

## My Journey to Black Belt

I can still remember the day my journey began. As I entered the karate studio I had no idea that this would be the start of a long, fruitful and satisfying part of my life. After a fun and welcoming first lesson with my new Sensei, I became more interested and excited about karate than I had ever been before. I even remember my first karate assignment, “transition into the guard stance, the high block, and counting from one to five in Japanese”. This first experience at the new school was so positive that I felt I could succeed while having fun, and believe it was a very important part of my journey as a karate ka.

The people I have met and friendships I have made have been another meaningful part of my journey at the dojo. The first classes were composed of my sister, Jared, Talia, Nuno, and Evan. This tight-knit group gave me the confidence and assurance to try my best and to not be afraid. This group has grown stronger as time has passed and we have become closer because of the challenges we have overcome together. Transitioning to the adult classes, I have also found new people that have helped me improve as a friend, leader, and student. When I began taking these classes, I was introduced to many inspiring, hard-working, and motivating people. I feel that I was pushed harder while taking classes because I was now training with older people, some who were black belts. Being around black belts definitely amped up the intensity and seriousness in the classes and I believe this helped me to become more intense and focused as well.

In particular, the person who has made the biggest impact on me as a karate student is Sensei. In class, he motivates, encourages and constructively corrects all of us, pushing us to bring our best effort every time. He has helped me improve my techniques and given me

a lot of confidence. I believe he is the reason that everyone in the dojo is the karate student that they are today and I would just like to say “thank you”.

My journey to black belt has been a significant part of my life for the past six years. Ten belt tests, two Shugyo trainings and two tournaments have challenged me in ways I never imagined. I feel fortunate that I am able to be part of such an amazing dojo with such amazing people and look forward to continuing my training with them and Sensei as one of the first Junior Black Belts at Authentic Karate.