

# Tools to Combat the Issues of Complacency vs. Reality

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## **The Seeds of Enlightenment**

I had a very interesting talk with my Sensei yesterday when discussing a book that we are working on. It will be about HIS Martial Arts, and his seminal contribution to Reality Based Training – Kapap.

While talking we were discussing how some Martial Artists have gotten a bit away from the reality of what they are ‘training for’ and teaching it to others as the truth.

He spoke for several minutes about the efficacy of their goal. He has found a very sobering and straightforward way to open their eyes to what they might really face. Reality. It’s nothing like what they think it is or will be.

His solution got me to thinking and I asked, “do you think that they’ve become too comfortable working with willing uke’s and the safe ‘sport’ rules adhered to in training in their home Dojo’s, and the rules generally extended to visiting ‘teachers?’

My sensei replied: “Yes, exactly.”

There’s nothing more sobering than seeing what the realities of ‘your art’ are when used in the capable hands of an untrained assailant – one that doesn’t follow the rules that you follow. The reality is that you don’t need to be an expert to prevail – it’s proven that un-trained people are every bit as capable and often even more so – because they don’t follow the rules. They aren’t going to follow your conventions, your body movements, your flow drills. They’re going to kill you by using your ego and ignorance to this fact against you.

Of course, this is nothing new, but over the last 9 years that I have been involved with Martial Arts, I had a gut feeling based on *my* reality - dealing with non-compliant types on a daily basis.

I write this article to speak to this unspoken and deadly issue. Not to offend anyone for the sake of doing so, but to make those that continue to delude themselves stop and think. Think hard.

## **The Concept of Change**

Think about this concept. You feel very strongly about a subject that’s important to who you are. Using this subject as an example, I propose that you can change either side’s viewpoint through education.

There is a universal way to get a portion of the other side (differing viewpoint) to change their minds about this subject. If you are pro or con doesn't matter, it only matters that you can be persuaded to at least consider changing your stance. It won't take more than a minute or two to do this effectively. That solution is education.

I can think of many subjects where this would be effective - hot topics all, but the method would work as effectively.

### **Testing... testing... is this thing on?**

I've read more than a few articles and books about de-humanizing people, soldiers specifically, but it could/would work on most any civilian.

To make change happen, sometimes it forces us to endure and experience things that make us uncomfortable. Viewing real violence makes us uncomfortable, and it can do so on many levels - psychologically, and physically. It changes us, and we can't 'un-see' it. It may lie dormant, never to be seen again, or it may have an instantaneous effect. It may simmer for now and be triggered at a later date. But undeniably it changes us.

Now the reality is that humans are very crafty and capable creatures - we can love and yet hate. We can create beautiful *things* and yet be capable of destroying those very same *things*.

We've had millennia of striving to become civilized, and yet we still possess the universal instinct of survival - it is after all what keeps us alive and allows us to propagate the species, and yet it's not going away anytime soon.

For too many years we have been spoon-fed another reality though - through the glass teat we know as 'TV.' For many years, Police agencies have had the daunting task of trying to wipe that slate clean in the brains of our young officer recruits. Think: Hollywood vs. Science. As an example I offer: When shot the bad guy always dies right away, but only after being forced backwards by the impact of the bullet(s). The reality is: it doesn't happen like that.

### **Erasing Our Alternate-Facts Realities**

I recently attended a Civilian Police Academy - the first of it's kind in my area, to my knowledge. It was an invite-only affair, and the main qualification for this no-fee three day, 10-hour course was that you'd agree to attend all three days. Class size was limited to 35 students, and we represented not only the curious and willing, but also a very diverse group of community activists, professionals, and just plain civilians.

The primary objective was to educate the public - and I'd guess to turn their heads away from the misleading and outright deceitful rhetoric coming out of that TV and/or in print or social media about the truth and facts of Police Use of Force Incidents.

To their credit, it was always truthful and very enlightening. As you might not have guessed it was also open to any questions and the officers were willing to answer without hesitation. They did so in a positive manner and never once took it as you'd face an opponent, but as you'd face a partner. I would not have thought this possible. They were passionate and educated. The young officer that was the primary speaker had a depth of knowledge that was comforting to me. It made me curious, as I haven't spoken with too many people that possess that level of depth and knowledge about violence.

My resources have brought me to a new level of education on violence, and I've coupled that with more than 8 years of real-world violence interaction.

