



Episode 304 – Master Nia Sanchez | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everyone welcome. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 304, today were joined by Master Nia Sanchez. If you don't know my voice, you are probably new to the show my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder of whistlekick and we make all kinds of fun stuff for martial arts. Doesn't matter whether your karate person, tae kwon do person, maybe you're a jujitsu person, we have great apparel, we have a growing line of training accessories and equipment, you can find it all whistlekick.com and we even have some stuff over at amazon. If you want to show notes for this or any of our other 303 wonderful episodes including topic shows from Thursdays or interviews from our Monday releases, you find those at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. If you know someone that would be a great guest, head on over to the website fill out the show form, the show request form, tell us a little bit about the person and we'll reach out, we'll try to get them on the show. There are very, very few people that have not said yes. Let's talk about today's guest. You know it's not often that we have someone on the show who has reached a high level in both martial arts and something completely unrelated or is it completely unrelated, I'll let you decide, to martial arts. On today's show we have Master Nia Sanchez who some folks may know as the winner of miss USA 2014 but here today she's Master Sanchez martial artist, taekwondo practitioner with a number of other martial arts under her belt both literally and figuratively and she's here to talk about her life as a martial artist what makes her tick. It's great conversation, I had a lot of fun with this one I know you will too. Check it out.

Master Sanchez welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.



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Nia Sanchez:

Hi, thank you so much for having me, I'm glad to be doing this with you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm glad too. We talked about a couple times you know, obviously coordinating schedules between busy people is never an easy thing as anyone out there knows. But here we are, we finally made this work and I've been looking forward to it. We set this up, it's been a few weeks since we coordinated.

Nia Sanchez:

It's been a few weeks, we're finally here, I'm ready to get going.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And here we are. Well, obviously this is a martial art show there may be some folks out there who know you for non-martial arts reasons were to get into all that but let's start, let's build some foundation to work from here, how did you get started as a martial artist?

Nia Sanchez:

So, I had started in taekwondo when I was eight years old, my dad was raised a military family, joined the military and then worked at a prison. He worked at [00:03:01.18] and then a prison in southern California. And we had moved to a new city and I was so out of my comfort zone, I became extremely introverted and shy. I was the girl that like stared at her feet when she walked down the street and being my dad's only daughter and him coming from you know, the very strict background and seeing some of the worst of the worst people in a regular basis, he was like, okay now, this is not going to be happening so, he put me into tae kwon do to help boost my confidence and to help me just be more like a strong independent little girl even, because he knew that it was dangerous for a little girl to not be aware of her surroundings, not even confident enough to hold her head up and look at people around her and be aware what going on. So, he put me into taekwondo. I refused to do it at first, I thought it was just for boys, so I made him join with me, so my dad, myself and my little brother all joined taekwondo at the same time so I'm glad, that I was a stubborn little girl, because that was such a cool family experience to go up through the ranks together. So yeah, that's how I got started at the beginning of the journey.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Well, obviously, that journey continued so at what point did you realize it was doctors for boys?

Nia Sanchez:



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It's actually funny, I have such a clear memory when I was a yellow belt, the instructor asking everybody why they took taekwon do he went on to the class and ask everybody for their answer. And you know, there would be kids, I wanna break boards, I wanna be a blackbelt, we got a variety of answers and my answer was, my dad made me. So, I still wanna do it, even after I had achieved an accomplishment of like earning a belt what you think might like encourage a little kid, okay cool I'm getting good at this, let me you know have more passion for it but I didn't really fall in love with taekwondo until my first competition. So, once I discovered the whole competitor's aspect of it and where you train really hard to perfect your technique and to be quick, you know at sparring and all that. My first competition I was a green belt so we were doing sparring and I absolutely fell in love. I got a first and a third place and then from there it just ignited the passion. So instead of my dad dragging me to taekwondo every single day I was dragging him. I was wanting to work out 6 days a week, we worked out every single day cause I want to get better for my next competition so the competition part deftly ignited the passion for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

[00:05:25.15] so here in a fairly short period of time maybe not, shortest if we talk to your eight-year-old self but early on, right you move from looking at your feet being completely unsure of yourself to stepping out in the competition which is already an intimidating thing, even people who compete week after week will often admit that they're nervous every time at least a little bit. Something is changing in there, something must've changed and who you were as a person for martial arts. So, was that apparent to, you know, say the adults around you at that time or was it only in retrospect later?

