crime and violence itself will begin to regulate society - and this may happen.

For many years the African Warrior has been asleep but with violence on the increase, it is time to arouse the African Warrior within each South African - Zulu or non.

One self-defense aid, which many have turned to, is the handgun, which is an ideal personal defense weapon. With the recent new firearms law being implemented it is sad to see so many licensed firearms being handed in with a growth in the illegal ones being circulated.

It is compact, easy to carry and can be brought into action very quickly and effectively at close range. It has been found that most of the situations involving handguns as defense weapons take place at short distances, usually at night. Of course there is no guarantee at what range one might have to defend oneself with a handgun but, although handguns can shoot accurately over quite long distances, they are designed as close range weapons.

In learning defensive handgun shooting techniques, training must be realistic and closely related to the type of situation you might encounter. As the nature of the potential threat to individuals will often be different, some people will require more skill with a handgun than others. In order to become proficient in defensive handgun shooting, one must be able to shoot at both short and long ranges, at any time of the day or night, from a variety of different positions.

The concept of Jeet Kune Do has allowed even its African practitioners to explore and absorb what is useful and reject what is useless. The need for functional training has grown positively in South Africa and thus JKD High Performance Street Fighting has been the one to awaken the African Warrior!

With all this brutality, one wonders why you should still want to learn to fight, why study JKD High Performance Street Fighting if there's already so much violence in society.

Bruce Lee said: "The ultimate achievement in Jeet Kune Do is not the wholesale destruction of one's foes but rather the annihilation of things that stand in the way of peace, justice and humanity. The art thus becomes the embodiment of life and not of death. A punch or a kick is not to knock the hell out of the guy in front but to knock the hell out of your ego, your fear, or your hang-ups." The fact is JKD for him was not an end in itself, nor was it merely a by-product. It was a means of self-discovery. JKD is a prescription for personal growth, or to put it another way, it is investigations of freedom - freedom to act naturally and effectively, not only in combat but also, in life.

Although Shaka's methods of fighting were revolutionary at their time, they are certainly not all applicable for today's situations. In a confrontational situation in Shaka's time, the solution would have been to go to war with the whole tribe and killing would have been the answer to any situation to be able to win and get what you wanted. In this same regard, the methods taught by Bruce Lee during his lifetime were and still are effective, but JKD would not be the functional art it is today without constant

improvement by it's innovators striving for better and higher.

Self-defense is said to be 90% attitude and intuition and 10% effective physical technique. The driving force behind it is how we think of ourselves - self-esteem.

Self-defense is not necessarily a form of fighting and its most sophisticated applications do not use violence at all! This is not a new concept. Consider the story of a famous swordsman in Japan's feudal past. He was sitting quietly in a ferry with a lot of other folk when a drunken samurai got on board. The latter behaved offensively and was making a thorough nuisance of himself so the swordsman asked him to please behave. This enraged the samurai who demanded "What school (of sword fighting) are you from that you dare to speak to me in that manner?"

The swordsman quietly replied, "I am from the no-hands school; I do not even have to use my hands to win a duel."

There and then the samurai demanded satisfaction but the swordsman replied, "Not on this crowded boat. It would be best to duel on yonder island." He indicated a small island in midstream that the boat was fast approaching. As the boat hove to, the samurai leapt off and drew his sword. The swordsman on the other hand, bade the oarsman to cast off and left the fuming samurai behind.

The swordsman called back, "That is how we defeat opponents in the "no-hands" school!"

Self-defense is knowing how to minimize the risk of violence by using observation, commonsense, assertiveness and escape. The JKD High Performance Street Fighting Concept is a total concept of self-improvement. The idea is for the individual to take responsibility and develop themselves toward their unlimited potential. The goal is to develop complete martial artists. A complete martial artist is one who strives to become a great person, a great fighter, a great technician and a great teacher. Fighting wise means training to be proficient in each range of combat, with or without weapons, against one or multiple armed or unarmed opponents in a variety of environments.

Combat takes place in different ranges. In each range there are different postures. For each posture in each range you have a multitude of techniques. The qualities the fighter possesses that bring the techniques to life and make them functional are called Attributes. Merely being aware of the ranges, postures, techniques and attributes is not enough. You aim at developing yourself into a high performance martial artist by training progressively against resistance in each range or scenario/situation.

The first step in achievement of any goal is honesty. In the martial arts, it is easy to fool yourself into believing that you are a great, invincible fighter. There are thousands of black belts who think that they can beat anyone around, just because they have a black belt around their waist. Even if this isn't your mindset, let's ask a few hard questions. When is the last time you were in a fight or competition that was full-contact? If you have never been in a full-contact fighting situation, how do you actually know that you can fight under those circumstances in a street situation? If you have been in a tough situation and came out on top, good for you, but who was it against? Was it a drunk whose alcohol induced bravado got the best of him, or a well-trained athlete? If you don't get into fights, good for you!! You should, however, put on the protective gear and spar hard occasionally until it is not foreign territory. You don't have to get injured, but it is vitally important that you are comfortable in the wild environment that occurs during an all out street brawl. You don't want to find out what it is like for the first time in the street

At JKD High Performance Street Fighting (JKD HPSF), we train to be well-rounded fighters who are functional in all the ranges. We spend more time improving ourselves in each of the general ranges of kickboxing, clinch and ground fighting both with and without weapons. This is a complete approach. The Instructors undergo a strenuous test to check their abilities as a Functional practitioner in all the ranges of combat. They partake in several rounds of full contact sparring in a high-pressure situation with an un-cooperative opponent. This is where you quickly find out what is functional and what is not! Self defense begins with awareness of the nature of violence and the circumstances in which it is likely to occur - forewarned is forearmed. But there is no substitute for knowing how to deal physically with an assailant.

Training the mind to assess dangerous situations accurately, to avoid confrontations and to stay alert and positive is an integral to successful self-defense. This positive mental outlook, combined with knowledge of self-defense techniques, will reduce the risk of being attacked and becoming a victim.

All the members of JKD HPSF worldwide will experience the benefits of training with daily improvement in themselves and in every aspect of life.

"Don't just think positive, act positive. When in doubt, remember that you are unlimited!" "Don't be a spectator, experience life. Live to the fullest, go where you want to go, do what you want to do and most importantly, do whatever it takes to become the person you want to be." - Burton Richardson.

These are the concepts which I would like to see brought, taught and nurtured in our gyms worldwide. JKD HPSF teaches us about subduing a violent opponent through various methods under the most stressful conditions when our very life is at risk, most people will go through a lifetime without facing death at the hands of another. However, to gain that attribute known as experience, we need to train our students with the most realistic training methods and techniques

JKD High Performance Street Fighting has grown from strength to strength within a short period of time. I believe it is due to the practical approach of what really works on the streets of today. No hierarchy, No rituals, free from tradition just PERFORMANCE ! Focusing on the political or ego orientated approach of the Martial Arts is a waste of good time, I ensure that my students focus on the more positive aspects of life and using their training to compliment their personal growth and well being.

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