### **Day One - Planting the Seeds**

During the first night, Use of Force against a citizen was the opening salvo. One participant felt very strongly about the subject of shooting citizens, and spoke out - "why can't you just shoot him in the legs?"

And so the journey to enlightenment began. By the end of day 3, it wasn't an issue anymore for this student. Her viewpoint had been *changed*, not without a bit of effort, but changed nonetheless. She had been educated.

Now think about what we as Martial Artists do. Many of us are equally indoctrinated into a specific way of thinking. I grant that much of this is due to and out of respect to 'never question the sensei', ignorance, and /or personal moral viewpoints - pick your poison. We've *all* done it, and likely continue to do it - *until* we become enlightened. Until we see or experience that irrefutable evidence to the contrary.

It may come in the form of being beat by someone smaller than you, or even at a belt level or two below you. It really doesn't matter other than the fact that if it doesn't happen, you will continue on your path until *it does*, and let's hope that's not too far down the road from and for you today. I hope this article at least convinces you to start down that path - to educate yourself, and to face the ugly truth. You have not been training for reality, but merely playing in a fantasy of what you think reality is.

### **Indoctrination Principle**

As an example, and getting back to my reading/research, you may have heard of the word 'othering'? This happens during indoctrination and it's a way to change your

viewpoint to create a precept for direct action against another human being in this case. We've all been indoctrinated in some form and at one time or another, but most likely we've been exposed to indoctrination continually throughout our lives. It starts in childhood, and continues through adulthood. We go along with it until we no longer do so based on the reality of our experiences and or re-education.

To make soldiers 'perform' better, it was determined that they needed to change their way of thinking and feeling – in order to become better and more effective killing machines. To do so, meant learning first what makes them tick, and then learning how to manipulate their thoughts and feelings about the enemy. Simple. But was it truly effective? It's hard to give a detailed answer. Because effective is also a multiplier – it may have helped with the math side, but the soldiers were broken. The numbers may have given them better results, but at what cost? During the Viet Nam War, the military machine expanded their indoctrination efforts of our soldiers to great effect. It was done so, but only after the research that was done after WWII by S.L.A. Marshall as revealed in Lt. Dave Grossman's book titled 'On Killing.'

Our soldiers, young and old were taught to hate the enemy and to 'other' them using simple concepts, and by using very simple triggers – words and images. They were taught to treat the enemy as less than human. This type of indoctrination can be very effective, and its ramifications are far-reaching, and go beyond it's use on the battlefield.

*(I suggest that you locate and read Col. Dave Grossman's book titled 'On Killing' for more background and education on this subject as one resource example that comes immediately to mind. It's enlightening for several reasons.)*

What we learn in the typical Dojo environment are many new things: classical 'respect', classical kata, and yet we learn a lot of very bad habits as well. We train to control our power, to pull our strikes and kicks, to stop after a point is scored by your partner during sparring sessions, and even to hand over the weapon after you've been able to seize it during weapons sessions.

'Train as you fight, fight as you train' has become an all too common call to 'arms' for far too many Martial Artists and Self-Defense 'experts'. We have deluded ourselves by using titles to demonstrate our mastery of an art to the uninitiated. Think about this slogan. Tear it apart, and really read it. It's a special kind of stupid when you really take all of the emotional and egotistical baggage out. 'Other' it. Let go of your personal viewpoint and just really get *the concept* of what I'm telling you here and why the slogan really makes no sense. I hope you can, but many won't take that challenge easily or willingly.

## **Fear-Based Marketing**

By teaching our students using slogans akin to this one - words that *sound* cool and make great bumper stickers, or 'wall' banners for our social media pages, is it any stretch of the imagination to see the indoctrination principle of marketing slogans like this? "The most deadly art?", "Krav Maga as taught to the IDF", "Fight Like a Navy Seal" and other juicy morsels that all have one thing in common - to separate you from your money. "Fear-based Marketing 101."

In defense of slogans and marketing ploys like this, there really are some 'systems' out there that are better than others, yet it's still all context sensitive. If you are a student that is in fear of what the world has to offer, you'll likely get sucked in. There is no shame in that, and that's why it's good and effective marketing. Been there and done that, for my own reasons, and yes fear is/was a strong selling point.

