

BE A MARTIALIST



by

Phil Elmore

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By Phil Elmore

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For My Wife

Contents

Introduction	v
What is Martialism?.....	1
Why Pacifism is Wrong	5
Criticisms and Defenses of Martialism	11
The Moral Authority of Self-Defense: The Individual Right	17
How to Pursue Martialism	27
Assertive Living as a Martialist.....	33
The Principles of Martialism	41
The Liabilities of Martialism.....	43
Your Journey as a Martialist	49

Introduction

We live in a violent world. Not a day passes that our news media do not relate some new horror, some new act of violence against our fellow citizens. This isn't paranoia; it's simply the truth. To deny that this occurs you'd have to ignore everything going on in the world around you. We must face reality even when it is unpleasant.



You are surrounded by predators. Most of the time, they won't bother you and you won't notice them. Most of us will go through life never being victims of violent crime. Most of us, who conduct ourselves sensibly and avoid high-crime, high-risk venues, don't expect to be confronted with violence – and for the most part, our expectations are correct. The problem is that the risk exists regardless of your expectations and your perceptions. Violent crime occurs and could find you at any moment in any circumstances, for it is by its nature often random and unpredictable. Unless you wish to live with the risk and do nothing about it, your choice is clear: you must take responsibility for the defense of your family and yourself. You must learn self-defense and take precautions against violent crime. Does this mean you must live in fear? No. Taking responsibility for self-defense *fre*es you from unreasoning fear and places risk in its proper context.

Simply put, you must pay attention to your personal security. Failure to do so may result in total tragedy for you or your family. If you don't pay at least nominal attention to your personal security, then you deserve what comes your way.

The crime rate right now (1999) is lower than it's been since the mid 1960s. However, the incidence of violence in those crimes is much higher – less crime, more violence. The FBI has amassed statistics that tell us a person generally stands a six percent chance in his or her lifetime of being victimized in some way. Of course, all statistics are capable of manipulation and don't normally reflect the reality of any given situation. The fact is that if your experience in that six percent includes a stabbing which results in your requiring a colostomy, that mere six percent becomes pretty life altering. If it includes a nonconfrontational property crime – your mailbox gets destroyed by vandals, for example – you got off easy.

This is not melodramatic, just truthful, prudent, and appropriately concerned.

– Street Smarts, Firearms, and Personal Security, Jim Grover

Recognizing that there are people who will prey on you if given the opportunity – and that there are people who seek to *make* those opportunities – is not paranoid hysteria.

It is merely realistic. Preparing to meet emergencies that have not yet occurred is not paranoid or mentally unbalanced. It is prudent.

Have you ever purchased life insurance? You don't actually think you're going to die soon, do you? Have you ever purchased a handgun and obtained a license to carry it? You don't actually think there are home invaders hiding in your shrubbery right now, do you?

I tell you now that it is very possible you'll get through your entire life never being confronted by someone who means you harm or who seeks to take what you have earned. I hope you do. Unfortunately, the possibility that you won't is also real. It is measurable. You should not expect to face rampaging barbarian hordes the second you leave the relative safety of your home – but neither should you think, “It can't happen to me.”

Those who understand the risks life entails also understand that they must hedge their bets and be prepared for possible dangers. They do not stockpile illegal weapons. They do not dig foxholes in their flowerbeds. They do not sit at home sweating bullets and aiming firearms at passing cars from beneath ghillie suits knitted from their living-room curtains. They do, however, think carrying firearms or other weapons suitable for personal protection is a *reasonable* action. They understand that a society increasingly hostile to individual self-defense, regardless of whatever lip service that society pays to recognizing your right to preserve your life, may indeed punish them should they make the choice to use force – no matter how justified they might believe themselves to be.

The legal penalties for one's actions cannot be ignored. Learn them. Know them. Remember them. Make informed choices.

Where preparation is concerned, however, err on the side of caution. No doubt the grasshopper considered the ant “paranoid,” too. Charges of “paranoia” and “hysteria” are very common when those who are not prepared face those who are. This is understandable. We are uncomfortable when confronted with others' superior abilities to cope. We rationalize our own lack of effort or lack of ability in order to evade the *cognitive dissonance* we feel.

In my opinion, neither money nor greed (cupiditas) is the root of all evil. The root of all evil is envy. The non-coper hates the coper, and thus the non-shooter hates the shooter. I see no other explanation for the pointless and irrational activism of the gun grabbers on the political scene. They know that their machinations can have no effect upon crime. Guns have no effect upon crime, but they do make all men equal, as the saying goes. This puts the coper on top, and infuriates the non-coper.

– Jeff Cooper

Cooper wrote a book called *Principles of Personal Defense* that belongs on your bookshelf next to this one. In 44 concise pages, he describes the principles that best embody personal defense. As it happens, these concepts also embody the idea of *martialism*. They are:

- Alertness – for awareness is the key to all self-defense
- Decisiveness – the willingness to take action and do so swiftly
- Aggressiveness – the willingness to assert your will in self-defense
- Speed – for wasting time means losing initiative
- Coolness – remaining calm under pressure
- Ruthlessness – doing what must be done even if it is unpleasant
- Surprise – taking the initiative and refusing to fight by others' terms

“Violent crime,” writes Cooper, “is feasible only if its victims are cowards. A victim who fights back makes the whole business impractical. It is true that a victim who fights back may suffer for it, but one who does not almost certainly will suffer for it.”

To be a martialist means to approach life with these principles of personal defense in mind. It is to be assertive, capable, prepared, and willing to take action in defense of yourself and your family. It is to possess and use the *combative mindset* – a mental outlook that accepts the reality of violence and leaves you aware and prepared for it.

A lot of people who don't possess the combative mindset fail to understand it and – worse – harbor serious misconceptions about it. This mindset is not about paranoia, not about fear, and not about anger. Those who possess it are not sitting at home stroking a shotgun or endlessly polishing a .45 with a lace handkerchief, muttering under their breaths about the enemies among us.

The combative mindset is the mindset of *preparedness*. It is the recognition that by preparing for emergencies – utilitarian and combative – you can stack the odds in your favor when something you cannot predict occurs.

I've read some accounts by would-be martial artists and self-defense advocates who actually claim such a mindset is a “waste of mental energy.” If that's true, such people must not have a much “mental energy” to spare. To successfully defend yourself, you must recognize and embrace reality. Evading or dismissing it does us all a disservice.

Martialism is the recognition of reality – the reality of our dangerous world and the measures that best help you prepare for and achieve success in self-defense. That self-defense could be against human aggressors; it could also be against natural disasters, civil unrest, isolated emergencies, and other matters of utility in which forethought and planning help you cope with the unexpected.

This booklet explains the concept of martialism as a philosophy. It explains how you, too, can become a martialist. It describes why this is the best means of living a full, gratifying, and dynamic life – for as long as humanly possible.

What is Martialism?

Attack, attack, attack – come at your target from every possible direction and press until his defenses overload. Never give him time to recover his balance: never give him time to counter.

– *Heroes Die*, Matthew Woodring Stover

Does that quote sound *fearful* to you?

I once read a discussion among several martial artists, one of whom cited this quote. He asked of the others the question, “Does this point to underlying fear?” A number of individuals responded in the affirmative. The attitude expressed by the quote was indeed very fearful, they opined. It was not a realistic attitude. It betrayed an ignorance of the *Budo*, the Japanese martial way that was what most of them claimed to study. The quote was, they asserted, an attitude exemplified by the infamous fictional Karate instructor portrayed by Martin Kove in *The Karate Kid*.

One participant to the discussion said that he felt sorry for those who imagined their lives were in constant danger. Another said that he felt sorry for those whose arts demanded “total aggression.” He wondered if a fighter who failed to feel such aggression would simply fail and die.

Still other respondents speculated that such a philosophy would prompt the fighter to leave himself open or to tire himself prematurely, while one or two wondered who or what grants the individual the “moral authority” to use lethal force against another person. Martial arts instructors who promote such attitudes of total aggression were called “naïve.” Those who agree with such a philosophy were presumed to suffer from low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, or the inability to exercise judgment in the face of an assault.

What motivates a martial artist to look at that quote and see mindless killing, bullying, bravado, and mental illness? What martial artist in his or her right mind would claim that it is “great” to be attacked, because when an attack occurs one is in “total control” of the situation? What sort of worldview prompts a martial artist to say that one should “respect” or even “love” one’s attacker? What attitude is behind the opinions of martial artists who look down on their fellow citizens who carry legal handguns or tactical folding knives?

I submit that martial artists who hold such sentiments are not “martial” artists at all. They have forgotten what *martial* truly means. They fail to understand the defining component of the arts they practice.

The martial arts are about *fighting*. Every martial system has at its core the concept of using physical force against another human being. It does not matter if the art in

question is a passive one, meeting initiated force with retaliatory force or some form of redirection. All martial arts were conceived in the forge of human conflict. Even generations removed from its roots and stylized to the point of near uselessness, a *martial* art is predicated on the concept that human beings may try to hurt or control each other with their bodies – or with weapons that are extensions of those bodies.

At some point in man's evolution, his primal rage compelled him to climb down out of the trees, pick up stones, and take a stand against the animals that had been hunting him for so long. From this rage the art of fighting was born. This inner rage of our ancestors would become the foundation from which many classical and contemporary martial arts styles and systems were built...

– *The Fighting Arts*, Michael Rosenbaum

To believe you can, with any degree of certainty, “totally control” a given situation is to display such complete ignorance of the reality of fighting that rational discussion is nearly out of the question. To believe you can be bigger, stronger, or better than everyone you meet is unrealistic and betrays a bizarre lack of self-esteem converted into mindlessly arrogant machismo and bravado. Anyone who believes an attacker is someone to be “respected” has never met a human predator ready and willing to gouge out another man's eyeball and *pop it*. Any martial artist who thinks he or she will have the time and information necessary to assess the *intentions* of an attacker who has just come from behind to smash a beer bottle over his or her head has no idea just how quickly real attacks occur.

People seek out martial arts and self-defense schools specifically because they wish to learn to protect themselves. True, they may enroll in a class or find a teacher because they want something else – physical fitness, perhaps – but the existence of reality-based self-defense programs, dojos, kwoons, dojangs, self-defense seminars, and Karate classes at the YMCA are predicated on the notion that people will pay to be taught what they are told is self-defense. We must keep this in mind as we seek success in self-defense – and spend our money accordingly.

The commercially available martial arts today provide a wide array of ancillary benefits. If you find an art or fighting system that improves your health and fitness, grants you some measure of spiritual insight and development, or gives you a social outlet, great. If studying a particular art makes you more confident, increases your respect for yourself and others, makes you more responsible, or makes you more disciplined, wonderful. However, if at any time you are tempted to think that any of these things, taken separately or together, are what the martial arts are *about*, you are mistaken.

Baseball isn't about listening to the national anthem, eating pizza or hot dogs, or catching foul balls, though most would say the experience of a baseball game isn't the same without these things. Can you imagine the sort of team that would result if a given coach focused on these things to the exclusion of training his players to hit and throw baseballs?

For a martial art to be a *martial* art, rather than some other form of physical expression (some other “art” entirely), its focus must remain on *fighting*. A truly accomplished warrior may renounce violence – but only his or her mastery of violence makes this possible. If the style or system you study leaves you unable to defend yourself in a realistic self-defense scenario, it may indeed be an *art* – but it is not *martial* at all. Its practitioners delude themselves if they believe that it is.

In the same vein, a martial art or martial artist whose attitude towards weapons is one of contempt, mistrust, fear, or condescension tells you volumes about its, his, or her “martialism.” Weapons are *force multipliers* – tools that perform the same function as hammers, levers, and pliers. They make it easier to accomplish a specific task. As the purpose of a martial art is to deliver force against another human or group of humans, only the most ignorant of martial artists would dismiss or reject tools that make performing this task more efficient and less risky. There is no such thing as an immoral tool. There are only immoral tool *users*.

All self-defense involves risk. Training in a martial art is one way of improving your odds in the gamble that is a self-defense scenario. Responsible carry of a legal weapon is another means of improving those odds, of giving yourself more options.

Weapons and martial arts training are not magic guarantees of success when faced with an attack, of course. You may always encounter someone faster, bigger, stronger, or better armed. That, however, is why we *train*. That is why we prepare, why we arm ourselves, why we stockpile emergency supplies, and why we formulate our plans before we need them. Learning martial skills and carrying martial tools improves our chances but does not remove the risk that characterizes the gamble. You can't win every bet, but you can *cheat* as much as possible.