Nia Sanchez:

I definitely was. My dad if you ask him, he'll say that right around the time when I started competing, he saw me start to come out of my shell a little bit, I always attribute it to the life skills that you learn from martial arts whether a taekwon do or another martial art. I feel like there's so many life skills and when I talk now I do public speaking, I always attribute how much of my success to what I learned at a young age in taekwondo and martial arts in general. You learn to be independent, you learn to be confident, you learn to present well you carry yourself well in a room full of people and when you have so many eyes on you, theres so many things that you learn, respect, kindness, being prompt and on time for interviews or meetings or whatever it is, so I definitely started to come out of my shell and everyone around me [00:07:00.21] and I think it kinda gave my dad, a little bit of an ease okay, my daughter is aware of her surroundings now, she's more confident, she is not so shy so it definitely broke me out of my shell and it gave me life skills, that's what I always say. Taekwondo you know is a beautiful martial art and I learned so much from it, but the number one thing that I've taken away to apply to the rest of my life is the life skills that you learn.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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So, what did competition after that, first incident, that first experience as a green belt look like. Were you competing frequently or was it you know a few times a year and how far did you take it?

Nia Sanchez:

Oh my gosh. So, I was obsessed with competition. After that we did every single regional tournament, which I think we had a top three a year and then at the time my organization, now they have one international tournament a year but at that time they had three international tournaments a year so we were going across country to compete international tournament since I was probably about 10 years old, every single year. And three years competing internationally, all the competitions were held in the us so flying to south, different places in the us and one of my favorite stories that I always share about never giving up on your dreams and what you want to do and what you're passionate about, was my first competition internationally. I was purple belt at that time and I was so excited because I always [00:08:33.21] and I was good. And my first international competition, I went and I was ready to this, I was so excited I essentially got a spirit award, that's what they called it, spirit award like things are coming you didn't place, good try, good luck next time. And you know I was so disappointed and so broken about that experience because I had only ever known at least placing at the regional level but my instructor, I had such a wonderful instructor that I still look up to this day and he said, don't let it get you down come back next time and show them how good you are. So, I worked really hard it was the last international competition at that year, and then the next guy came back and I ended up getting all first place across the board including [00:09:21.07] forms, sparring, forms, everything. So, it goes to show you know, just because you don't succeed at something the first time, it does not mean you can't be successful you just have to, you have to work harder and that's just life like sometime people want to just show up and do this thing and win award and not getting results. You just have to really, really work hard and you can make it happen. But I continue to compete and its definitely interesting the transition between the I forgot what they called it and it was essentially like the preteen division and the you're moving up to the adult where I'm 15 years old competing against women that are in their twenties, that have been training in taekwondo, martial arts for 10-15 years. And I'm over here like a few years in, so that was definitely an interesting transition for me too. I had been killing it when the like teen division. I was always getting first if not all first, at least first, second, third, I was always placing doing well, and then went up to the adult division and I think I got all third so it was, and still did well for being, going from teen to the adult division but it was definitely for sure. I love competition, I love the sparring, I love forms and always trying better myself and I definitely did, I learned a lot through competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, you're not seeing it but some the words you're using make me suspicious that maybe there was a lesson in humility in there that you're thankful now that you learn. Were you starting to get a little fool of yourself winning everything?

Nia Sanchez:



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Oh, for sure. Yes, for sure and it's so true, it's like, like I said, martial art and the lessons I've learned have applied to my entire life and with my pageant title and success in that world people always say, you're so normal, you're so real. I think I learned those lessons at a young age where don't get a full head, don't think you're all that hot because there's always better than you and there's always room to improve and room to get better so that life lesson I've definitely taken away, I had definitely been like okay, I'm hot stuff, I know what I'm doing and then you know, you move up the next level and you're like okay, no I don't know how I'm doing I need to really level up again. So yeah, I definitely learned life lessons of humility through martial arts, there's always someone better, you always need to keep working to be better and staying humble on the process for sure

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Now, you brought it up so it's fair game for you talk about a little bit now too. There may be some folks out there who know you first and foremost not as a martial artist, a martial art but as a pageant competitor and I'm going to guess just in the way that you have talked about martial arts today, in the way that I've seen some of your, your photos from your time in pageant competition relating to your taekwondo that there's quite a synergy, there's a lot of overlap going on between at least for you those two worlds. So why don't you talk to us now about how taekwondo competition became pageant competition?