So what really is the likelihood that you're going to draw your weapon on someone - let's just say a gun? Have you researched the legal ability to do so? Have you thought about what it may cost you? Here I strongly suggest that you find and read Marc MacYoung's book titled 'In the Name of Self-Defense.' Do it now if you haven't already done so. It's going to not only open your eyes, even if you think you know it all - but it's going to change your perspective - for the better. It's what truth looks like, from the perspective of a real-life 'master of violence.' That's not his title, but it could be. Marc makes you look strong and hard at the ugly. He's seen it, and even done it. He's here to educate you - but only if you're smart enough to seek him out.

Now go back and read 'On Killing' *after* you've read Marc's excellent book. Explore your psychological ability to wield that tremendous tool against another human being. I caution you that reality is ahead.

So, these are but two insights and references to get you more up to speed. Do yourself a favor now, and digest that for more than the time it takes to read it. Let it simmer for several days. Contemplate what has been offered up in these two excellent resources.

I can point you to several other excellent reads as well:

- Alexis Artwohl, PH.D. & Loren W. Christensen's book titled 'Deadly Force Encounters'
- Charles Remsberg's book titled 'Street Survival'

Educate your mind further. This stuff is enlightening, and uncomfortable at the same time. My goal is to make you face that uncomfortable side of this equation. Look into it deep and hard, and then ask yourself - could I do violence to another human being using my skills and weapon of choice? Can I draw a weapon and use it to stop

another human being from existing. It's not an easy mirror to look into. There are no right or easy answers, but if you don't ask the question(s), you won't have the answers if and when you may need them the most.

### **An Effective *Alternate-Facts* Cure**

So, the '*cure*' for some of this is to change how and what we study and teach and maybe when. Today, stop and figure this out for yourself, and more importantly for those you are responsible for and to – you, your family and your students.

In Kapap we say "I'd rather be a student of reality, than a master of *illusion*." A very responsible and appropriate slogan in context of the purpose of this article.

If you want to test your mettle, educate yourself - read and understand things that make you uncomfortable. If it's difficult to look into that mirror and honestly assess your ability to do what you are practicing to do to another human being without remorse, you *are* the bad guy. I'm not saying there may not come a time, or that you may be justified in doing so – it all depends on circumstances and context, but reality isn't something you go into unprepared. And how does one prepare to take another's life? Indoctrination. Which leads to a false sense of skill and ability, up and until reality shows up and shows you something you were never prepared for in the first place, then your fantasy world comes down around you. Your reality shatters and leaves you vulnerable, or worse.

### **The Gun Solution**

If you fancy yourself a gun guy, do the research. Again, I suggest researching some of Marc MacYoung's books - learn about the 'Dead Man's Ten' study as just one example of what you are likely to face. Watch the YouTube videos of Police shoot-outs. These people are skilled practitioners as well, and in context.

### **Day Two – Witnessing Reality**

On day two of the academy we were shown a video of a roadside shootout. The aggressor shot until his gun was empty. He was also the target of the officer simultaneously. The aggressor was able to continue to fire on the officer, reload and fire more shots, get back into his vehicle and drive away. He made it about a mile or so down the road. The officer pursued, and when he approached the vehicle, only then did he discover that he had fatally shot the man. The aggressor was dead behind the wheel. That's a long 'Dead Man's Ten!'

Read the FBI research on actual homicides. Read the Street Survival Series of books put out again by Calibre Press and Jim Glennon. Read the Artwohl/Christensen book on Police shootings. These are men and women that have prepared to take a life, but read about their 'experience.' Read the personal stories and insights. Ask yourself the hard questions now, because when ' it' happens will you have time to ask

yourself, your lawyer, your family, and your sensei? It's not easy. Don't delude yourself with macho attitude. These are humanized accounts of what happened and the outcomes. The effects it had on the police officers, their families, and their friends. How it totally changed their world. This is reality. Cold, hard, honest.

### **The Knife Solution**

If you fancy that you're a knife guy. Think about this. It takes very little skill to kill someone with a knife. A whole lot less skill than it does to do the same thing with a gun, I believe, in many instances. A gun allows you distance, which psychologically gives you an edge - distance is a form of de-humanizing the act. It de-personalizes your actions to an extent not possible with a knife.

Using a knife on another human is a very personal act. You will get their blood on you. You're not going to walk away untouched by this act like you may after having shot someone. You will likely get cut or worse if it's against another person wielding a knife. Learning whatever art you choose to use for this weapon is no guarantee. It doesn't matter much if it's FMA or any derivative. Because, even if you do prevail, is it going to be what you've fantasized it was going to be like, or did it even go down the way you 'saw it ' in your own mind? No, it didn't. That I can guarantee. It never does.