These concepts all come back to the concept of aggression. Aggression – forward drive, seizing the initiative – is not *anger*. Anger can be channeled, of course, but if it is not controlled and used properly it works against the fighter. Aggressive domination of an encounter, by contrast, is not reckless fury. It is not fearful and spastic hurling of one's body into danger without regard for covering one's vital areas.

Holding down the pillow means not letting someone raise his head. In martial arts, in the course of dueling, it is bad to be maneuvered around by others. It is desirable to maneuver opponents around freely, by whatever means you may. ...Stopping an opponent's attack at the initial outset, not letting him follow through, is the sense of 'holding down the pillow.' ...First, doing whatever you do scientifically, thwart the opponent's very first impulse to try something, thus foiling everything. To manipulate opponents in this way is mastery of the art of war, which comes from practice.

– *The Book of Five Rings*, Miyamoto Musashi

Overwhelming an opponent with aggression, when done by a fighter who understands the principles of fighting and is skilled and experienced in their application, will always decide a violent altercation. It will also decide a violent altercation *in favor of the assailant* if the defending “martial” artist fails to grasp the importance of it.

Those who understand the purpose of the martial arts and the foundation for all fighting systems do not live their lives in fear. They are, however, realistic about their chances, about the myriad of factors they know they cannot control when faced with attacks by unknown assailants possessing equally unknown motivations and intents. Real fighting is messy, brutal, aggressive, and fast. It is not a dance, it is not a kata, it is not a form, it is not a sport, and it is not an exercise.

We forget this at our peril. *Real* self-defense requires us to be more than artists and more than martial artists. It requires us to be *martialists* – assertive, even dominant (but not domineering) human beings who stand up for our rights, arm ourselves with the tools to face emergencies, and confront that which is wrong rather than shrink from or avoid it.

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly.

Specialization is for insects.

– R. A. Heinlein

The Martialist™ is a fully capable, fully competent human being who, above all else, is willing to do what must be done – to *take action* – in order to stand up for himself and for his family. He is not the toughest bad ass in the neighborhood. He is not the strongest or the fastest or the meanest. He knows there will always be others more capable in some areas or possessing to greater degree some desirable quality.

What sets The Martialist™ apart is his unwavering commitment to ruthlessly apply logic and reason to reality – a reality he does not try to evade – and his willingness to take action in order to assert himself in an often hostile, generally apathetic world. Martialists are women and men who do not live in fear and who do not jump at every shadow. They are simply human beings who’ve chosen a path of dynamic *living* and of self-defense that preserves their sovereignty from the myriad others in this world who seek to violate their rights. Your ownership of yourself is your most fundamental natural right. Martialists recognize this and take steps to protect their property.

The opposite of The Martialist™ is the *pacifist* – the coward who refuses to take action. Pacifism in whole or in part (because many pacifists do not adhere to their philosophy consistently) is the philosophy of victimhood, of apathy, of inaction. It is fundamentally wrong – and contrary to everything for which martialists stand.

Why Pacifism is Wrong

I thought about it during the last session of our class in History and Moral Philosophy. H. & M. P. was different from other courses in that everybody had to take it but nobody had to pass it – and Mr. Dubois never seemed to care whether he got through to us or not. He would just point at you with the stump of his left arm (he never bothered with names) and snap a question. Then the argument would start.

But on the last day he seemed to be trying to find out what we had learned. One girl told him bluntly: “My mother says that violence never settles anything.”

“So?” Mr. Dubois looked at her bleakly. “I’m sure the city fathers of Carthage would be glad to know that. Why doesn’t your mother tell them so? Or why don’t you?”

They had tangled before – since you couldn’t flunk the course, it wasn’t necessary to keep Mr. Dubois buttered up. She said shrilly, “You’re making fun of me! Everybody knows that Carthage was destroyed!”

“You seemed to be unaware of it,” he said grimly. “Since you do know it, wouldn’t you say that violence had settled their destinies rather thoroughly? However, I was not making fun of you personally; I was heaping scorn on an inexcusably silly idea – a practice I shall always follow. Anyone who clings to the historically untrue – and thoroughly immoral – doctrine that ‘violence never settles anything’ I would advise to conjure up the ghosts of Napoleon Bonaparte and of the Duke of Wellington and let them debate it. The ghost of Hitler could referee, and the jury might well be the Dodo, the Great Auk, and the Passenger Pigeon. Violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than has any other factor, and the contrary opinion is wishful thinking at its worst. Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms.”

He sighed. “Another year, another class – and, for me, another failure. One can lead a child to knowledge but one cannot make him think.”

– Starship Troopers, R.A. Heinlein

What is pacifism? What does it mean to be a pacifist?

When applied consistently and logically, pacifism is the doctrine of total non-violence. Whether you call it “passivism” or some other term, the implications are the same. Pacifism is the philosophy that the use of force is always (or almost always) wrong. It is

the credo that one may not hurt or kill another human being even when that person uses physical violence against you or those you love – perhaps because “nonviolent” means are said to be more effective forms of resistance to initiated force, or perhaps because the use of force in self-defense is said to “perpetuate the cycle of violence.” Pacifists may engage in “nonviolent” resistance – that is to say, they may actively resist even though they will not use what we would normally consider force – but they will not *fight*, for the most part. Some self-described pacifists insist they would not stand by and allow their loved ones to be raped or that they would use force to preserve their own lives, but their adherence otherwise to a general philosophy of non-violence simply means they are hypocrites.

A philosophically consistent pacifist would attempt to place himself between his wife and his wife's would-be rapist, giving his life to “protect” her, but he would not actually hurt or kill the rapist. The logical outcome of this scenario is a dead husband and a violated wife (as well as an unbroken chain of violated women in the future).

A group of pacifists or passivists might gather together to stand before an advancing army and throw their bodies under the treads and wheels of the invaders' war machines, but they would not actually try to kill any of the invaders. The logical outcome of this scenario is a pile of dead pacifists and a sacked city (as well as an unbroken chain of sacked cities in the future).

False Moral Equivalency

The fundamental flaw of pacifism is that of *false moral equivalency*. There is a difference between *initiated* and *retaliatory* force. If you do not make this distinction – if you do not see the difference between attacking someone and defending against that attack – you are, in effect, declaring both attacker and defender to be morally equal. You are saying that there is no difference between the rapist and the raped, the mugger and the mugged, the murderer and the murdered. You are saying that there is no moral difference between the September 11th hijackers and those they cut to death, no difference between Osama bin Laden and those condemned to be torn and blown to pieces in fiery collisions.

It is very easy to play the part of nihilist, of relativist, wandering in the forest of affected profundity, wondering aloud if a distinction between initiated and retaliatory force can really be made. Anyone actually applying philosophy to life in a practical manner will immediately perceive the difference. Our first social interactions with other children are marked by the distinction, something as simple as understanding who “started it” when two individuals come into conflict.

If we have a verbal disagreement and I strike you, I have *initiated* force. If we have a verbal disagreement and you tell me you are going to strike me as you take a step toward me and cock your arm, I am using *retaliatory* force when I strike you before you can complete your attack. All conflicts in life are permutations of these simple

examples. While the complexity of these interactions on a national level can make moral judgment much more difficult, it does not make necessary judgment *impossible*.

Physical force is coercion exercised by a physical agency, such as punching a man or shooting him or stealing his property. Initiating force means to START the use of force against an innocent individual, one who has not himself started its use against others.

Since men do not automatically come to the same conclusions, no code of ethics can escape the present issue. The moralist has to tell men how to act when they disagree (assuming they do not simply go their separate ways). In essence, there are only two viewpoints on this issue, because there are only two basic methods by which one can deal with a dispute. The methods are reason or force; seeking to persuade others to share one's ideas voluntarily, or coercing others into doing what one wishes regardless of their ideas.

When you use force, therefore, you attack a person's body (or seize his property) and thereby negate and dismiss as irrelevant his mind (and his conclusions and wishes).

The function of the mind is to perceive reality by performing a process of identification, and integrating the identified evidence into a context in accordance with the rule of an objective methodology (reasoning). This process presupposes a sovereign, volitional consciousness and must be performed egoistically, individualistically, and independently. It cannot, therefore, be forced.

To initiate force – to, essentially, order a man to accept a conclusion against his own judgment – is to order him to accept as true something that, according to what he knows, is not true (is either arbitrary or false). This amounts to ordering him to believe a contradiction; it is like demanding him to believe red is green, or $2 + 2$ equals 5. One can torture an individual and force him to say these things, but one cannot make him truly believe them. Volition pertains to the act of initiating and sustaining the process of thought. A creature of volitional consciousness – man – cannot will himself to accept as true that which he sees to be baseless or mistaken.

Force thus makes a man act against his judgment. The virtue of rationality requires one to think, and then to be guided by his conclusions in action. Force clashes with both these requirements. Force used to change a man's mind acts to stop his mind (and thus make it inoperative as the source of his action). Force used to change a man's action shoves his mind (and thus its process of cognition) into the trash heap of the purposeless.

He who initiates force to change another's mind, therefore, works to detach his victim's consciousness from reality and therefore from life. He who initiates force to change another's action works to detach his consciousness from life and therefore from reality.

– Leonard Peikoff

Attackers and defenders are not morally equivalent. A moral difference exists between initiated and retaliatory force. That same moral difference exists between initiated and preemptive force (force taken to preempt a credible threat).

Contempt for All Life

Pacifists claim to want peace and believe they adhere to the doctrine of nonviolence because they respect life. The practical results of pacifism, however, are exactly the opposite: a total contempt for life. This contempt extends beyond the individual pacifist to encompass all other human beings.

Anyone who would die – or who would allow *others* to die – rather than use force, particularly when he or she is more than capable of applying the force necessary to preserve his or her life, shows contempt for the gift of that life, for the potential wasted when that life is thrown away. By itself, then, pacifism is a self-immolating doctrine whereby the logical standard of “good” – to promote and sustain rational individual life – is discarded in favor of “peace” at any price.

This peace would more accurately be termed unilateral surrender, in which aggressors may hurt and even kill the pacifist before he or she will do more than throw his or her body onto the sacrificial altar of passive resistance. Violence begets violence, after all – or so the pacifists claim. If you want peace and thus prepare for war, you are, in the minds of the pacifists, a “slave to violence.” Their wishful thinking results in the complete evasion of reality – specifically, that we are only as safe as we are prepared to make ourselves through force. Only our ability to protect ourselves grants us any freedom from attack. Only our willingness to fight back forms any sort of deterrent against those would do us harm. Few invading armies stop invading and go home out of disgust at the overwhelming ease of conquering victims who will not fight back.

This contempt for life extends to the pacifist's fellow human beings. Aggressors are, by their natures, more likely to initiate force against *others* if they demonstrate a willingness to initiate force against *you*. If, when confronted with this evidence, you do nothing to preserve your own life, you do nothing to make it more difficult for the aggressor to seek *more* victims. If all you do is passively resist, throwing your life onto the pyre of symbolic gestures, you are *enabling* the aggressor through your inaction. The blood of any subsequent victims is on your folded hands.

Remember Cooper's comments on fighting back? When victims fight back, they make violent crime far less attractive to predators. If an aggressor knew that it was quite likely

each victim he chose would fight back, making his aggression an action fraught with risk, he would be more reluctant to strike. If, on the other hand, he could expect his victims to die nobly while resisting him passively, he could take his actions with impunity, knowing that there was no danger to him in his predations.

Are Pacifists Cowards?

Some speculate that pacifists' unwillingness to fight is indicative of cowardice. There are many types of cowardice, however – some obvious and some deeply buried. I think most pacifists actually believe themselves to be very brave, in that they believe it is much more difficult to refuse to use violence than to hurt or kill another human being.

This is true, in a way. It is much harder to refuse to use force to protect yourself and your loved ones, to guard jealously the gift of your life. This is because it is hard to fight your nature as a human being, to actively resist the logical standard of value for rational human life.

Fundamentally, pacifism is a doctrine, a philosophy, of *inaction*. What is inaction, then, if not cowardice, however deeply rooted and obscured by the layers of our beings? A given pacifist might indeed be brave enough to speak out and to die, might indeed possess the “courage” of his or her convictions. This is the “courage” to throw one's life away for a given cause.

Life requires *more* than a willingness to die. It requires the strength necessary to go on *living*, to stand and to fight against evil, to actively oppose through forceful action the depredations of society's destroyers. It is not enough to throw one's body under the wheels of the advancing tanks. One must be willing to cover those tanks with fire, lead those tanks into concealed pits, pry open the tanks' hatches and shoot and stab to death those who would seek to subjugate others by force.