Nia Sanchez:

Oh yes. So, overlapped for days. Like it's crazy how much I took all the things that I learned taekwondo and transfer them into the pageant world. Mostly the discipline that it takes to not be discouraged if you don't place whether it's taekwondo or in the pageant world, I train for, I'm thinking training of this, I'm training for taekwondo. I competed for five years in a row before I became miss USA. So I competed at the regional and state level multiple years and did well but obviously didn't win until the right timing I believe everything happens in god's timing and so I wasn't ready to become miss USA at 19 years old, I would not have won if I had competed for title at 19 so, I became miss USA when I was 24 years old and there was just, I was very blessed to be able to use a lot of what I've learned and I've trained multiple martial arts, tae kwon do being the longest but taekwondo, jiu jitsu, muay Thai, and I use so much of those life skills and just the physical skills. I was miss USA it kinda naturally became my platform to teach women self-defense across the country. My question when you know in top 5 and you have no idea what's coming your way and this question pretty much determines whether you get a crown or not I was asked about rape on college campuses and how I could help fix the problem. Which I'm like how you ask a 20 something year old girl how she can take that huge issue but all I could do is respond with what I knew and I knew that I could help teach women self-defense. And there's a lot more to that subject and we could go into depth of that because I had a lot of feminist hating on me for that answer but, that's what could do. I could teach women self-defense and that's the way that I can help the problem and I ended up winning and with that that transitioned into my platform for the whole year and I was able to teach women self-defense in high schools and colleges across the country.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Now you mentioned hate from feminists and we don't have to unpack this too much but maybe you could sure a little bit more about what you mean?

Nia Sanchez:

Yeah absolutely. Okay so long story short, after I answer the question, you have 30 seconds to answer a question that you have no idea, even the content of the subject matter and you have to give your best answer in 30 seconds so I did. I said I can teach women self-defense. The feminist out there, not all feminist there was an article where I read there someone that said, I don't agree with miss USA but majority of them talk to me for about two weeks about saying well women's shouldn't have to learn self-defense men should not rape and of course men should not rape, but that's not the world that we currently live in so my defense that is of course, if there is any way we can have discussions with high school men and college men and really break down no means no and what's rape and what's not and you know like really have that conversation that they understand and you know we can do our part to help on that end, that's great let's do that but for the current world that we live in, I'm going to teach women self-defense. So, you know, there was a lot of pushback on my answer but it's an answer that can be, you can sit down, you can have a 20-minute conversation and fully discuss [00:16:10.27] but you only have 30 seconds on stage. So, I did the best I could within 30 seconds and I see their side of it but I also live in the world that we currently live in. So, I'm going to do my part to help women the way that I can. That's kinda the gist of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Then you mentioned you caught that flak for a few weeks after the competition, what was your mindset cause here I imagine in one sense, you're on cloud nine, you've achieve something you been working for number of years and then I'm going to speculate, as a martial artist, martial arts is pretty core to who you are. It's one of your founding elements and it's something that you hold dear, so here your answer is something coming from a place that is very personal, something that is so important to you, your martial arts training and that very answer being attacked, I think if I was in your shoes would feel like an attack of my martial arts training. Was there any kind of... Was it was it difficult? Were you feeling conflicted between the joys of victory and maybe this this element of criticism that's on such a large national stage?

Nia Sanchez:

You know I was a bit but at the same time I had done so much mental and emotional prep because I wanted to be miss USA and I knew that if I became USA there is so many more eyes on you, theres so much more that comes with having that title. So, I honestly was mentally prepared for just about anything to come my way, I know I did my best to prepare in every area and I was fine with my answers so my belief at the end of the day is as long as I'm okay and I'm staying true to who I am, then, there



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can be a million naysayers out there but you can go ahead and talk because it's not going to affect me. I'm happy with who I am and the way that I'm handling situations. So, I was completely fine with that. I was like, okay you can say that all day long, still doesn't make sense to me. Like, I understand we need men to not rape but that's not the current world that we live in so, what I can help women and you do what you can do too. Like let let's not be against each other, let's be for each other and find positive solutions but I honestly didn't take it too personal, it was more annoying than anything else to have people being so critical when in my opinion there is no need for it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, well. You know, there's a certain element of the population will always try and tear someone down the further they go the higher they get the more that they want to tear them down because it exposes where they are hanging out in the trenches slinging mud.

Nia Sanchez:

We ain't got no time for that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No. Too much good stuff to make happen to fall victim to their words.

Nia Sanchez:

Agreed.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now today, we've already heard about a lot of really good things going on in your life. I'd like for you to kind of flip it around for us, to talk about something negative it's happening your life and how you were able to lean on your martial arts to get past it.