*(Matt disagrees with me on this point and adds these insights for consideration: "repeatedly and effectively stabbing/slashing enough to kill? Not that easy. vs. pulling a trigger over and over [consult wound data comparisons]. I disagree and think the opposite is true." I based my thoughts on the psychological investment inherent in an act of violence where death is the outcome, perhaps as a one-sided goal (his, not yours): intent, commitment and no 'personal barriers issues'. Matt closes with: "Will power vs. Skill power = Kill power!")*

Check this out. Look up some prison knifings on YouTube. Watch a few, and see what reality *really* looks like. These guys have skills that you don't and you won't be prepared for their skills. To your mind, they may not be skills, but in the end, it works - with a knife, a shiv, or any manner of 'weapon at hand.' Skill is the least of it.

Now go find the brutal footage of terrorists using any imaginable means to kill people that they have effectively '*othered*' -whether doing so for strong religious 'beliefs', or for strong political ideology as their driving force.

If you can actually sit through a few short glimpses, or watch an entire clip of one beheading, then at least you've witnessed the reality of reality. You've started down the road to enlightenment. From here, you need to stop and reassess your journey, but you will *only* if you are smarter and more responsible after having done so, for the benefit of others that you are training. There is very little skill involved in this act. Intent is the driving force, and you likely don't possess that 'skill.'

## **Reality as a Valuable Learning Tool – It's Missing in our Curriculum**

Reality is not a common learning tool, and it really should be. It needs to be. If we are to be Honest, and display Integrity, then we owe it to ourselves as well as to our students. We need to be better and more completely educated - even if and when it's disturbing, and knowing that what we are teaching is *not* the whole story. It's fantasy in too many cases. I don't mean to say it's intentional, as it isn't always. But, it is intentional if we disregard the facts and the realities and don't speak to it or teach it to our students.

Be responsible and accountable. Don't propagate your 'reality' into impressionable minds. Do the research and then make those resources available. I have listed just a few herein.

Don't be fooled by your own complacency – you've been training with *willing* partners, and following standard Dojo (read: sport) 'use of engagement' principles. They are falsehoods if you're training to use a weapon against another human.

There are glitches and safeties built into your training methods and programs (thank you Rory Miller!) I'm telling you that you are fooling yourself and misleading your students. Can you really afford to continue this practice in good conscience?

There are many ways to speak to this subject matter, but the reality is that you probably haven't yet faced reality. This is your wake-up call. Please accept the invitation. It's my gift to you.

Who said you can't learn any Martial Art from a book or by watching a video? I whole-heartedly and respectfully disagree.

***In a future article I will expound more upon the Civilian Academy Experience – an overview that will include more in depth information about all three days.***

### **Acknowledgement:**

Matt Swartz, NYSP, Ret. is a very modest man possessing extraordinary talent and drive. He offered to read this article in draft form and provide me with some feedback, and I am so grateful that he did so. I met Matt briefly and by chance while attending an LEO-only training session a few years ago given by FLETC DT Senior Instructor Charlie Moore, USMS, Ret. Matt is the subject of a chapter of Charles Remsberg's fourth installment of the original Street Survival series published by Calibre Press, titled 'Blood Lessons', which was used in Police Academies to train new recruits. I am proud to know Matt, and now even more so for his contributions to this piece.

<https://www.policeone.com/health-fitness/articles/1811517-Trooper-interviewed-in-Blood-Lessons-named-Athlete-of-the-Month/>

<https://www.policeone.com/police-products/training/books-training-materials/articles/1811526-Book-Excerpt-Bionic-Trooper-from-Blood-Lessons/>



[https://www.amazon.com/Blood-Lessons-Life-Death-Encounters/dp/0981900801/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1486337120&sr=8-1&keywords=blood+lessons](https://www.amazon.com/Blood-Lessons-Life-Death-Encounters/dp/0981900801/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1486337120&sr=8-1&keywords=blood+lessons)

*Resources:*

[https://www.amazon.com/Killing-Psychological-Cost-Learning-Society/dp/0316040932/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1486306471&sr=8-1&keywords=on+killing](https://www.amazon.com/Killing-Psychological-Cost-Learning-Society/dp/0316040932/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1486306471&sr=8-1&keywords=on+killing)

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<https://secure.calibrepress.com/shop/books/street-survival-tactics-for-armed-encounters/>

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