Religious Motivations

Some adhere to pacifist doctrines in the belief that this is required of them by the Divine. One may indeed labor under the notion that a goddess, a god, or the God (however one chooses to look at it) would ask you to die before standing up for the life that is rightfully yours, before protecting those you love from others who would violate them. What manner of evil, soul-destroying gods would these be?

The gods love us and take an interest in human affairs. They are not cold creatures who would ask us to lie down and die simply because one or more of our fellow humans demanded it. To think they could ask this is to show contempt for the Divine itself, to embrace a delusion so antithetical to human life that it is almost a preemptive plea for death.

Religious motivations are irrelevant in considering the practical outcomes of pacifism. Pacifism is both evil and morally bankrupt specifically because it is self-destructive and

contemptuous of human life. No rationale, no alleged dictate from the Divine, can change this.

The Alternative to Pacifism

Life is a struggle, but not a bleak one. To live life actively, to live to the fullest of your being, is to stand your ground in the face of the myriad forces and individuals who might oppose you, dominating every space you occupy and driving forward to do what you must, what you will.

To fight those arrayed against you, it is necessary to embrace the arts of war. These are neither evil nor good in and of themselves. They are simply the means to certain ends. You must reject the doctrine of pacifism. You must embrace the alternative. You must steep yourself in the knowledge required to wield the tools of war. You must train your mind and your body in the skills required to accomplish this successfully. You must be prepared to fight aggression, to oppose evil, to take action. You must be willing to *settle things*.

You must be a *martialist*.

Criticisms and Defenses of Martialism

When I say, “society is full of predators,” many people consider this unreasonable fear-mongering. I must be paranoid, they tell me. I must see danger lurking behind every tree and under every rock. I must, they assert, be dangerously unstable.

Really? Simply for recognizing reality?

Think about that for a moment. Stating plainly that society is full of predators isn't a paranoid assertion, emotional hyperbole, or a marketing ploy. It's a fact. If you can look around and honestly state that you don't believe our society (I am American and speak only about the United States) contains a significant criminal element that preys on our citizens with regularity, you're living in denial. You don't believe the news reports of shootings, stabbings, rapes, burglaries, and robberies that appear every day in the media. You don't believe the tales of your friends, relatives, and fellow citizens who all seem to know someone who's been robbed or assaulted or found themselves in an extremely threatening situation for which they felt unprepared.

When you *disbelieve* in this manner you are evading reality – refusing to see something you don't wish to see. This is understandable – for the reality in which we find ourselves, the reality of violence and of the potential threats that exist within society, is *unpleasant*. It is not a nice thing to think about and it does not make us happy. We do not get to choose to believe only those things we want to believe, however.

“All of that,” you might be thinking, “is anecdotal evidence and doesn't prove anything.” Everyone knows our news media sensationalize things, right? If it bleeds, it leads, to the exclusion of plenty of better news – right?

One could choose to ignore all these pieces of evidence, yes. One could choose to ignore the statistics for the murder rate in one's city and for national rates of violent crime. One could proclaim the data of one's senses and the accumulated crime figures for an entire country to be media sensationalism and illogical, hysterical interpretation of events far less harmful than our fearful assessment indicates.

One would be irrational to do so.

Check your premises, as Russian-born novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand was fond of urging. Ask yourself if you would leave your child unsupervised in the food court of the average shopping mall. Ask yourself if you would leave the doors of your home unlocked at night. Ask yourself if you would feel ill at ease walking through a parking garage shrouded in darkness. Ask yourself if you would roll down your windows and chat with a homeless man if he approached your car when you were stopped at a light.

If you answered “no” to any of those questions, I have just one more:

Why?

Recognizing that there are people who will prey on you if given the opportunity – and that there are people who seek to *make* those opportunities – is not paranoid hysteria. It is merely *realistic*. Preparing to meet emergencies that have not yet occurred is not paranoid or mentally unbalanced. It is prudent. Arming yourself on the theory that you cannot be bigger, stronger, or faster than everyone else and thus you wish to give yourself an advantage is certainly “unfair” – but then, you don’t want ever to be caught in a “fair fight” with someone intent on murdering or raping you.

Have you ever purchased life insurance? You don't actually think you're going to die soon, do you? Have you ever purchased a handgun and obtained a license to carry it? You don't actually think there are home invaders hiding in your shrubbery right now, do you? I tell you now that it is very possible you'll get through your entire life never being confronted by someone who means you harm or who seeks to take what you have earned. I hope you do. Unfortunately, the possibility that you won't is also real. It is measurable. You should not expect to face rampaging barbarian hordes the second you leave the relative safety of your home – but neither should you think, “It can't happen to me.” Long is the list of people (including seasoned “martial artists”) who have lost fights and had their lives forever changed because they were naïve enough to assume this.

Those who understand the risks life entails also understand that they must hedge their bets and be prepared for possible dangers. They do not stockpile illegal weapons. They do not dig foxholes in their flowerbeds. They do not sit at home sweating bullets and aiming firearms at passing cars from beneath ghillie suits knitted from their living-room curtains. They do, however, think carrying firearms or other weapons suitable for personal protection is a reasonable action. They understand that a society increasingly hostile to individual self-defense, regardless of whatever lip service that society pays to recognizing your right to preserve your life, may indeed punish them should they make the choice to use force – no matter how justified they might believe themselves to be.

I must emphasize that I’m *not* preaching paranoia. I don’t want you to live your life in fear, expecting an attack at every moment. The problem is that you have no way of knowing, beyond the most general of speculation, when you truly *are* in danger. Very few assaults are scheduled ahead of time. Very few home invaders call ahead. You're not in constant danger, no – but the fact that danger *exists* is itself a constant. Societal predators adhere to no fixed schedules and recognize no restrictions on their depredations beyond those imposed by force or its threat.

Am I telling you to assume that everyone you meet is going to try to kill or rob you? Of course not. However, among the handful, dozens, or scores of people whose paths you cross on any given day *could* be individuals who represent a threat – and you won't know ahead of time who they are. As a result you must maintain a perceivable level of alertness when you are out and about. You must take steps to secure your home so you may relax and live safely when at home. You may choose to take this a step further

and seek out the training and the tools – including legally possessed weapons – that give you an advantage should an altercation occur.

Unfortunately, our society is increasingly hostile to self-defense. More and more restrictions are being placed on the possession of firearms, infringing on the “right to keep and bear arms.” Laws covering other weapons further restrict your rights to self-defense, too. It is not legal to carry certain kinds of knives, for example. Stun guns and even pepper spray are illegal in many areas. The act of self-defense itself could be seen in some circumstances as unreasonable force – and you could be prosecuted for it.

What am I trying to tell you? I am not and could not encourage anyone to take specific actions – because I cannot live any other person's life for him or for her. The attitude of martialism, among other things, is based on respect for individual sovereignty – the idea that you as a person are inviolable unless you choose to violate someone else's sovereignty. I see my fellow citizens' freedom of action as a benefit, not a threat – but for this reason I believe individual responsibility for individual action begins and ends with that individual. No one can take decisions for you. No one can take responsibility for those decisions but you. I am encouraging you to think and to do what you believe to be the right thing based on all factors – legal, social, moral, spiritual... and personal.

I hope you never have to fight anyone for any reason. But if you must defend yourself – if you find yourself faced with force that cannot or should not be avoided and you choose to preserve your well-being or the well-being of others – I hope every such fight is *unfair*. I hope you are so prepared that there is no question who will win and who will lose if you must use force against an aggressive foe. That is what it means to “fight unfairly,” to “cheat” when engaged in the gamble that is life. Hedge your bets through education and training. Stack the deck by being more prepared than those who would hurt you.

I also hope you recognize the risks. I hope you understand: society often demands that you *assume the risk* – that you let the attacker dictate the encounter and use no more force than the force he employs. You may find this morally objectionable. You may believe that because he has chosen to attack you, he assumes the risk of whatever you might do to defend yourself in dealing with a situation he created.

The choice is yours – and the consequences are *yours to suffer*.

This booklet is not legal advice and cannot take the place of your own judgment. Only you can decide what you must do and what consequences you are willing to accept. Can you live with hurting someone? Can you live with going to jail for doing it? Would you rather suffer injury yourself before risking the horrors of prison, of societal censure? That choice, too, is yours to make.

About now you may be considering finding a teacher who'll instruct you in self-defense. That, too, is fraught with peril, for there are many poor schools and poor teachers out

there. Whenever someone – even me – presumes to tell you what to do in order to defend yourself, engage your mind. Examine critically what you are being told. Does it sound reasonable? Does it sound logical? Is it legal? Does it sound like something with which you can live?

As adults, we are responsible for what we do and what we believe. The martial arts world is rife with instructors who take advantage of their students – people who rape them, defraud them, bully them, brainwash them, teach them poor techniques or questionable principles. Simply because you meet someone who claims to be a teacher, who imparts information to you, who earns (or otherwise acquires) your respect and your admiration, does not mean you can disengage your brain and let that teacher think for you.

You must strive, at all times, to have an *active mind*. Take no one's word – especially mine – for what is legal, for what is moral, for what is right. Instead, approach the issues as logically, as rationally, as you can. Do your homework. *Think*. If what you are learning in a self-defense class strikes you as incorrect, as dangerous, as useless, or as otherwise questionable, say so. If the answers you receive do not stand up to logical analysis, walk away. Make your own decisions in life based on the available information.

One of the concepts in which I believe strongly is the notion of preemptive force in the face of a credible threat. This “self-offense,” while the most efficient means of successful self-defense, could get you barbecued in court. It could send you to prison for a very long time. Unfortunately for all of us, allowing the attacker to dominate the altercation, to take the initiative, will get you killed. That's the choice you make, the choice that makes violent confrontations such a wrenching dilemma to many living in contemporary society. You are damned if you do and damned if you do not. The choice you must make is then, what do you believe to be *right*? Do you believe you and your attacker are morally equivalent? Do you believe you deserve to assume the physical risk of the confrontation?

Now, I'm not encouraging you to flout society's conventions or do anything “illegal, immoral, or fattening.” I am encouraging you to think for yourself. You are born into a social contract consisting of a single clause: you must obey society's laws to remain within it. I do not encourage you to oppose societal conventions or to break the law – far from it, in fact. However, I do not believe that society is always right simply because it is *society*. Do you honestly believe the opinions of the majority are immutable and never to be questioned?

That's dangerous logic I've just used. It's the same logic used by criminals to rationalize their actions. It's also the same logic used by the Founding Fathers of the United States in signing the Declaration of Independence. It's the same logic used by Harriet Tubman, who smuggled slaves to freedom. It's the same logic used by civil rights protestors in the 1960s who resisted prejudice and institutionalized racism and wrought

incredible change in society by so doing. Who was Rosa Parks to encourage others to flout society's conventions, after all?

My point is that a belief is not automatically correct or incorrect, moral or immoral, simply because societal convention holds it to be so. You cannot say, "I am morally right simply for standing up to society, with which I disagree" any more than you can say, "I am morally right because I am taking the brave stand of agreeing with societal conventions."

The morality of an act must be determined objectively and within context. Predators who try to justify evil using morality or some great crusade (against a society that supposedly marginalizes them) invariably rely on illogical thought processes to make their cases. No amount of believing themselves to be justified alters the objective analysis of their actions. Moral judgments can be difficult, but this does not make them impossible. All rational adults possess the ability to make them if they choose to do so.

If you judge incorrectly – if you are in error – you *will* pay for your mistakes. That, too, is inescapable. More profoundly, *others* will pay for your errors in moral judgment. That is yet another factor you must take into consideration when choosing to use force and deciding the degree of force you will employ.

The choice, again, remains yours to make. Choose wisely – for you will immediately make enemies among those who believe no individual has the moral authority to defy the majority. They'll argue that such a concept is irresponsible – and under certain circumstances, they're right.

Provided one's actions are reasonable and just, however, it is suggesting that societal conventions are immutable that I consider irresponsible. If society can never be wrong, no societal ills can be challenged, no unjust laws resisted – for the challengers will be shouted down as immoral for daring to dissent.

Moral authority, for that matter, isn't granted by some agency from whom we must petition it. Moral authority is a function of reality – of logic applied to that reality. A person who initiates force against you is violating objective moral principles and thus surrendering his or her sovereignty through that violation.

The Moral Authority of Self-Defense: The Individual Right

We've touched on moral authority. Let's delve further into that topic and explore the philosophical justification for self-defense as an individual right.

For The Martialist™, few things are as immediately irritating, illogical, exasperating, and enervating as an argument about self-defense. Martialists, who understand the realities of force and self-preservation, rightly believe there should be no argument. An aggressor who seeks to harm you without provocation and without justification – he who *initiates* force – is committing an immoral act, violating your sovereignty and granting you moral sanction to use force (preemptively or in retaliation) in order to eliminate the threat.