Nia Sanchez:

Oh dear. Ok. Well there have been things here and there I mean, I'm just going to go with the first thing that popped into my mind and I was in a really bad relationship where there was infidelity and I was one of those girls that ended up staying with him and you know trying to figure out, make it work and then towards the end it started to get physical and that was when I was like completely like [00:19:58.28]. Physically, my martial arts help me defend myself against a strong tall man and I think with like the discipline everything it finally kicked and rose like you know what, no, I deserve better and I am valued and I have work then and I knew that all along. My martial arts have taught me so much like self-worth and value but I kinda lost that for a little bit. So, I, even though I had lost it at that point was able to lean



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back into the life skills and the self-worth and self-knowledge I have learned through martial arts and even my martial arts family which you know, there are a lot of men at martial arts and I had the guy is being like, who's this guy, I'll take care of him, I was like, no, no we're good thank you never talking to him again, he's gone. But you know, it's awesome, I do appreciate that, it's a very much a family feel that you have from martial arts. I know if there ever I did ever need any help in that way, I would have a family that support me even though they are not my own physical family but my taekwondo martial arts family. I don't know if that was what was you are expecting.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It absolutely is I think we talk about personal relationships, it's really easy two to blame yourself, to speculate you know here's where I'm falling apart, here's where I'm not good enough, here's where you know whatever's happening to me is deserved and this is a subject we don't get into on the show very much and full disclosures because it's a subject I'm not always comfortable talking about because I've got some stuff in my past that I'm still working through. We'll leave it at that, but I appreciate your openness and just the realization that it's all about moving forward. It's all about taking those steps. You know as you were talking about that there was, I didn't catch a hint of woe is me, of any kind is self-deprecating vibe coming from you. It seemed very matter-of-fact am I reading that right?

Nia Sanchez:

Yeah absolutely. I'm blessed to have an amazing mother. And my mom has always told me that everything that you go through in life, even if like some of it self-inflicted in retrospect, looking back at it, you can learn life lessons and become better from that. So, it's something that now I'm like okay obviously, would have loved to go through that but I did so, I'm going to learn from it and I'm going to become a better person, I'm going to be able to help others. Before that and I know we won't probably go too much into the relationship but before that I had a friend that dated a guy that had cheated on here and I did not understand. Like she's like an idiot like I was like, what the heck? Hand then I went through it and now I have empathy for women that have experience that but I also was able to get out of that relationship and have that strength that it takes a lot more than you would realize. So now I have empathy for that and I can help women, I worked with women in women's shelter that you know are running from abusive, aggressive, unhealthy relationships and I teach them self-defense and teach their kids stranger danger. And I've now been and if I had never been there and had that life experience I would not be able to relate and to empathize and to help these on a different level that now I am able to. So, it's all life lesson and everything that you go through is a life lesson good or bad, and it's all how you relate to it and if you relate to it in a healthy way learning from it, then you can become a better person, become like a step up instead of a stumbling stone if that makes sense.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does absolutely. And I think that ability to relate the people, to take something really so foul, it allows you to understand someone else's pain someone in the moment because as you said people that



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haven't had these experiences can often look at it pretty simplistically you know whether its poor romantic relationships, whether it's addiction I mean there's a lot of stuff that we can look at that when people don't have any context it's really easy to be dismissive. But once were able to embrace were able to have that empathy, we can truly be helpful. I get it. Let's imagine that your back 2014 you're on the stage and rather than the question asked you about rape on campus they had asked you what has been the most dynamic, exciting or dramatic story from your martial arts career you had 30 seconds tell it. What story what you've told the audience?

Nia Sanchez:

First of all, when you started that question, I got the biggest smile on my face and then I was, oh dang, we're going back to pageant questions. Okay. I honestly probably would have shared the story that I already shared with you about going from doing well the regional level to competing at the international level being like having this big head about me and ready to just kill it and then being completely humbled and not placing what so ever, and then come back and winning. I feel like that was a huge life lesson for me and totally change the game with just my perspective on success in general and not having a big head about yourself even when you do so well at a certain level cause you just have to know like there's always a level up and you can always become better and improve yourself. I'm trying to think if there's anything else that like standout. I have so many fun great martial arts, taekwondo memory but nothing like super super crazy, dramatic that I can think of.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's okay. Give us one of the smaller kinda anecdotal ones and then I'll ask you something else

Nia Sanchez:

Okay hold on rephrase the question one more time I already kinda lost it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Tell us another fun you know exciting story of you know if you were to sit down to write a book about you, you know you're writing your own autobiography and your sprinkling in martial arts anecdotes from your time training or traveling or competing. Give us another one of those.

