

# Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

May 2026



## — Why Budo? —

**Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:**

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

*These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.*

Copyright 2026 Itten Dojo, Inc.  
701 W Simpson Street, Suite C  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-3716  
[www.ittendojo.org](http://www.ittendojo.org)

## Beneath the Blade Ego, Honor, and the True Purpose of Combat

“When the sword is honest, the hand need not hesitate. But when the heart is corrupt, every strike is a lie.”—Old koryu teaching.

There is a moment before every act of combat—a sliver of breath, a pulse in the wrist—where intent is laid bare. In that space, before the blade is drawn or the body shifts forward, the most appropriate question is not, “Can I win?” but “Why am I moving?”

Martial practice often begins with romantic ideas of justice, defense, or proving oneself. But as the years accumulate, as the bruises deepen and the stories fade, a deeper distinction emerges—the difference between fighting from ego and fighting from honor.

Ego fights to be seen. Honor fights to preserve clarity.

The ego-driven fighter, even when cloaked in the language of defense, carries a hidden ledger. Every glance is a challenge, every insult a wound to be avenged. Their actions, though skilled, are shaped by internal noise: pride, insecurity, rage. This form of conflict is not martial, it is theatrical. A staged battle to reclaim a sense of identity threatened by the presence of another.

By contrast, the honorable fighter does not seek conflict, nor flee from it. He moves only when movement is necessary. The engagement is not a performance, but a choice. And that choice arises not from wounded pride, but from an unshakable core of principle.

But what is honor, truly?

Honor is not reputation. It is not the applause of one’s peers. Honor is the disciplined alignment of action with a moral compass forged in hardship, silence, and failure. It does not require recognition; it requires restraint. It is not reactive; it is rooted. When honor moves, it moves cleanly. It does not draw the sword unless the situation demands it.

And when it does strike, it does so with no hatred, no attachment, and no vanity. The honorable fighter can look their opponent in the eye without



contempt. Ego demands submission. Honor demands truth.

This is why the traditional budo arts emphasize etiquette as much as technique. Bowing, cleaning, the stillness before movement—these are not formalities. They are micro-disciplines meant to erode the ego, to strip away the self that craves domination.

In the moment of true conflict, ego fights to prove. Honor fights to protect. Ego strikes to hurt. Honor strikes to end harm.

To live and train with this distinction alive in your bones is not easy. It requires constant vigilance not

against others, but against oneself. To catch the subtle tone in the mind that whispers, “Let them know who you are.” And to answer instead with silence.

### Conclusion

The deeper one travels into martial discipline, the clearer this becomes: The real victory is not over your opponent, but over the parts of yourself that misuse your strength. When the blade is raised, ask not, “Do I have the right?” Ask instead, “Is this an act of ego or an act of honor?” The answer will shape far more than the outcome of the fight—it will shape who you become. 🌀

**Edward Castillo (Salahuddin Muhammad) is dojocho of the Takeshin Dojo and director of the Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai. An overseas director (Nihon jujutsu division) for the Japanese Budo Association under his teacher, Asano Yasuhito Sensei, Castillo Sensei is the current head of Hontai Hakkei-ryu, and a student of Shinkage-ryu Hyoho (Asano-ha). He is retired from the fields of private client and executive protection, and has also worked in fugitive recovery.**



### A Request from Castillo Sensei

My name is Edward Castillo. On October 20th, 2024, **I had a series of cardiac traumas, resulting in a hospitalization.** I am in need of assistance as I can't work at this time and things have taken a downturn financially. **I am seeking assistance while recovering from this life-changing situation.** I am a martial arts instructor and have a limited capacity for any physical activities. As you know, the monthly bills mount and it becomes difficult to focus on recovery, with the other worries involved. I am working on making a full recovery and my particular health insurance does not cover my cardiac therapy. Thank you and any assistance is appreciated. All the best to you and yours.



**Donate via  
GoFundMe**