While this is self-evident to any rational human being, it is anything but obvious to many members of contemporary society. Sadly, a significant number of these people exist within populations whose members should know better – martial artists, would-be combatives experts, some military personnel, and even some law enforcement officers. Invariably, these people – so many of them hopelessly ignorant of the ideas about which they speak – will turn to the concept of rights and twist it out of all recognition. In debating what is right and what is wrong, in arguing what should and should not be law, in debating what is justified and what is not, they will invoke that most miserable of misconceptions where your rights are concerned: the oxymoron of the “collective right.”

The rune “manu” or “manaz” means “The Individual,” or “The True Self.” It is this rune that forms the stylized logo of *The Martialist™: The Magazine For Those Who Fight Unfairly*. It was chosen to symbolize individual rights.

The Founding Fathers of the United States indicated their acceptance of, and based the United States Constitution on, the concept of natural rights. For the purposes of this discussion it doesn't matter if you believe in God or not. Most deists or theists believe rights are God-granted, while others believe natural rights come from nature. (What matters is that you recognize natural rights exist.)



In order to discuss these concepts, we must first explore from where our natural rights stem. We must then try to understand what these rights truly are. We must couple our understanding of rights to the nature of survival and our long-term goals as mortal human beings. Finally, we must understand the implications of these concepts.

The Source of Rights

Because not everyone can agree on the Divine, I'll approach the issue from a secular standpoint. Your natural rights are a direct result, and the logical conclusion of, two different aspects of your being: the fact that you are a discrete biological entity and the fact that reason is your means of survival.

We Are Discrete Biological Entities

Because you are a discrete biological entity, you are an individual. There is no such thing as the collective; there are only quantities of individuals. Every group of people can be broken into individuals. No group of people can exist as a single living organism because they simply aren't one, any more than a parking lot full of cars can be a single automobile.

Because no human can be another human, no one can live another's life. By virtue of your nature as an individual, you are born with the inalienable property right to yourself as a person. This means that no human being has a claim on your time or your effort without your consent. Think about it. If you do not own you, who does? If you are anything but your own property, you belong to someone else, which makes you that someone's slave. Are you a slave?

Your property right to your person extends to a general right to possess legally-acquired property, for no human can exist without property of some kind. This is an axiom of existence. You cannot exist in space unconnected to all other existents, the sole resident of an empty bubble of space-time. This does not mean you have an automatic claim to someone else's property by virtue of your *need* for it, however. This means that you have the right to *possess* property if you can indeed *acquire* it. Claims to the contrary made by Marxists, collectivists, and socialists of every stripe are empty. If you have no right to possess property once you have obtained it, those making this assertion must be making it naked while floating in empty rooms from which even air has been evacuated.

Let's look at property now. Most property today belongs to someone. Let's say, however, that it did not; how do we go about obtaining property that does not yet belong to another person? Your property right to yourself and your effort can be used to obtain rights to real property (land). He who first "mingles his labor with the land" earns a property right to it. What of land (or other property, for that matter) whose acquisition is disputed as being illegitimate? The longer an illegitimate claim goes uncontested, the more the passage of time legitimizes it, because the passage of time increases the

possibility that an attempt to correct the illegitimate acquisition would harm parties who themselves have acted in good faith and who have committed no immoral actions.

Property is Use Access

What is the alternative to this right to possess property if one can acquire it? What is a property right, anyway? A right to property is the right to its use. Because land is scarce – there is a finite quantity of it – some method must be used to determine who may use or possess the scarce commodity (be it land or any other item of property). If property belongs to no one, we have none, which contradicts the necessity of property. If we say all property belongs to everyone, we have a problem – because we would then only be able to use property with the mutual consent of every member of society. Because this is impossible, some delegation of humans within society would have to make this determination – and it would then be those people, not all the people, who hold the property right. Those who arbitrate access to a thing own that thing, regardless of lip service to the contrary. (This is not an original idea. It has been the topic of more than one book on natural rights.)

This points to a critical issue concerning rights. Either you recognize that you have sole dominion over your person, as does each human, or you do not. If you do not, you are saying either that all of society – the Collective, the State, whomever – has first right to you as property, or that some other person does. Let's take the latter first. I'm willing to bet that few people will admit to believing in Plato's theory that a select Elite of societal guardians should have command over the rest of us. By what rationale does one human being presume to own another, when he cannot live that human's life? By what rationale does a human initiate force against another? (We'll get to that, too.)

As to the former, we run into the same problem of all humans belonging to the State as we do when all property belongs to the people as a collective. Because we cannot gain the mutual consent of all of society's members in exercising property rights over the individual, we must choose a delegation of people to do this – and we're back to the latter Platonic problem again.

These points touch on the rights conferred by your nature as a discrete biological entity. You have other rights that stem from the fact that reason is your means of survival.

Reason Is Your Only Means of Survival

This concept comes from the work of philosopher Ayn Rand. You have no choice but to use reason for long-term survival. To be a rational being is to embrace reason, the faculty that integrates the data of your senses into concepts, as your only means of knowledge. Only knowledge can provide you with the means to survive, for you are not born preprogrammed. You must choose to be rational, and as a result you are a creature of volitional consciousness. You may think there is some other means of knowledge, but this is not true. Psychic insight is unreliable. Religious revelation is

similarly sketchy. Instinct tells you that you need certain things, but not specifically what they are or how to get them.

Refusing to Initiate Force

Once you make the choice to be rational, you accept that you do not have the right to initiate force. All force has a physical component, but this does not mean all manifestations of force are some form of striking or restraining someone. Theft is force, because it deprives people of assets rightfully theirs. Fraud is force, because it is a form of theft. All manifestations of force are, essentially, the demand that a person act against his or her reason. Humans can resolve conflict in only two ways: reason or force, persuasion or coercion. If you cannot persuade someone through reason and you force them to comply with your wishes, you contradict the recognition of reason as your means of survival.

As a result, you cannot initiate force. To do so contradicts a fundamental principle of survival as a rational being – that reason is your means and your method. This action, the initiation of force, can also be coupled to our previous discussion on your biological nature. If you cannot live another person's life, you cannot presume to force them to comply with your wishes. Your inalienable rights to your person and to the results of your labor are violated when force is initiated against you.

Moral Use of Force

Refusing to *initiate* force does not mean, of course, that you cannot use force morally in your *defense*. When force is initiated against you, there is no other recourse but to use force in response. By definition, you cannot reason with someone who has *rejected* reason. You must therefore respond in kind. Ideally, you must respond with superior force, though legally we are allowed only parity of force.

Retaliatory, Preemptive Force

Retaliatory force may also be preemptive. The concept of preemptive, retaliatory force might sound contradictory, but it is not. In the presence of a credible threat of force, you are not obligated to permit that threat to be carried out before you react to it. You may, morally if not legally (for the courts may not necessarily support your actions in this regard), intercept and prevent the threat if a reasonable human being would conclude that force was imminent and harm was likely.

What Are Your Natural Rights?

Now that we've discussed from where rights come, what are they? What is a right? A natural right is a right to action, not a claim to the assets, labor, or time of others. A free citizen has the natural right to pursue happiness and conduct his life as he sees fit provided his actions do not infringe on the same natural rights of others. (This is

sometimes stated briefly as the idea, “Your right to swing your arms ends where my nose begins.”)

Your rights are violated only when another person initiates some manifestation of force to prevent you from acting. Thus it is not true that you have a “right not to have force initiated against you.” Rather, you have a right to enjoy the product of your labors and you have a property right to your person. Any person who initiates force thus violates that right. This is not simply a semantic distinction; it is a substantive difference in tenor, character, and application. I cannot morally shoot you unless you have initiated force or its credible threat, because I do not have the right to take this action. This is not the same as saying that you have a right “not to be shot by me.” There’s a difference in character – the difference between the “positive” and “negative” conception of rights. The negative conception is that in which we understand our true natural rights – we must not interfere and we do not have the right to shoot someone down without justification. The positive conception is the one so many people apply incorrectly, believing they have some fictional right “not to be killed” – thus attempting to impose obligations on the rest of the natural world without the consent of any entities this world encompasses.

David Kelley, in his book *A Life of One's Own: Individual Rights and the Welfare State*, described the difference in the context of Welfare programs and wealth transfers. His ideas (and the ideas of Ayn Rand and others who’ve written on natural rights and objective philosophy) form the core of this section of *Be a Martialist*.

One person's right always involves corresponding obligations on the part of others to respect it. The moral claim inherent in a right would be meaningless if no one were obliged to respect it. Liberty rights impose on other people the negative obligation not to interfere, not to restrain one forcibly from acting as he chooses. ...In this framework, the positive obligation to provide another with a good or service arises only from one's own consent or voluntary act. But welfare rights [and any other attempt to impose positive conceptions of rights on others, such as infringing on their rights to keep and bear arms in an effort to enforce your collective “right not to be shot”] impose on others positive obligations to which they did not consent and which cannot be traced to any voluntary act. If a person has a right to food, come what may, then someone else has an obligation to grow it... A welfare right is by nature a right to a guaranteed positive outcome that is not contingent on the success of one's own efforts. It must therefore impose on those who can produce the goods the obligation to share them.

A right is, by definition, unquestionable, and not dependent on some responsibility on your part. Many times, those who support some infringement on your natural rights will appeal to the idea that “With rights come responsibilities.” This is not true. A right carries with it no concomitant responsibility, because it is, by definition, inviolable.

Responsibilities, by contrast, are accepted, not imposed. Others must respect your rights or act immorally; you accept no responsibilities in possessing those natural rights.

The “Social Contract” and Responsibility

You are born into society accepting, by virtue of your existence, exactly one clause of the “social contract” – the agreement not to infringe on the natural rights of your fellow human beings. Humans who operate according to this guideline obtain what they require from other humans through exchange to mutual benefit. They are traders, giving value for value received. No human being has a claim to your life or your assets simply because you are born into his society. Your property rights to your person remain intact and inalienable regardless of the circumstances of your birth.

The price to remain within a given society is that you must accept responsibilities. These responsibilities correspond to the laws of that society. Either you abide by them, or you will be killed, cast out, or imprisoned – but in any case you will be a part of society no longer. Accepting the responsibilities that are the price to remain is not the same as blindly agreeing to any infringement on your property rights to your person. You can (and you must) speak out and work against the enacting of any law that violates your rights, such as compulsory national service or conscription, schemes for redistribution of wealth to achieve egalitarian ends, prohibition of civilian arms possession (which infringes on your right to preserve your person and thus violates your property right to yourself by making it more difficult for you to protect yourself), and so on. If laws violating your rights are passed, it is indeed your responsibility to comply or leave – but that does not make enacting those laws morally correct, nor does it mean that the “social contract” is the source of those claims on your person.

The Role of Government

If we agree on what I’ve said up to now, particularly regarding the use of force and the inability of one human to live another human’s life, it stands to reason that government is evil. What is a government, after all, but a means to force humans within society to comply with certain demands? Government, however, is a *necessary* evil, because there is no other means to protect individual rights. (A society with no government whatsoever invariably devolves into feudal tribalism, which destroys individual rights by empowering mobs and eventually fostering warlords. The natural human reaction to a power vacuum is the creation of powerful entities to impose order.)

That is the only legitimate role of government in a free society: the protection of individuals’ natural rights. That is why governments are instituted among human beings – or at least, that is why they *should* be.

The Non-Concept of “Collective Rights”

Governments do not exist to protect the non-concept of “collective rights.” A right is a right to action – and only individual, mortal human beings are capable of volitional, goal-

directed action. A government can no more take an action than can a corporation. Both are entities (the corporation is a legal entity, a fictional person created for legal convenience) – but they exist only as concepts. Only the component parts of a government, a society, or a corporation can actually take action, and those component parts are individual humans. These individuals may indeed choose to act in cooperation, in concert, towards mutually accepted (or credibly dictated) goals. They cannot, however, truly be one entity. They will always be individuals and act individually, even if acting individually together. As Coach Scott Sonnon says of training, “We are all alone in this together.” The same idea applies to any group of individuals working towards common purposes for whatever reasons.

When some misguided individuals appeal to “collective rights” with regard to self-defense, they are invariably making a plea for the subordination of the individual to the collective, for the infringement of rights in exchange for something they identify incorrectly as a “greater good” or a “collective benefit.” These are the people who believe your “right not to be shot” or your right “not to be stabbed” justifies the prohibition of civilian arms. The problem is that you possess no such rights. No individual has the right to initiate force against you, but this is not the same as some universal, environmental guarantee that you will not face these conditions. To arrange the latter requires the wholesale infringement on the natural rights of your fellow citizens, presuming them all guilty before the fact and without trial (and without, in fact, any evidence of wrongdoing on their parts as individuals).