Nia Sanchez:

I actually when I training and you get I was training at MMA gym in Washington state. That's my taekwondo instructor that I originally train with in California moving to Washington state and lived like 20 miles away from where my mom lived. My mom lives in Washington state so when I go and visit my mom, I eventually moved to live with my mom for a while, I went to train with him and he had that huge massive like 6'4 like MMA fighter like super intense scary guy but I am so glad that I went and train with



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him at that time because I start to learn jiu jitsu through that and that was something that I think is important because for a lot of martial arts that I relate to like taekwondo and karate and like more stand up martial art, I had never really learned groundwork and so that was really fun and it was fun to contact [00:27:59.11] and not just a normal jujitsu gym where it's like all you're doing is jiu jitsu but it was more MMA with a lot of jiu jitsu included so that was something really cool and is different in my original taekwondo background so thankful that I learned jiu jitsu and a little bit of MMA through that. And [00:28:18.05] really cool guy I'm like what the heck this guy is massive I've never seen someone so big in my life and you know but he's so quick and fun to like learn from someone so different than what I had ever experienced before.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How did your taekwondo help you as you learned more things there and how did those things help your taekwondo?

Nia Sanchez:

Well it's like. I don't know I'm relating it back to dancing. Relating it back to dancing because you know you your mind learns and picks up on moves and techniques and what is it, you know, like a whole dance faster than when you do it, it's kinda like a muscle memory. So, the same thing really helps me from having done so many years of taekwondo to transition into jiu jitsu although the moves are completely different. You're on the ground, you're doing all these arm bars and choke holds and everything but I already had a memory of being able to pick up and learn body movement and remember it so quickly so the taekwondo helped in that way. And then I think it just kinda helped in taekwondo because I was more of a well-rounded martial artist, my mind started to think a little bit differently when I was doing jiu jitsu and MMA training then I had though when I was in taekwondo only. So, it just helps me become more of a well-rounded martial artist. I was able to respond to different situations when it was like say sparring or forms or even just training in class. I was able to be, I feel like a little bit more dynamic because of the training of multiple martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. And that's quite often the answer the people give the ideas martial arts are pretty similar they're more generally more similar than they are different. There's only so many ways you can move the body. Now you mentioned dance in there do you have a dance background too?

Nia Sanchez:

I danced a little bit in high school, I would not have a dance background if you ask my husband, I definitely don't have a dance background. But I did love dancing and we had a cheer team and dance team that essentially perform together on the football field so I was on the dance team. [00:30:29.23]



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and I loved it and it was more jazz ballet hip hop kinda thing but you know, I'm not like a freestyler I can do choreographed moves.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Alright I get it.

Nia Sanchez:

But it definitely helps with taekwondo as well like I was so much more flexible like when I would do the dance class and the moves and everything, I was so much more flexible because of taekwondo that helps with dance and then also I had like to strength in my legs that a lot of other dancers especially teens that has. So, taekwondo helps that world for sure like they had me doing all that the bending moves because I could do it I had the strength for it because of taekwondo.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now if you look at your martial arts career from age 8 up until now. If you had to pick one person who's had the greatest influence on who you consider yourself to be as a martial artist, who would that person be?

Nia Sanchez:

Aside from my... Can I say my instructor, does everybody say their instructor?

Jeremy Lesniak:

They tend to, you haven't talked a lot about your instructor so that so that's okay. If that's where you want to tell us, tell us a bit about this person is why they were so influential.

Nia Sanchez:

Okay so my instructor Eric cray, was absolutely amazing, he, I feel like I grew up in a little bit more like an old-school taekwondo where if like the class got in trouble we would go out to the parking lot and do knuckle push-ups in the cement or like do [00:32:12.08] and he would like were run across our leg but I love it, I don't know why probably cause like the military family that I come from, so I definitely think like I grew up in like a hard-core like taekwondo class because nowadays have to be so every kid which is important but any who, I'm getting off track. Instructor was great I feel like I learned a lot of skills from him and I looked at him as a business person, he was very organized and very professional business life. So, I would be 16 years old running helping run the studio because at that point I was a certified instructor and I had been around the studio so long that I was able to learn business from him as well as the life skills. That's like all these life skills that I learned and I attribute taekwondo came from my



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head instructor so I feel like you have to get credit where it's due if it weren't for him, I may I don't know maybe someone would not have applied the life skills the way that he did that made me learned them so well. So definitely a lot that I learned from my instructor. I feel like that was such a rambling answer, that was so like multi-faceted

Jeremy Lesniak:

But that's how it tends to be the best instructors all are multi-faceted and martial arts instructors anyone that's ever owned a martial arts school knows how multifaceted the relationship with students can be. We're teaching so many things, were learning so many things that become those life lessons that you have held up with such high regard if it was a much simpler relationship, I don't think martial arts would have the same impact. I don't have too many people that I've ever heard say you know my elementary school soccer coach changed my life. And not to say that I can happen and that it hasn't but that's a little bit more of simple relationship. Not that it's not important, not that soccer isn't great, not that kids learning how to participate in team sports isn't wonderful, but there's something special the relationship between a martial arts instructor and student.

