

The Master's Apprentice

Yoshinkan Aikido's Saburo Takashima Sensei

As an instructor at Yoshinkan Aikido's Tokyo *honbu* (headquarters), Saburo Takashima Sensei regularly takes the Tokyo Metropolitan Police and riot-squad members through the punishing training sessions that are part of their year-long, compulsory full-time course. Born in 1973 in San Paolo, Brazil, Takashima Sensei moved to Japan as a seven-year-old. He has been an *uchi-deshi* (live-in student) at Yoshinkan hombu since 1997 and is today ranked 4th Dan Jokyō. Here, he talks about the art, the course and the role of an *uchi-deshi*.

When did you first commence Aikido training?

I started aikido training in December 1996. I just dropped into the dojo to observe an aikido class and by chance, the instructor knew my brother, [who] was practising Aikido. The instructor encouraged me to be a member of Yoshinkan.

Did you do any other martial arts before aikido?

I did judo and kendo at school, but I was not a serious student.

What attracted you to aikido?

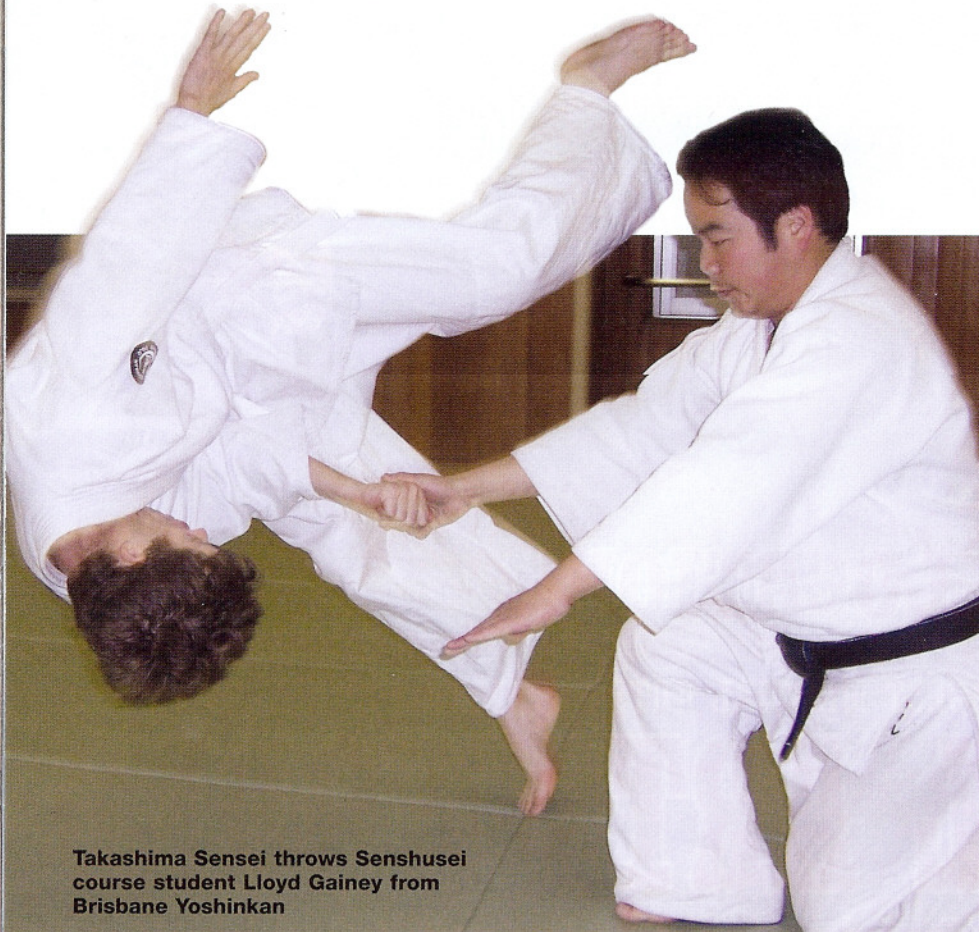
The fluid and beauty of aikido movements really attracted me. Its movements were like a dance rather than for fighting. Aikido movements did not seem to rely on muscular strength — it wasn't a competition between the people practising aikido.

You undertook the famous Yoshinkan Senshusei course. Please tell us about your experiences in that year. Is it as tough as it has been portrayed?

The Senshusei course is an intensive 12-month aikido course that was originally developed in response to the needs of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. About 40 years ago in Japan, there were many riots and the police asked Yoshinkan to train their riot police in a short period of time. The course is now open to other people besides the police.

Because the course was originally designed for the riot police and to produce instructors for the police force, it was very hard training and it continues to be very hard training, and demanding. It is very challenging for each person and the participants as a group. Everyone is continuously pushed to excel.

From my perspective, as someone who now teaches the Senshusei course and someone who took the course, each person must continuously confront his/her limits and



Takashima Sensei throws Senshusei course student Lloyd Gainey from Brisbane Yoshinkan