Subordinating the Individual to the State

This attempt to subordinate the individual to the State is the product of ignorance and illogic – specifically, a lack of understanding regarding (and the misconception of) the concept of rights. These same collectivists do believe they have a claim on the goods and services of others – that their *needs* constitute a valid claim on others' efforts, others' time, and others' earnings. They make pleas to compassion and argue that the simple fact of your existence is an argument for its sustenance – without considering the implications of such a guarantee. If you indeed have a right to life (rather than a right to try to survive if you can manage it, without interference) then this is inviolable – and we must, as a society, take from producers and give to non-producers as a matter of course in order to keep you alive regardless of your efforts.

Think about the implications of such a process, such an institutionalized practice as part of a socialist or “communist” (which will always be, in effect, socialist) government – and even in our own American “mixed economy.” When you tell another that he must give up part of his earnings to support others (on the grounds of their needs as justified by “compassion” for those in need, for example), you are not allowing him a choice.

If I must pay confiscatory taxes that redistribute my earnings for the sake of some egalitarian social scheme, my government is using force – for when you take another man's earnings without his consent (or you force him to “give” of those earnings against his will) you are asking him to act against his reason. You are, according to the

definition we've explored, *stealing* from him, initiating force against him. Your theft of his earnings is never justified, regardless of the “collective rights” you invoke to rationalize it.

By the same token, if you invoke a fictional “collective right” in order to infringe on the individual right of self-defense, you are again engaging in morally bankrupt, intellectually flawed, socially unjustifiable thinking (and taking equally bankrupt, flawed, unjustifiable action). By infringing on another man's right to defend himself – by prohibiting his possession of arms, by litigating his self-defense after the fact as happens so often in contemporary society, or by marginalizing him by registering his tools or his membership in self-defense organizations – you are subordinating his natural rights to the will of the collective, to the mob rule (or the oligarchy) of government duress. You are, in effect, telling him that his life is expendable according to the collective, that he is subordinate to that collective. You are substituting your demands, your initiation of force, for his rights. This is never justifiable morally (though it happens quite commonly in society).

Leonard Peikoff wrote a book called *The Ominous Parallels* in which he made the case that such subordination lays the philosophical foundation for tyranny and genocide. More importantly, he compared these philosophical precursors of Nazi Germany to the philosophical landscape in the modern, Western world, optimistically concluding that our own sense of individualism would prevent the same collapse into despotism and mass murder. Whether we can indeed escape the push to subordinate the individual to the collective and to that collective's contrived “rights” remains to be seen.

The Soul of Tyranny within the Collective

Any man who would infringe on the inalienable, natural right to self-preservation is stating his desire to subordinate the individual to the collective. This may seem entirely reasonable if one accepts, incorrectly, the non-concept of “collective rights,” but we must see this philosophical choice through to its conclusion. In the place of the natural rights of the natural agent of goal-directed action and moral choice (a single human being), the collectivist puts the group. Because the group is not capable of collective action (only individual actions taken in concert), this subordination of the individual empowers the mob and, more accurately, the smaller group holding power over the mob. It is again the example of “community property” – of access rights to property actually being held by the smaller group that administers access.

When you make this choice, you are elevating an individual or a group of individuals over another individual (the person whose rights are violated in the name of community benefit). By what right is this done? By what right is this force initiated and this theft made? There is none; there is no justification for it, though rationalizations abound.

No attempt to prohibit civilian arms, to restrict morally justified self-defense, to subordinate the natural individual to the unnatural and contrived State (or to the unthinking and non-concept of the groupthinking mob) can be made on moral grounds.

No infringement on natural rights can be made on the basis of some other kind of right – for there are no rights but those of the individual. There are no collectives in reality; there are only groups of people working together. When those groups work to steal from the individual, they have no moral grounds on which to do so – regardless of the shrill voices raised to trumpet mythical and misunderstood “collective rights.” When those groups work to kill the individual without provocation and without justification – when they initiate force by acting as the framework in which individuals commit unjustified violence – they do so illegitimately in the eyes of every rational, reasonable woman and man on the face of this planet. The sad fact that the irrational do not see their crimes – or worse, believe these acts to be just – does not change the nature of those crimes.

Self-defense is an *individual* right and, as such, is inviolable.

How to Pursue Martialism

My wife and I were attending the local minor league baseball team's evening outing. We enjoy going to the games, even though our team is not very good. Watching baseball in the stadium is among the few sporting activities I enjoy that aren't martial sports of one kind or another.

Unfortunately, the stadium was extremely rowdy that evening – people on the upper decks dropping and pouring things on the lower ones, drunken barbarian hordes wandering from seat to seat being disruptive and then being told to move along, and so on. I thought I was in a zombie movie for a while and was disappointed not to have a shotgun near at hand. It was “library night,” meaning that many people obtained tickets for free at their local libraries – which is why it was so busy.

We moved our seats once to avoid trouble with neighboring spectators, but in our second location some reeking piece of human filth shambled over to our location and sat down directly in front of me. He smelled like a cat box and looked like he was probably carrying vermin. I swear, had he not been an order of magnitude less filthy than the average panhandler, I would have figured him for a homeless beggar.

My new “friend” kept stretching one meaty arm across the seatback next to him, his elbow encroaching on our personal space and his sleeve draped over the straw of the beverage in the cup holder in front of me. “Ick,” I thought. “I guess I’m done drinking that.”

Finally, as his elbow jabbed ever closer, I accidentally whipped the back of my hand in a “gooseneck” strike into the fleshy part of his upper arm.

He jumped about a mile.

I apologized for accidentally bumping into him. I cautioned him to be careful; the rows are awfully narrow and you never know into what you can bump when you're not watching where you're draping your elbows. He gave us no more trouble.



Now, what I did was remarkably risky. Had he chosen to take issue with my clumsiness, we could have found ourselves in a much more involved confrontation – one in which I could very well have been seen as the aggressor. Why, then, did I choose to do what I did?

As I sat there, seething at this person's rudeness, at his foul and inhuman body odor, at his lack of consideration for all around him, I reasoned that he was not the sort of person who would be receptive to a polite request. Society has become increasingly raw in the last few decades. People who are in the wrong – who *know* they're in the wrong – don't feel shame or embarrassment anymore; they lash out with hostility when their rudeness is pointed out to them.

My wife and I were in a movie theater watching a free preview of *Instinct* – which, ironically, is about humans' capacity for violence. The movie was so loud the bass was hurting my chest and the theater was absolutely packed. In the row behind us, an African American woman who was talking loudly (though I could not hear her over the movie) was loudly "shushed" by a middle-aged white guy a couple of seats away.

When the woman went on talking, the guy figured he'd get forceful and told her in no uncertain terms to shut the hell up. She responded by standing up and slapping him full in the face. They wrestled around like a couple of Jerry Springer guests as I maneuvered myself to the opposite side of my wife (as I wanted my bulk between them and her if they came crashing into us from their row).

Having vanquished her foe (who was, after all, completely in the right to question her rudeness in the theater) the woman simply walked out. If she had the good sense to keep walking – and I'm sure she did – there was no way to identify her for security or have her detained. She slapped the hell out of that guy and I'm sure he learned a valuable lesson about with whom to pick fights in movie theaters.

That is the society in which we live. At the baseball game, theorizing that this creature in front of me (from all indications of his behavior, demeanor, and aroma) would probably react much as that woman in the theater had reacted, I knew speaking with him was not an option. We'd already been chased out of one set of seats in pursuit of the path of least resistance. I fumed in silence.

Then it hit me. What would my teacher David do? David is the friend with whom I credit my first real breakthroughs in the martial arts. He taught me to conquer fear and to stand up for myself or, perhaps more accurately, he showed me *how to learn* to do both things without really teaching me to do them. As I hunkered down in my seat, I thought about the lessons he'd taught me – and I decided it was time, in some small way, to choose the dynamic path and stand up for myself. I took the risk and I got away with it.

I don't truly recommend that you go about slapping people. Rather, I'm trying to demonstrate a concept: standing up for yourself, living assertively, is the essence of martialism. It is the willingness to *take action*.

I came to this philosophy gradually, thanks both to the teachers with whom I've worked and to my own experiences. The first of these – the one that opened my eyes to what would become the concept of martialism – happened when I was in college. While a Junior at Alfred University, I witnessed something that would change my outlook on awareness and self-defense forever.

I was leaving a four-story residence hall in which one of the university's dining halls was located. I had just come from dinner and was feeling relaxed and untroubled. As I exited the building, I stopped to see what was going on – for a crowd of people was staring up the large hillside into which the campus was built.

We watched and a few people pointed and muttered. We watched as a lone student, someone I did not recognize, dragged a metal bed frame down the hill. I remember him as tall and skinny, an unremarkable fellow with a tan complexion and slightly disheveled hair. He moved with determination and without a word, the bed frame scraping the asphalt walkway as he tugged it along.

No one questioned him. No one challenged him. No one stopped him. We watched as he walked up to the old brick-faced building, upended the bed frame, and climbed it like a ladder. The corner of the frame shattered the window of the room he was boarding like a pirate. He scrambled in through the opening.

I walked into the building. The student burst from a room on the lounge level – the room that was, I would learn later, *below* the room occupied by a young woman who'd just dumped him. Crazy and screaming incoherent oaths, he stopped in the hallway.

I froze.

I knew I should do something, but I did not know what. Like the twenty or thirty people who had watched this bizarre scene unfold, I was unprepared for a scenario outside the *normal*. My brain clicked to a stop, unable to process a situation with which it had not been programmed to cope.

A resident advisor, a student with nominal authority within the hall, appeared from somewhere. He was an unremarkable fellow, totally average, with no pretensions to “tough guy” status. As I stood there like a moron, he braced the crazed student.

“Get out of here!” he yelled. “Go! Get out! Get out!” He *yelled* that guy out of the building, following him and shouting until the student had fled down the street. The local police appeared shortly thereafter. Spectators pointed them in the direction of the disturbed young man.

I learned later that after his girlfriend dumped him that evening, she had locked him out of her room. He responded by trying to kick in the door. A locksmith was called to remove the bent deadbolt and free the poor young woman. I assume that it was after he failed to kick in the door that this unbalanced student went back to his own building,

got his bed frame, and went nuts pirate-style. I don't know what was done to him, but they did catch him and he never returned to the school (at least to my knowledge).

I thought about that incident for a long time. I'd spent time armed (with both knives and guns) of my own choice as a private citizen. I knew how to fight, or thought I did. I was taking Karate at the time. I fancied myself tougher than the average guy and was known as such in certain circles.

Yet I stood there and *watched*. I froze – not once, but *twice* when it mattered. I didn't stop that guy and ask him what the hell he was doing. After it was entirely too apparent what he was doing, I didn't take action, didn't intervene, as he terrorized the residents of that building.

I was not alone, of course. No one else *watching* that day thought to say to that troubled student, "Hey, what are you doing?" No one thought to run up and kick the bed frame out from under him when he started climb it. No one went for help. No one tackled him after he broke through the window. No one did *anything*.

It's a natural reaction to freeze up in times of crisis. Normally it takes only one person in the crowd to act, one person to rush forward when someone falls or collapses or has been injured, to break the reverie into which spectators sink in times of crisis. That day in the residence hall, it was a guy named Joel, a resident assistant with true courage, who *acted* when no one else would. It was *not* a bearded ruffian in an Army jacket who'd just wandered up from the basement dining hall. That bearded ruffian, of course, was me.

I made a promise to myself that day. I vowed that I would never again be complacent, that I would never again fail to act when confronted with the unusual. I have not always been successful in keeping that promise to myself. I have tried, however. I engage regularly in scenario training and visualization towards this end. When I see something or someone out of place, I start asking questions and poking my nose into the situation. When someone is rude to me, I confront them. When someone does something with which I don't agree, I speak out. When I fail to do this, I am always painfully reminded of my promise.

I will never erase the memory of my failure to act – nor would I *want* to erase it. The incident will forever remind me of the dangers of complacency.

Years later, I was in a bookstore at the mall when a young boy's loose shoelace got caught in the escalator. He yelped as the machine dragged him off-balance. I saw what was happening, snapped open my Gerber EZ-Out folding knife, and went for the escalator to chop his lace free – when his parent or legal guardian reached him first and pulled him free bodily. I quietly folded my knife and went about my business unnoticed, but I remembered the incident. I remembered and was glad that I acted without hesitation to a scenario I would not have imagined and did not expect.