Nia Sanchez:

Yeah absolutely. Very much.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now let's do the opposite of the question. If there was some what you could train with that you haven't. Anywhere in the world, anywhere in time how would that be?

Nia Sanchez:

Well I hopefully will be training with the Gracie soon for jiu-jitsu, obviously Gracie jiu-jitsu, I did not know that they had a school in Beverly hills but my dad is been a fan of the Gracie's especially the two brothers and the way that they teach they're quite some time and ever since he retired he's been thinking that he's going to get an apartment in Los Angeles then just train with them because he still loves martial arts but I hope to be training with the Gracie's very soon, Victoria Gracie who is the wife of one of the Gracie brothers, I forgot their names right now but she teaches the women jiu-jitsu class in Beverly hills I am so ready to get started. Their currently touring the world, they are going like north Korea and multiple places, meeting up with their schools across the world but once I get back I hope to be able to start training with them, I think jiu-jitsu is really important really important to note those type of escape technique and those type of, that type of ground work and I teach women martial arts, women self-defense so it's easy for me all day long to keep standup techniques and I also teach the ground techniques that I learned from my time doing jiu-jitsu previously but I think it will be such a tool for me to learn more from especially the best of the best like the Gracie's they're world renowned and be able to



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add that and become more knowledgeable for the self-defense class that I already am teaching. The classes I'm already teaching.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Tell us a little bit about those, that self-defense the classes that you're teaching is this something that you do in a specific location or you travel and do.

Nia Sanchez:

Right its more of a traveling. It's a workshop. Essentially, I guess I shouldn't say classes more of a workshop, so I have been teaching about five years now from all the techniques that I learned through multiple martial arts training and I absolutely love it. I started off teaching in women shelters, stranger danger to the kids and then self-defense to the women. Obviously as I mentioned it became my platform as miss USA and more recently I have decided to do it on my own. So, until actually about a month ago, I would, companies would fly me out, I would teach self-defense to their women or different organizations, so I taught self-defense regularly but I never get my own class or my own workshop. So, now a few times year I plan on hosting women self-defense classes in different places across the country. I did two weekends in los Angeles and it was actually amazing, I had more than 60 women attend and it was just, I felt like it's very life changing the women learned so much and I had the best response. I'm planning on teaching in New York and Miami in the late summer, early fall and then possibly Chicago after that. So, I have a feeling that I'm flying across the country know those date at the moment trying to lock down venues first but it's just I think every woman should at least now some techniques and should feel empowered to be able to defend themselves. I've had so many women that said I didn't even think about half of the scenarios that you mentioned during your class and honestly if someone came up to me I would have no idea what to do. I'm so glad that I now have, I discovered the tools in the toolbox. You know they say, now I have some tools in my tool belt and I want to learn more. So, for me, it's more to get women started with learning self-defense, and then if they want to continue training somewhere else that's great or they want to come back to another workshop that I do, they'll continue to learn more and perfect their techniques but I love teaching self-defense. I feel like that's kind of where my martial arts journey has taken me and I'll continue to train in martial arts here and there because I love it but self-defense is like my main focus right now for women.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. I've had the opportunity to speak with a number of people who teach women self-defense and among the women that teach women self-defense they've often recounted sometimes on the show sometimes honestly more so privately to me, some of the stories the powerful stories that they hear the people that they're teaching. I'm guessing just in the way you would, that you've had some folks tell you some of that stuff, some of the these, sometimes it's horrible, sometimes you know has a happy ending with the last second or whatever, how do you handle that? Because I would imagine and this is, this is this is me I'm not trying to put words in your mouth or anybody that might be listening. If I step up in



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front of a group and I'm teaching self-defense, and the last three times I've taught that I've had people come up to me and tell me about these rough things going on that led them to come, I might be putting a little bit too much weight on my shoulders in teaching and in trying to personally take on the well-being of everyone in front of me or maybe you do that in and that's the way through. I don't know, obviously I'm not a woman and I don't teach women self-defense.

Nia Sanchez:

Yeah, it's definitely heavy when you hear those stories, there are stories that have made me want to cry and I've cried with women. I think empathy is number one most important and then when I talked to women going to the main things I always share a letter talking in person or speaking in front of the large group is first of all its never your fault you never, you didn't do enough, that's never the situation. You always, a woman will always do everything she can to get away, get out of the situation, whatever it is you and the way I describe it, you do everything you can with the tools that you have and you know it the main thing is its never your fault so, when I teach I say you know you did everything you possibly could. Or if you ever, god forbid, are in a bad situation or something is happening you will do everything you can with every tool that you have what I'm here to do, is I'm here to give you more tools. So if god for that something happens you have more tools and more resources in your brain and your mind to be able to help get out of that situation, but it's hard but the thing is its never like the woman, the man should have not attacked in the first place and you do everything you can with what you have so it definitely hard [00:41:48.23] like you mentioned I've heard so many stories but I just do my part to try to be able to help as much as I can.

