



OMAC Chicago  
**Moosong Dojang**

**1<sup>st</sup> Dan Black Belt Test**

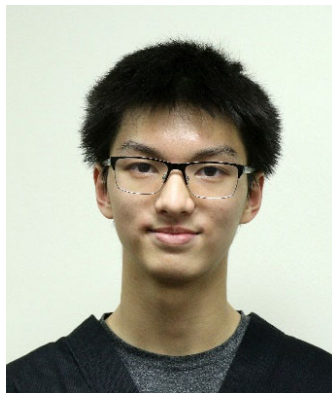
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Required essay for the 1<sup>st</sup> dan black belt test

***Taekwondo and My Life***

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***“Taekwondo and My Life”***

Submitted by: Palm Dhantravan

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I started taekwondo as a five-year-old who was just following his brothers. I didn't care much for it then, as I wanted to do was fool around and thought that I was too small to be good at it. Nonetheless, I continued as my brothers did, and taekwondo continued to become an increasingly bigger part of me over the years. These past ten years with taekwondo has transformed me from the whiny five-year-old to someone with more self-control, concentration/attention, and grit.

Taekwondo most affected me in my relation with school and the stress it comes with. As the responsibilities of school stack up each year, I see many of my fellow students under greater stress. However, when a stressful situation is placed upon me, I resort to the basic teaching that I learned on day one; the simple breathing that we practice every class and lets me forget about whatever test I have the next day or what essays I have due. It seems silly to say, as we breathe every second of every day in our lives, but somehow we seem to forget *how* to breathe when we're under stress. This is what taekwondo has taught me, and it has allowed me to take control of situations by first taking control of my senses. Once I stop worrying, my mind is then clear and able to concentrate on my task ahead. I do my best work, and the results just follow. This obviously does not guarantee perfect results, but I do not allow my grades to be a source of worry and stress. Through taekwondo, I have learned that life isn't and shouldn't be all about trying to get the best grades. Getting caught up in trying to be perfect only makes you afraid of failure, and sets you up to give up when you fail.

Taekwondo has taught me that it's okay to fail, as long as you get back up and keep trying. I went to the OMAC summer a couple years ago, and the one thing I remember Supreme Grandmaster Choi saying was some terminology that translated to something like, "Fall down seven times, get up eight times." The words possessed a message that seemed to resemble that within a tiger's heart, always on the prowl for greatness and never quitting. This grit was something that took awhile for me to develop. As I didn't care much for taekwondo as a kid, I quickly gave up and remember quitting when I was a blue belt. However, after a session without taekwondo, I gave it another try. It was worth it. I practiced and paid attention, and started to like taekwondo more and more. I later grew to understand the importance of trying and trying, and also why we had to practice things over and over.

Now, with the opportunity of assisting Grandmaster Kim in the beginner and intermediate classes, I observe the kids going through the same transformations that I did. Some start out with a natural talent and liking for taekwondo, but others not so

much. They start with a lack of focus, eagerness, or discipline. However, as they continue to practice and push themselves, they start to develop that grit and focus. They get better and seem to like it more as they progress. Wherever they started, and no matter how long it takes, they develop the same traits that help them everywhere they go.

Similar to grit and mental persistence, taekwondo has taught me to always finish what I start. More towards attention and diligence, practicing and perfecting forms has translated to completing all my school work properly and on time. With taekwondo being a part of my life for quite a while, I have never really had a problem with completing school work as I learned this trait early.

Another lesson I have learned from taekwondo is self-control. The greatest display of this growth was the fasting in preparation for my black belt test. I found this especially difficult as there was food everywhere around me. At school, my classmates had brought in food to share with the class, bake sales greeted me at the front, and the cafeteria scent permeated through the hallways. Sitting at the lunch table, I saw all my friends gorge on their food and heard my stomach grumble. When I wasn't hungry, my mind was still fixed on all the food that I was missing out on. Nonetheless, I subdued my hunger and temptations with the mental strength and control I had developed with my training. This self-control and ability to resist my own mind had been completely absent when I had first joined taekwondo, and had grown greatly with time and practice.

However much taekwondo has transformed me and helped me grow, it has helped in ways that I have not noticed myself also. Grandmaster Kim recently noted that I have gained more confidence, that had shown through with my posture and voice. When observing me lead the intermediate class, he said that my voice had a greater presence and that I was standing taller. These recent growths have shown me that I can and will continue to develop through further training.

For much of my life that I can remember, taekwondo has been a part of me. It helped me grow up and will continue to help me grow. Much of what makes me who I am is due to my training in taekwondo. Through my years of training, I have learned to assess where I stand wherever I go. My training has taught me to step back from the problems and stresses of reality to find a solution, and to first control my mind. Wherever I go, whatever the situation is, I can look back to my training to find a solution. Taekwondo has and always will be a part of my life.