I share these personal stories simply to illustrate something we've all experienced: the *need to act*. Complacency kills awareness and slows our reactions to danger and emergencies. Complacency is the handmaiden of pacifism and passivism. Complacency is our enemy and we must fight it at all times. It is the opposite of martialism.

Thank you, Joel, wherever you are, for teaching me that lesson so long ago. It was the lesson that is at the heart of martialism: recognizing the need and possessing the willingness to *act*.

We've spent a lot of time on the philosophy of martialism. We turn now to its practical mechanics. To pursue martialism requires you to take the following actions:

Learn to defend yourself physically. This means seeking training in the martial arts and self-defense. Selecting an appropriate training school is beyond the scope of this booklet, but it stands to reason that any self-defense program or martial art must be at least generally in keeping with the philosophy already articulated here. You must learn to fight with your bare hands, to use your body as a weapon. Learning how to fight physically helps you to be more confident. It gives you courage to stand up to others and to confront them when you must – for skill in self-defense teaches you that you can speak out without fear of being bullied or beaten down.

Knowing you can defend yourself from physical assault even helps you in situations that don't involve violence. For example, I discovered after I achieved competence in self-defense that my frequently unreasonable boss didn't scare me anymore. Somehow, in some almost perverse way, I was not afraid to confront him, even shout back if he became abusive with me, because I knew I could "take it to him physically" if he got out of hand. I had no reason to think he would become physically violent with me, but having the confidence of physical competence made all the difference in my demeanor and my interactions with others.

Physical self-defense – unarmed self-defense using punches, kicks, grappling skills, and so on – is the most fundamental form of using force. Without a good physical foundation for self-defense, you cannot live as a martialist. Do your homework and seek out a good school with a good teacher. Approach your classes with an active mind and never stop asking questions. Your martial art or self-defense system **MUST** teach you to use force effectively. If it doesn't, you're wasting your time and getting no closer to your goals.

Among the martial arts systems that are suitable for effective self-defense are World War II combatives, Judo and Jiu-Jitsu, many Kung Fu styles, Jeet Kune Do, the Filipino and Indonesian martial arts (Kali, Silat, and the like), and some forms of Japanese and Korean striking arts (though I generally discount strip-mall schools offering Karate and Tae Kwon Do). There are also one-time seminars available to the interested student.

Arm yourself. If you can do so *legally*, you must possess and carry weapons. Weapons are *force-multipliers*. They make it easier to achieve a given goal by increasing the force you can deliver with the same (or less) physical effort. A gun or a knife makes it possible for one man to defeat multiple attackers, or for a physically weak person to overcome a much stronger individual. Weapons are not evil; they are the *levers* of self-defense. They are tools that amplify human action.



There are countless weapons. Teaching you how to use them or how to select and carry them is outside the scope of this booklet. Be aware, though, that if you can get a license to carry a firearm, you must do so. The handgun is the most effective means of portable self-defense available today. You cannot afford to dismiss it. Also very effective (but of even greater potential for liability in court) are knives, various striking tools like batons and fighting sticks, and lesser self-defense items like pepper spray. Tactical flashlights can be used as expedient striking weapons and provide light for utility and personal emergencies. Pocket sticks – keychain-sized dowels not much bigger than a flashlight – are also useful. Pens, pencils, and even pocket combs can be used as improvised weapons, for thrusting or tearing into the soft parts of the human body (like the eyes and the neck).

To be a martialist means to be committed to *fighting unfairly* – seeking every possible advantage through preparation, training, and the possession of equalizing tools like guns and knives.

Prepare for Emergencies. My father taught me always to be prepared for the unexpected. He taught me how to amass and organize survival gear and utility tools – things like lights, batteries, and portable radios for power outages, sealed rations and water packs for blizzards and other natural disasters, survival blankets and outdoor gear for unforeseen automobile breakdowns, and sundry other items that help one cope with emergencies. I keep a first-aid kit attached to my desk at work – next to a large flashlight held in brackets bolted to the underside of the desk. Walking through the camping department of any discount store will reveal countless supplies that could come in handy in an emergency. Remember all the survival kits and gear marketed before the “Y2K” crisis-that-wasn’t? You should keep that sort of thing around in case something you can’t predict goes wrong. Searching the web for tips and merchandise related to “survivalism” will help you learn what you must learn to be better prepared. This personal preparedness is also the essence of martialism.

Live Assertively. As we’ve already learned, this is the key to martialism as a philosophy. It’s also the subject of the next chapter of this booklet.

Assertive Living as a Martialist

Remember when I said you didn't have to live your life under fear of constant attack, looking for ninja in the shrubbery and assassination attempts behind every knock at the door? Well, I lied, sort of. You *are* under attack. You are under attack every moment – in certain very specific ways.

You are being assaulted. You are being intimidated. You are being oppressed. Every day and from every corner of life you are enduring wave after wave of often hostile, sometimes malicious, but always demanding *imposition* on your person. Most of the time you field, absorb, or even repel these attacks without conscious knowledge. They are part of our society and our culture and you probably do not think of them as mental *assaults* – or as situations in which *self-defense* is appropriate.

The fact is, however, that just as you must always be prepared to defend yourself physically in a dangerous world, you must be even *more* prepared to defend your *mind* in a world that hates you. Hatred may seem like a strong word, but how else would you characterize the alignment of countless unrelated forces that all seem to want what you don't want to give? If you cannot stand up to these attacks on your mind, on your person, on your *self*, you will not be able to defend yourself physically when the time comes. If you cannot stand up to them, you cannot be a martialist. Learning the mechanics of self-defense is, again, outside the scope of this book, but what we *will* discuss is how to lay the mental foundation for self-defense. That is the purpose of martialism and assertive living. It is the ability to defend your mind that makes physical self-defense possible. It is the ability to defend your mind that enables you to live a dynamic life as a martialist, taking action where action is required, defending your person and your sovereignty.

The purpose of martialism is *not* primarily to help you kick ass and take names (though I'd like to think it *will* help in that department). It is to prepare you, to help you, to encourage you, and to enable you to *live a better life*. The key to living a better life in a society so rife with mental and emotional oppression – the demands and manipulations of advertisers, of media news outlets, of coworkers, of friends, of family, of governments – is to *live assertively*. Assertive living is the lifestyle of the man or woman of *action* – a lifestyle characterized by adherence to a moral code, the willingness to *enforce* that moral code, and a keen awareness of the value of the self. It is the recognition that you are an end unto yourself and thus not defined by others' demands, others' desires, or others' emotions. It is the willingness to set your personal boundaries and stand by them – to stick up for yourself and for others in a firm but reasonable manner, backed by the willingness to use physical force if you must.

Assertive living is *better* living because The Martialist™ is happier and mentally healthier than his passive brothers and sisters. When you cast off the demands of others and refuse to be intimidated or otherwise pushed around, you value yourself more, you are more satisfied with your life, and you are better able to deal with all

challenges that come to you. What's more, living as a martialist develops a personal confidence that others perceive. That confidence is both attractive and repellent, for good people value confidence and competence – while bad people fear and avoid it. Let me share a few scenarios with you through the eyes of one who aspires to martialism. All of these are situations I directly witnessed.

I was sitting in a business meeting for a large industrial corporation. Attendees at the meeting were learning to use a complex document control database. Leading the meeting was the individual responsible for that database. His attendees included several people over whom he had no direct authority who clearly thought sitting through the meeting was beneath them. As I watched, a few of these people started playing the part of hecklers, joking and taking snide shots at the meeting leader. He responded with a few muttered comments of his own but, as he is a fairly soft-spoken person, these went unnoticed or were ignored. Before long, he had lost control of the meeting and several people left at the break.

A friend of mine belongs to a church whose members are fairly pushy. They were trying to get her to attend a church event to which she really did not want to go. She lamented this to me. "Just tell them you aren't going," I said. "Don't offer an explanation and don't discuss your reasons. Say simply that you cannot attend." She couldn't bring herself to do this, so I suggested she tell them she could not get a babysitter. "You were just telling me what a hassle it was to find someone to watch your daughter," I said. She leapt at this chance. The next day, however, it turned out that she'd attended the event after all. Some of the helpful folks at the church, including the pastor's wife, had arranged for child care for her daughter and had called her to *inform* her of the arrangements they'd made without her consent. She ended up going along with it all.

I was sitting in a restaurant with my lovely wife when our waiter, who clearly wasn't too bright, made what he probably thought was an innocent comment (something no experienced waiter would have done, but a blunder a beginner might make). He behaved so rudely, in fact, that it essentially ruined dinner for us. We sat through the meal as I fumed over this callous disregard for people the waiter *should* have been trying to please.

What do these three situations have in common?

Each of these three events represents an attack on the self by outside influences. When people treat you with a lack of respect, they are telling you (verbally or nonverbally) that they do not see you as you would like to be seen. They do not value you as a person because they are willing to violate your rights and your wishes. They do not respect your boundaries, to use a clichéd but very accurate phrase. They are attempting to *impose* on you *their* ideas of your self, of your person, by treating you as they wish to treat you (and not as you wish to be treated). Whether the goal is to diminish you by treating you as less important or unworthy of respect, or simply to get you to comply, to do something you do not wish to do, the result is the same. In each of these three events, martialism and assertive living are necessary if those involved are to

continue to live well and to be happy with themselves (and with their ideas of who they are). Martialism requires that we stand up for ourselves in the face of these assaults.

One of the earliest lessons I learned in the business world (and which I did *not* learn until I'd been a professional writer for several years) was taught to me by a supervisor for whom I have a great deal of respect to this day. I was complaining about how unreasonable a particular schedule seemed. "There's no way I can get this done in this amount of time," I groused. "Phil," my supervisor told me, "you've got to learn to *push back* when you get this. Don't just take it. If it's not reasonable, *make it* reasonable." Not surprisingly, it was this supervisor – a good man and a gifted manager named Paul – who also taught me another valuable lesson. He called it "summoning your inner prick."

"You can't be afraid to be a prick sometimes," Paul explained. "Sometimes that's the only appropriate reaction. When people treat you like shit, summon your inner prick. Don't feel bad about being a jerk to people who treat you that way. They've got it coming. There's no reason to feel guilty about that."

Since then I've learned a lot about when to stand up for myself, when to push back, and – yes – when to be an *absolute prick* because it's necessary and warranted. I've learned not to feel guilty about pissing people off when it was *necessary* to stand up for myself. I am learning how to *be a martialist* – and that's what I'd like to share with you.

In the three situations I described before, martialism could have salvaged each of them. That meeting leader could have stood his ground and informed his hecklers that they would either be quiet and listen or leave the meeting – an assertive stand that would have enforced his demands for respect and professionalism. (He didn't do this and the meeting collapsed as a result.) My church-going friend could have informed her fellow worshippers that no one makes arrangements for her child without her consent – thus setting a precedent that would have put them on notice for future scenarios. (She didn't and she had to deal with the pushy manipulations of that congregation in the future.)

In the case of my trip to the restaurant, the event happened *after* I started to learn about the need for assertive living. My wife and I finished our meal and I realized that I was *miserable* – that a single stupid comment from someone had ruined what was supposed to be a pleasant trip out. To live assertively, I had to address the situation. Ideally, I should have said something at the moment the comment was made, but I was not mentally prepared to do so. Expecting nothing but a pleasant dinner, I was caught emotionally flat-footed by the remark and had to work out in my head what to do about it. This is not right or wrong; it simply was what occurred. I am no expert on how to live your life, but I've come to believe very strongly in the concept of martialism.

I walked to the counter where patrons pay their bills. I went alone, telling my wife I would meet her at the door. The waiter who'd made such an ass of himself rang me out and handed me my change, which I pocketed.

“And now,” I said, placing my hands on the counter and leaning forward, “A word of advice.”

The waiter’s eyes grew wide as saucers. I was angry but calm and I’m sure my anger was clear. “I am going to do you a favor,” I told him, “and keep my voice down so that none of your other patrons’ meals are disturbed by this little scene.” I went on to inform him exactly why his comment was inappropriate and why it ruined our meal. He stammered an apology – and by this I mean he literally had trouble getting the words out. I warned him never to make the same mistake again and informed him that he had lost repeat business, as we would never return. I then spun on my heel, joined my wife at the exit, and left. I have never gone back.