Jeremy Lesniak:

This really all we can do. You do what you can, where you are with what you have. Do you have a favorite martial arts movie?

Nia Sanchez:

Yes. Have you seen ip man?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course.

Nia Sanchez:

Yes. Okay so I [00:42:21.23] such a class and I ended up watching ip man when I lived in Hong Kong in Cantonese with English subtitles. So, I feel like I got a really authentic experience watching it like in Asia but I had never really watched martial arts movies until that movie and that was kinda my first



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when I was in Hong Kong. So, I feel like sometimes the first martial art movie is like if you get a good one it is a good classic and it's your favorite so that definitely the case for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah actually I have a theory the first martial arts movie people watch assuming it's not completely horrid is the one that sticks with them the most. For so many people it was its Billy jack, or its enter the dragon or it's the karate kid or teenage mutant ninja turtles.

Nia Sanchez:

Oh my gosh, Billy jack, I can't believe you just said that's crazy, I watched it when I was a kid. My dad had me watch that when I was like six years old and he was like, maybe it was closer to when I was starting taekwondo maybe 8 years old and he will always, he loved the scene where if I'm thinking of the right movie, where he was like this split's going to hit you on that side of the face. Is that the same movie?

Jeremy Lesniak:

That is the movie.

Nia Sanchez:

That's my dad's favorite movie. Favorite martial arts movie. I love it, I totally forgot about that movie. Good one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We did a whole profile on that you know, dug in a lot of behind the scenes stuff with of course a video clip embedded of that famous scene; I'm going to take this foot and put it on that side of your face and there's nothing that you can do about it. And of course, for anyone that might be new the show will drop links to everything we talk about today photos and in the whole shebang whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. What a lot of people don't realize is that Billy jack was earlier than enter the dragon, earlier than a lot of the movies that you know we think of from that era and there's just... There's something totally and it got into issues of racism and just there's just so much stuff going on there is a lot of martial arts films were willing to touch it kind of checks a lot of boxes.

Nia Sanchez:

Now I'm going to have to watch it. Oh my gosh I haven't seen it for so long, that's going to be happening tonight.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

There is actually three, I want to say there are three of them and then there is a fourth that got a script that didn't actually come out. There's some interesting stuff in there and no I don't wanna ruin it in case anybody wants to, hasn't watched or wants to go listen to that episode. How about martial arts actors? You know are you going to pull from ip man and say Donnie yen or maybe we've got somebody else on the list?

Nia Sanchez:

I feel like firstly such a classic, I feel like I almost have to say him, I honestly haven't watched that many of his movies but it kinda relates back to Hong Kong. When I lived in Hong Kong they had this huge first of all, he's just an amazing martial artist but in Hong Kong they have this statue of him on their little Hollywood walk of fame and I kind of started my fascination with Bruce lee around that time so, that is also just a favorite martial artist when it comes to like you said, the famous martial artist in movies that kind of stuff, but yeah. So that aspect, Bruce lee for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice, I was unaware of the statue and actually just pulled up as Master Sanchez was talking about it and I'll drop a photo in cause this is this is super cool.

Nia Sanchez:

Such a sick statue, I'm like oh my gosh, everyone, if you're in Hong Kong you need to go there and take a picture in the same pose, it's like a must do if you go to Hong Kong.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I should go to Hong Kong just for that. Why were you in Hong Kong? You said you're a military kid?

Nia Sanchez:

Yeah, I do come from military family. My dad was in the military by the time I was born but after high school I traveled a lot so I lived in Germany, actually a trained a little bit of taekwondo in Germany, I lived not lived, spend a significant amount of time in the middle east and the united Arab emirates, in Abu Dhabi and then I lived in Hong Kong and I worked in Hong Kong on a Disney contract but that's where I actually took may Thai because I was like dying to be away from my martial arts training so I took may Thai when I lived in Hong Kong.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Cool. Would you go back?

Nia Sanchez:

Oh my gosh my most favorite cities in the entire world. I've been to New York, I lived in New York a little bit and I've been back here a few times and New York is kinda creeping up to match Hong Kong for a while Hong Kong has been my number one. I love the history I love that it is a very you know, new city but then there's so much history at the same time. You could be seeing a brand-new skyscraper right next to an old temple that they preserve that been around for hundreds of years so I love Hong Kong and I love the diversity of it. It's a really cool city and if you've never been and you're looking for a cool city to travel to, Hong Kong is a cool place to be.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about books? Martial arts books. Can be little polarizing people tend to either love them and have a huge collection or where do you fall?

Nia Sanchez:

I am a huge reader but I have, I don't think I've ever read a martial art book besides like the student manual from my taekwondo experience growing up and I remember, we had to memorize what the meaning was behind our, the name of our forms like chun ji, do sun, donggun, wanyo. I trained [00:48:39.01] type of taekwondo I trained so not world taekwondo federation which now I work with them and love them, but the only type of taekwondo reading I've reading or martial art in general as far as I can remember is just learning more about Korean taekwondo history versus like reading a book.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm going to put you on the spot because you're used to it I wouldn't do this to very many other people. So, most listeners know that that I practice a number of different martial arts and that I currently train in ITF taekwondo as one of the styles, do you remember the definition of chung ji?

Nia Sanchez:

No, I don't do you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I remember the part of it heaven and earth.

Nia Sanchez:



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Tell me, I'm fascinated right now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would have to look it up and hopefully my instructor doesn't

Nia Sanchez:

Oh, I'm putting you on the spot. It's not like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The turnabout is fair though I should've known.

Nia Sanchez:

I used to have no like one [00:49:49.10]

Jeremy Lesniak:

You had it that's why I asked because it sounded like you could've kept going up.

Nia Sanchez:

I did for a while, I had it all memorized. Years after I didn't even have the current belt you know, say when I was a blackbelt I still have the purple belt, the blue belt but it's gone, can't bring it back right now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's okay. It's alright. I tend to cram.

Nia Sanchez:

[00:50:13.13] taekwondo most people don't train in that, taekwondo, that's cool that we have that in common. I really don't know a lot of people that have trained in that type of taekwondo.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you pick, if you're still passionate about tae kwon do and his is for you and all the listeners we went through a phase where it seemed like it popped up in every episode whether it was a taekwondo



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practitioner were talking to or not but Alex Gillis's book killing art which is an amazing really journalistic exploration of the founding of taekwondo and how ITF and WTF happened in and just all the all the stuff. It's something that I don't read a lot my brain wanders, but I have no problem staying engaged with this book. It's an incredible book.

Nia Sanchez:

Oh, I'm going to write that down and I'm going to make that happen because I do read a lot and I would totally be fascinated.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If people are listening if they want to get a hold of you or find you online, social media, websites you know any of that how would they do so?

Nia Sanchez:

Pretty simple across the board, [realNiaSanchez](https://www.instagram.com/realNiaSanchez) for just about all of my social media and then my website should be up in a few weeks and that's going to be NiaSanchez.com that is a place where you can definitely find out about an event that I am hosting. I do women networking event as well as women's self-defense classes and I am always doing them in different places across the country so who know, I could be coming to be near someone soon that's listening. So NiaSanchez.com hopefully will be up soon and if not just [realNiaSanchez](https://www.instagram.com/realNiaSanchez), Instagram Facebook twitter all of the above.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great there'll be a couple weeks between our recording today when this airs so hopefully, hopefully will be up and of course we'll drop links over to show notes and if the link is there you know it will be good and of course anything else that you start doing in the future we'll update the show notes if you send it over to us because this is you. This is a capture of your martial arts story.

Nia Sanchez:

I really enjoyed talking to you and I have to get that book's name from you one more time cause I'm going to read that book.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A killing art by Alex Gillis is the name of that book and I appreciate you coming on today this is been a lot of fun. Glad that we finally got to make this happen and listeners I hope you enjoyed it. And I'd like to ask you one more favor if you would to send this out with some parting words for everyone listening.



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Nia Sanchez:

This is a good one. To everyone listening, never give up on your dream you can absolutely make them happen if you just keep moving forward one step at a time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When I look on this episode the thing I'm most struck by is Master Sanchez's positive attitude. Just her willingness to except where she is word from her circumstances, to move on. Those of you listening might think we'll you know maybe this is as part of an act, part of her pageant persona. I can tell you from the numerous emails and the time we spent before and after talking about martial arts in a number of other things, doesn't seem like a persona. This is who she is, she's the real deal. It's clear that she's passionate not only about martial arts but about working with people in whatever that context is and I can't think of a better person to do that. Thank you, Master Sanchez, for coming on the show today. Remember you can find the show notes with links to everything we talked about today, a number of photos bunch of other stuff, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com if you will find us or Master Sanchez on social media you can find those links over there as well. If you want to check out the products we've got going on whistlekick.com or on amazon and as always you can email me directly. I'm still able to keep up with email, it's getting harder but this is because you guys are sending us such great feedback, such wonderful questions. Jeremy@whistlekick.com is the best way to get me. That's all I got for you today. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.