That is martialism. That is assertive living. That is pushing back when you are pushed. It does not mean behaving like a raving madman, an “ugly American,” or a boorish lout. It does not mean using violence inappropriately or swaggering through life with a chip on your shoulder. It means only preserving your ego, your sense of self, from the attacks of others. You do this by making it clear in word and deed that you are not someone who will tolerate disrespectful, rude, or otherwise inappropriate behavior. In so doing – in so preserving yourself – you also set the stage for physical self-defense. You make it more likely that you will be prepared mentally for doing what must be done if someone initiates force against you. Your willingness to confront others will translate into a willingness to use force in self-defense.

You may be thinking that you’ve wasted your money on this booklet. “I know not to let people treat me like dirt,” you might be thinking. “I’m not a doormat. I don’t need an entire book to explain that to me.” What you may not realize is just how accustomed you have become to others’ rudeness and disrespect. Our society has become more coarse than ever before. Ironically, the nastier we get, the less likely we are to stand up to such behavior, to confront it. We complain a lot and we get angry, but generally we *avoid* confrontation. As a result, we don’t stand up for ourselves. Recognizing that I was doing this very thing was the inspiration for this book. It might be more accurate to say that recognizing I had *stopped* doing this prompted me to consider the topic at length.

Much as you cannot truly grant *yourself* a nickname, you cannot walk into a room and announce yourself *changed*. You cannot look a crowd or a family member or a spouse in the eye and say with sincerity, “I understand myself now. I pronounce myself different, my journey fulfilled, my quest ended.” To be truly transformed is something that occurs without direct knowledge. It is something of which you become aware over time. It is something realized slowly, acceptance dawning and increasing as you examine the mounting evidence of an inner process that, because it must come from within, never really *arrives* until it has already *been*.

I have always been a sarcastic man, proud of what I consider my acerbic wit. For years, however, I was also a pushover – a passive and angry man who avoided conflict whenever possible and could not bring himself to be assertive even when it was

necessary. I was, as a coworker once put it, a “follower of the Glorious Path of Least Resistance” – a wry comment that I actually took as a compliment, at the time.

You might be saying to yourself, “But a smart individual *does* avoid conflict when possible. There’s nothing inappropriate or passive about that. Otherwise you could end up getting into fights or self-defense situations when you didn’t need to do so.” Well, that’s true, up to a point. To do what is right in life sometimes requires conflict, however, for to sit idly by or avoid trouble while someone is doing someone else wrong is to give sanction to evil. Less dramatically, to avoid conflict when you’re being treated like crap is to live as a doormat or punching bag. It is the opposite of living assertively and it will leave you dissatisfied and unhappy in the long term.

What this means is that while The Martialist™ does not relish the thought of doing violence and prefers to solve conflicts without using force, that individual also knows that there are times when violence is necessary and when force is warranted. The assertive man, the woman of action, does not shrink from conflict if to do so means to grant sanction to evil. The man of action does not allow another to make victims of those about whom the man cares. Something forgotten by many who believe they pursue the “warrior ideal” in today’s society is that the warrior does *not* submit passively to being *used poorly*, either. Self-preservation and *self-respect* demand otherwise.

For years I allowed myself to be bullied at work by bosses and by coworkers. If I came into conflict with a fellow employee, rightly or wrongly, I apologized and wanted only to get along peacefully with each person at the office. If a boss treated me shabbily or without proper respect, I accepted this as my superiors’ prerogative. If I worked hard on a project and that project was judged less than acceptable, I bore the burden of what I saw as rightful shame and pledged to work harder. I could not say no when given more work. I spent hour after hour of unpaid overtime, working late into the night and arriving at painfully early hours of the morning. I believed, through all this, that I was a good employee – that my efforts were the evidence of my earnest desire to serve my employers well.

There came a time that I now realize was the *beginning* of a real understanding of the concept of martialism. I would like to say this came about because of my diligent, if haphazard, reading of martial arts texts and philosophical commentaries, but I would be wrong. No, the first hints of understanding came to me through the efforts of gifted teachers. Your own path to assertive living may differ (it may start with this booklet, for example). Mine was the result of physical instruction. I began training in a pair of martial arts: one an eclectic and personal style whose name translates to “Virtuous Strength,” and one the traditional Kung Fu style of Wing Chun. To the teachers of those two arts I owe a debt I probably never will repay. Their lessons began the changes I only now perceive.

The first lesson was that of *fear*. My eclectic teacher David, also a friend, scolded me harshly when I was hesitant to close and engage him in sometimes brutal, near- to full-contact sparring. I outweighed him by an honest one hundred pounds and was still

hesitant. I *knew* his strikes would shatter my defenses. I *knew* he would be everywhere at once.

“Stop,” he spat at me, “being afraid. You’re not afraid of *me*. You’re afraid of *yourself*.” He pantomimed nailing one of my feet to the ground. “Now. You will stand your ground. You can rotate on that foot. You can kick with the other foot. But you are *not* to back up. *Do not give ground to me.*” That was the beginning. That was when I learned to conquer, however briefly, the fear of myself.

My Wing Chun teacher, who emphasized in each class the vitally important principles of that traditional art, taught me the second lesson – one I choose to term “space domination” and which others have called “forward drive” or “seizing the initiative.” We were taught that when an opponent closes to within kicking distance, he has crossed the boundary of safe personal space and must be *attacked*. “Do not wait,” my Sifu told us many times. “If he’s too close, *get him.*”

I choose these two lessons because they are at the heart of the changes of which I am only now becoming aware. They are also fundamental to the differences and the benefits I have seen as a person. To cope with fear and to take the initiative are the heart of confidence and the soul of martialism

I had been training in Wing Chun Kung Fu for perhaps half a year and in my eclectic art for maybe three times that when a coworker – an unpleasant woman who had never really treated me with respect – began acting skittish around me. She finally commented, to the agreement of a couple of other office personnel, that I had become “much more aggressive.” I gathered that she did not find this development comforting. I was confused by her observation.

I spoke with another coworker whose cubicle was located next to mine, someone whose company I truly enjoyed. “Do I seem different at all to you?” I asked, mystified. “Is my personality different?”

“You’ve definitely become much more assertive in the year that I’ve known you,” she told me. “You don’t stand for things that you would have tolerated before. You make the people who used to treat you badly nervous. Haven’t you noticed they don’t treat you like they used to? It’s because they know they can’t get away with it.”

I thought about that for a long time.

When something is perceptible in your work life, it becomes (immediately or eventually) perceptible in your home life as well. No woman wants a man who is too weak to do what he must as her partner and her *husband*. I had always seen my pursuit of the tools and methods of violence, of the knowledge of the use of force, as my natural role as a *man*. What I did not realize in all the years I failed to understand the nature of assertive living is that my passivity, my pursuit of the path of least resistance, does not do justice to the demands of a man who has pledged his eternal loyalty and love to his *wife*. You

are more than a man when you are married. You are a *husband* and your responsibilities increase accordingly.

To live as a martialist is to be *strong* – not necessarily physically, though that never hurts, but mentally and emotionally. A husband who lives that way is a source of strength to his wife. He is assertive on her behalf without being overbearing. He is firm without being unyielding. He is confident without being arrogant. He treats her with respect and acts forcefully and without hesitation when she is treated badly by others. He makes his wife proud for good reason and stands up for her and for himself. He does this because he has the confidence and the wisdom that come with standing up for what is right – and that thrive in any individual who is happy and satisfied with his life.

I want you to be a martialist because it will mean living *better*. I hope, in this book, to share with you what I've learned about such a lifestyle. I want you to see your boundaries in your mind and immediately enforce them when someone violates them. I want you to be able to recognize when you are being treated disrespectfully. I want you to develop the courage and the will to confront such disrespect, rather than avoiding it. In so doing I hope to encourage and reinforce your own journey to better living and, more importantly, better *action*. The man and woman of action protect those for whom they care while standing up for what is right and upholding a moral code. Doing so produces changes in the behavior of others – some good, and some less than pleasant. In reading this book I hope to encourage you on this path of self-discovery and self-realization. That is, ultimately, what we're talking about defending – your *self*, your *ego*. This is not self-absorption and it is not pride.

It is martialism.

No book or booklet can really teach you to live as a martialist. What I will present here, however, are the general principles of assertive living. Keep these in mind. Read them every day, if you have to, in order to keep them foremost in your thinking. I publish *The Martialist™*, but even I forget these principles and fall into bad habits. The Glorious Path of Least Resistance is, like the dark side of the Force, remarkably seductive. It's easy to fall into it and difficult to climb out of it.

Principles are just that – *principles*. They're not specific rules and they're not detailed instructions. They're concepts that you must learn to apply. Two people can apply the same principle to the same situation and conclude, quite reasonably, that they must take different actions. Learning to apply martialism comes with practice.

Remember, too, that you cannot afford to make mistakes as you try to get this right. Screw up and hit someone just once when it's not justifiable and you'll be looking at an assault charge. A criminal record's not an easy thing with which to live. A lot of good people who've made isolated mistakes live with those black marks for the rest of their lives.

The Principles of Martialism

- You are an end unto yourself. You don't *owe* anyone *anything* unless you agree to accept that responsibility. Responsibilities are accepted, not imposed.
- No one has the *right* to violate *your* rights. This means no one has the right to harm you physically, steal your property, or abuse you unless you consent to such mistreatment.
- Others' opinions of you do not matter.
- Be alert. Don't sleepwalk through life or you'll fail to see it when others attempt to violate your rights.
- Learn to say NO. Refuse. Resist. Stand up for yourself. When someone makes demands you don't wish to meet, you don't have to make excuses or compromises. Simply say NO. The person making demands must cope.
- Be confident. This will come with time. Once you achieve physical competence in self-defense, you'll find you are naturally more competent. Stand tall. Walk boldly. Move calmly.
- "Fear never arrives." This quote is from a book called "Street Ninja" by the no-doubt pseudonymous "Dirk Skinner." Either what you fear will never come to pass, or when it does you will be too busy dealing with it to worry over it. Either way, channel your fear into preparation. "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," goes another of my favorite sayings.
- Take action. Do not hesitate – but don't be reckless, either.

The Liabilities of Martialism

As I've described, living as a martialist changes your personality – or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the changes in your personality that come with growing assertiveness prompt you to live your life differently. Either way, when you start to *defend your mind* on a more regular basis (reaching eventually to consistent assertive living, always defending your mind from assaults on it), people are going to notice. This can be both good and bad.

When you become a martialist, your *personality* is changes. You are less likely to put up with things you tolerated before. You are more likely to provoke confrontation with people who are treating you badly. You are more likely to stand your ground and defend your opinions in the face of criticism. None of these things sounds like a negative until you consider with whom you might come into conflict. If you're the type of spouse who usually lets your partner win arguments or push you around, your marriage could be destabilized when you start standing up to your husband or wife. If you work with people who are used to you "rolling over" for them or accepting their abuse without comment, they're not going to like it when you won't take it anymore. You may find yourself working with people who are angry with you and making no attempt to hide that fact – and you'll have to learn to endure that feeling.

One of the biggest sources of mental and emotional oppression comes from the workplace. Specifically, many of us fear our bosses. We fear them because they have the power to fire us or lay us off. This is a perfectly understandable and perfectly rational fear – because none of us wants to be out of a job. Even if you don't fear the financial hardship of being unemployed, you dislike the hassle of job-hunting.

Living as a martialist means *you must not be afraid to lose your job*. Your boss is a person like any other but is in a position to violate your boundaries and to treat you with disrespect in ways most other people are not. To live assertively, you must be willing to stand up for yourself even in front of your boss. You must be willing to do so at the risk of losing your job – because your boundaries are more important than your employer's idea of what constitutes "insubordination." Most of time, enforcing your boundaries will lead to better employment conditions – because as long as you perform competently, you boss will quickly learn that you are not someone he can abuse. Sometimes, you'll stand up for yourself and your unreasonable, unpleasant employer will be so unreasonable or unpleasant that he'll tell you to get out. You must be willing to face that possibility without fear, unflinching as you stand up for yourself.

Remember my supervisor Paul? We both had the same overbearing, obnoxious boss. Paul, however, did not find himself working tremendously long hours of unpaid overtime. He did not absorb verbal abuse from our boss. When my employer got angry with me over something that was a perfectly rational misunderstanding, my initial impulse was to cower and apologize – which only encouraged my boss to be more verbally abusive.

Paul, on the other hand, never apologized for anything that was not his fault – and he didn't care if anyone expected him to do so.

I later learned that Paul set the tone for his relationship with our boss right from the beginning. When our employer first made an offer to employ him, Paul learned he had a counter-offer from another firm. When he informed our boss, Tim, of the counter-offer, Tim flew off the handles. "I thought we had a deal!" Tim blustered. "Just who do you think you are?"

Paul cut him off in mid-tirade. "I'm sorry that's how you feel," he said, "so I guess this isn't going to work out."

That immediately took the wind out of Tim's sails. "Hold on," he said, calming down. "Let's not be hasty." Confronted with someone who would not tolerate his overbearing bullshit, Tim was robbed of his power. Paul, as a result, enjoyed much better working conditions and a much higher salary thanks to his willingness to stand up for himself and negotiate from a position of strength. The willingness to walk away is the ultimate position of power where negotiation is concerned. If you are willing simply *not to be employed*, your leverage when dealing with your employer goes up accordingly.

My working relationship with Tim became so intolerable that I started looking for work elsewhere on more than one occasion. Things were coming to a head, too, as my training was starting to make me "more aggressive" – in the words of the coworker I mentioned before – and I was starting to chafe under Tim's abusive leadership. I think I probably would have had a shouting confrontation with him one day, if not for the fact that he moved to another state to open a branch office there. The change in my behavior was such, however, that he went out of his way to be polite to me on the phone towards the end of my employment (I left for a different job on my own terms). This did not stop him from speaking ill of me behind my back, I found out later, but it said something about what he was no longer willing to say to me directly for fear of how I would respond.

If you've ever worked with more than one person at a time, you have experienced office politics. I have worked in some offices and industrial settings so large that you could drop a pin in the break room and hear about it on the shop floor an hour later. Such places are gossip mills of the worst order. As such they also produce some of the most intense and the most petty office politicking you're likely to encounter. Such politicking relies on people's passive-aggressive childishness to thrive. This is the antithesis of martialism, for those who live assertively face their issues head-on rather than whispering behind others' backs.

Recognize from the outset that choosing the assertive lifestyle will put you on the outside of office politics. You'll be annoyed if not outraged at the gossiping that does go on – and you're likely to get yourself in trouble with a supervisor or manager when someone you confront directly goes running to those higher in the chain of command to tattle on you.

I've seen this in my own work life. A particularly petty worm of a man whose cubicle sat adjacent to a friend's decided he didn't like the fact that my friend had frequent visitors. Whenever someone lingered too long in my friend's cubicle, the worm would poke his head over the wall and say something like, "Could you keep it down, please? *Some* of us are trying to work." Keep in mind that my friend is both a productive and loyal employee. He is a very friendly, outgoing person, but also puts in long hours to accomplish his tasks. The behavior of the worm was simply petulant. Something of a passive loner disliked by many who interacted with him, the worm felt (I believe) resentful of the fact that my friend got along well with others and enjoyed a social life.

My supervisor, Aaron, called me and another coworker into his office one day. Someone had complained about "too much socializing" going on in my friend's cubicle. My coworker and I had both been mentioned by the anonymous individual reporting the non-existent problem. This is office politicking – petty nonsense that has little or no bearing on one's real work but which takes up time and resources nonetheless.

As someone striving to live assertively, I had two choices. I could do nothing – not acceptable in this case – or I could confront the worm. This is the impulse you will have as a man or woman of action. In this case, however, I could not in good conscience confront the worm because I did not know for a fact it was him. The assertive thing to do, then, based on my suspicions, was to refuse to have anything to do with the worm. True to his nature he would frequently say hello or otherwise attempt to put me at ease when I interacted with him, both of us knowing he had tried to make trouble for me. From that point on, I addressed him using only his last name and refused to acknowledge him most of the time. This is sometimes all you can do – make it clear that while you will abide by the guidelines of largely civil conduct, you know that a given individual has acted against you and you will not tolerate two-faced displays of hypocrisy.

Living as a martialist means you lose the ability to politick around the office. This is no tragic loss, but will create complications for you. The unwillingness to "play the game" can limit just where your career will go in some offices – which means you must compensate by leaving when necessary to find better coworkers.

Another very serious side-effect of living as a martialist is that it really shows you who your friends are. Because you'll be more likely to state your honest opinions and more likely to defend them when someone questions them, you will discover "friends" who aren't really your friends at all. Some people have no problem associating with others as long as those others defer to them or don't disagree with them. Start having opinions of your own, however, and you'll soon learn these same "friends" are petty, insecure creatures capable of remarkable vindictiveness.

One of my first successful ventures as a writer was the online publication *The Martialist™*. When themartialist.com went online and my e-zine started reaching an audience, a few of my friends – personalities in what you might call the online "self-

defense community” – were happy to contribute to it. As it became clear, however, that I had my own opinions and my own way of doing things, one or two of the people I would have thought I could count on for support suddenly became very critical.

Things finally boiled over for one fellow in particular, whom we’ll call Ben. Ben and I had struck up what I thought was a fairly good friendship. We talked on the phone on occasion, interacted in online discussion sites, generally agreed on a lot of things, and shared many of the same interests regarding self-defense and weaponry. What I came to learn, however, was that Ben was a remarkably insecure man who considered his expertise in the realm of self-defense – expertise borne of both military and civilian experience – unquestionable, unassailable, and *the quality that made him special*. As a result, the success of my publication started a slow burn within him – a burn I didn’t know about until he attacked me.

At some point I received an anonymous e-mail questioning everything I was doing with my publication. The message assailed me personally, questioned my abilities and my motives, and generally was the most vicious piece of hate-mail I’ve ever received. At the time I maintained a hate-mail section on one of my websites (because exposing such things publicly robs them of power). I promptly posted the e-mail and changed my discussion site icon to a backhoe (because my anonymous critic accused me of “moving like a busted backhoe,” which I thought a particularly imaginative turn of phrase).

Not long after *that*, my “friend” Ben wrote me two e-mails that were without doubt the worst messages I’ve ever read from anyone. Under the guise of trying to “set me straight” as a friend, Ben said things that not even my worst enemies had ever imagined. When you boil the messages down they said, essentially, that I was a stupid man who’d never managed to create anything of value and never would, and that nothing I’d accomplished to date was worth a damn. As these messages came from someone who was *supposed* to be my friend, I gave them serious consideration.

What I discovered was that the e-mails were flatly *wrong*. The problem wasn’t mine; it was *Ben’s*. I learned a valuable lesson that day about the lengths to which people you trust will go to *destroy you* mentally and emotionally. I include this example because I want to emphasize that this assault on my ego, this attack on my self, came from a source I thought was friendly, from someone whose judgment I thought I could trust (and someone whose overbearing behavior I had defended more than once to others).

Living as a martialist, stating your opinions, having the guts and the wherewithal to *create* instead of merely criticizing, go hand-in-hand. What you’ll learn once you adopt this lifestyle is that people will practically crawl out of the woodwork to treat you like shit. You’ll suddenly have to deal with the resentment and jealousy of people you didn’t even know existed – all because they feel threatened by the way in which you approach life. Living as a martialist, by definition, means fighting back the attacks of others on your sense of self. This, in turn, *threatens* those others’ egos because it denies them the validation they seek in their insecurity.

Coach Scott Sonnon, probably one of the nicest guys I've ever met in the fitness and self-defense industries, once told me that I'd have to grow a thick skin if I hoped to "play with the grown-ups." He was right. Living assertively means absorbing an endless succession of attacks, turning them aside and charging them. It means having the courage not to care what others think of you and to do what is right *because it is right*, not because you'll get approval (you won't).

Not long before I chose to write this booklet, a coworker of mine took me aside. He had thought long and hard about what he wanted to say to me. He and I were (and are) good friends. He was, he told me, deeply concerned about my willingness to confront people. How could he in good conscience continue to associate with someone, train in the martial arts with someone, who was displaying what he thought were such volatile tendencies?

There was a time when I would have been so offended at such an implication that I would have stopped associating with my friend entirely. I would have cut him out of my life and added him to some mental list of enemies over which I would fume late at night. Instead I saw his confrontation with me for what it was – an act of courage and of caring.

I assured him that being willing to stand up for yourself is not the mark of a volatile madman – but of a dynamic martialist. Refusing to play the petty games of others, choosing to confront them, is not the mark of someone who cannot be trusted – but of someone who has chosen to be worthy of the ultimate trust. To live as a martialist is to be strong, to be moral, and to be a person of *action*. This unsettles many people, even our friends.

Finally, we have to talk about the legal and social risks of living as a martialist. Standing up for yourself and for others is increasingly vilified by our popular culture. Modern society values victims over victors. You are expected to take all manner of abuse and do nothing about it – for if you do, you'll likely be sued or arrested and charged.

I remember reading about a study in some major newspaper. The study compared the behavior of Southerners and Northerners when confronted with rude, obnoxious behavior in strangers. The Southerners, it was discovered, were much more quick to take issue with rude behavior and to confront it physically. The gist of the study was that Southerners are violent rednecks stuck in the past, whereas the much more civilized Northerners were more apt to ignore rudeness.

The attitude with which the study was supported made me angry. It was the unnamed Southerners who were acting as we *should* act as men and women of action. When someone treats you rudely, you *should* confront them with their rudeness – for your mental defense demands no less. If you simply sit there and take it, you will suffer in the long run. You will be diminished mentally and your sense of self will crumble. You will *live poorly* and you will be less likely to stand up for yourself in the future.

Our legal system supports those passive Northerners. If you confront someone with their rudeness and the situation escalates to a physical confrontation, you are likely to be seen as the aggressor. You might be charged with menacing, with assault, or with any of countless other crimes. If you get involved in someone else's dispute because it is the right thing to do – the thing a man of action would do – you may be injured or worse.

A friend of mine once intervened in a domestic dispute in a parking lot. A guy was hitting and grabbing his girlfriend or wife. My friend got between them. In the struggle, he managed to subdue the aggressive male, who dropped a pocketknife during the fight. My friend was in the process of keeping the male down when the female picked up the knife – and stabbed him in the ass with it!

My friend blushed a little while telling the story. He is very much a “man of action” and I didn't doubt that he would do something if confronted with the obvious evil of domestic violence – even though domestic disputes are notoriously dangerous because of the type of behavior that young lady displayed.

“Would you do the same thing again if confronted with the same situation?” I asked my friend.

“Yes,” he said without hesitation. “Though I think I'd keep a closer eye on my ass.”

That's the attitude you have to have. You must be cognizant of the risks – and you must be willing to face them anyway.

Your Journey as a Martialist

I used to be a terrible hypochondriac. There was a time when I was afraid to touch door handles with my bare skin. Shaking hands with someone sent me rushing to the antibacterial lotion as soon as possible afterward. Opening mail terrified me. I had to wear gloves to pump gas into my car. I worried every moment that I'd been exposed to some terrible illness for which there was no cure – something stigmatizing with which I would have to live out my miserable life. I lived obsessed and terrified, suffering what one psychologist called “general anxiety” and driving the people close to me absolutely nuts.

I used to live passively, afraid to confront those who were rude to me, afraid to stand up for myself, afraid to make a scene. I was abused at work and I was a spineless at home. I was a disappointment to anyone who counted on me because I was not there when they needed me.

I used to spend a lot of time thinking about what others thought of me. I'd worry about it, argue about it online, lie awake at night feeling upset over it. I was obsessed in so many ways that I think I had an undiagnosed case of obsessive compulsive disorder, in fact.

I'll never know.

When I chose to *be a martialist*, all of this changed. The change was gradual and is still occurring. I am still learning and still improving. What I do know, however, is that martialism helped me to live a better life. It set me *free* of my fears and anxieties. It made me stronger. It gave me courage. It gave me confidence. It made me a better person.

It can do the same for you.

“Be more prepared than the challenges you will face.”

– Scott Sonnon

About The Author

Phil Elmore is a martial artist and professional writer whose work has appeared in a variety of print and virtual publications. A caustic polemicist with an almost religious regard for self-defense, he is not a lawyer, a police officer, or a member of the military. He is a private citizen who believes your right to your life and your property is inalienable.

The publisher of *The Martialist™: The Magazine For Those Who Fight Unfairly*, Phil is also known for his willingness to confront irrational ideas and to stand up for what he believes is right – despite the criticisms of others.



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LEARN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELF DEFENSE AND ASSERTIVE LIVING

In this booklet, Phil Elmore, publisher of *The Martialist™: The Magazine For Those Who Fight Unfairly*, outlines the philosophy of martialism. Martialism is the key to successful self-defense and to living assertively as a dynamic, sovereign human being.



Through prudent planning, emergency preparation, and mental programming, you can cope with the unexpected and the unpredictable to defend yourself and your family from danger (both human and natural). You can also learn to assert yourself in your daily life, living as a martialist at work and at home. Rather than meekly following the Glorious Path of Least Resistance, you can learn to stand up for yourself – and to do what must be done when others choose not respect your physical boundaries.

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