



Episode 397 – Conversations on Violence with Mr. Michael Rowe |  
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### Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there everybody, welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 397 and today, I have past guest, Mister Michael Rowe, back to talk about violence. My name is Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host on this show, I'm the founder of whistlekick and I love everything that we do here at whistlekick. I love the martial arts and that's what whistlekick was founded in: a love for the traditional martial arts and that's why we have two shows for you. every Monday and Thursday, we bring you a different show all for free. You can check out the show notes and a whole bunch more at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). If you head to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and use the code `PODCAST15`, you can get 15% off anything and everything that we sell over there. It's not only a store. We have links to all of our other projects like martial journal and a few other things that are brewing. There's just stuff going on there all the time so if you haven't checked it out lately, please visit [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). We've done a number of shows recently on violence, on the reality of violence and from Day One of this show, that subject has been something that has been very popular among our listeners. We get a lot of feedback when we do shows on the subject. We get a lot of commentary if we have a guest on who, maybe says something that is a bit unconventional or untraditional, and here, we may have a bit of that so we've brought back past guest, Mr. Michael Rowe who first appeared on Episode 82 and we were reconnected because he introduced me to Master Ratinder Ahuja from Episode 378. Well, as martial artists do, we started talking and realized that he had a lot to say about violence based on his experience, his background which, I'm not going to spoil, but it's



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a little bit different than what most of us are going to experience day to day and it's even different from what, many of these so-called violence and self-defense experts out there, are going to experience from day to day so we brought him back and here we have that conversation. Mister Rowe, welcome back to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Michael Rowe:**

It's great to be back there, Jeremy.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think you hold the distinction of having the longest gap between appearances so we're looking at it will be 300+ episodes in between when you first came on which was episode 82 and here we are, I don't know what episode number this is going to be but we are past episode 382 at the time of this recording so it's been a while.

**Michael Rowe:**

It's been really long, huh?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I mean it's been over 3 years.

**Michael Rowe:**

My wife will tell you that's a long time for me to keep my mouth shut.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm not promising that you kept your mouth shut. It just hasn't been open on this show.

**Michael Rowe:**

True. She would say that any opportunity for me to get out and talk to somebody about something that I'm interested in and I always find a way to do it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, good. I think that that's the way we share knowledge. That's the whole foundation of this show is to tell stories and to talk about experiences as martial artists and hopefully, to feel a connection with each other and, ideally, learn something or, if not learn something, make you question something, make you think.

**Michael Rowe:**



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Exactly. Help make connections out there in the universe.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, we started talking again after your introduction, for me to Master Ratinder Ahuja, someone that you've had the opportunity to train with and that you've maintained contact with. That was a great episode. For listeners, that was episode 378 so you can check that out and we'll link that on the show notes but that's not what we have you on here to talk about today. When you came on last time, we talked about you. We talked about your time and your story in the martial arts but what we're going to talk about today is pretty specific. It's something that, I don't know if you want to use the term, expertise but something that, if not, you have a fair amount of experience with and that is the reality of violence is expertise or experience, which word would you prefer there?

**Michael Rowe:**

Oh, you know, specialized experience, I guess, you can better say. I've never really felt great with that title, subject matter expert, expert or expertise. Okay, I guess, but I'm kind of specialized in this subject. I have a little bit better than average knowledge on the subject.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, and I know as we go along, we're going to talk about where that specialized knowledge comes from but let's start this off. Let's pick a direction and head there. When we talk about violence, we've had people in this show, Rory Miller, Tony Blauer, folks who are and have made a name for talking about violence but when we have those folks on, we don't go too deep into the difference between what we generally perceive as violence versus what those folks, what you yourself is talking about as the reality of violence so what are some of those differences? Where's the gap between reality and perception?

**Michael Rowe:**

Perception is greatly, I'd say, about what media does for us. The movies, television, some respects, the seminars that are various compatriots are out there teaching in terms of violence. Their martial arts has been dealing with the concept of violence and violence in the battlefield events, eventually violence in their community or sometimes, violence at home. It's always worked on that equation and what is different is, well, there's a whole lot of things that sometimes it delves into fear, it delves into things that we're just not wanting to talk about in polite company and people just want to shy away from and there's a lot of stuff, the guts, so to speak, within violence but, also, the biggest problem is because, most of us, I know a couple friends of mine like Rory Miller, I met once or twice, and Tony Blauer, I met once. They all talk about it. We're practicing in most martial systems, I guess you may say, theoretical violence because most of us don't really have a real grasp on what violence truly is society-wise. We all have little bits of experiences with it. maybe a small sliver of what violence really can be. I mean, when



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we talk about violence, we talk about like it's something simple like a cat or a dog and violence is more like one of those fantastic beasts that you would find in Hogwarts. Something totally amazing, something different, something that changes from moment to moment. Maybe becomes invisible, sometimes changes shape, it's something that's totally different.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's not something that we are ever going to wrap our heads around the first time, the second time, maybe even the tenth time that we experience it, is that what you're saying?

**Michael Rowe:**

Yeah, for many of us, well, some of us some experience of bullying. I grew up in the 1970s in a small, rural community and in terms of bullying, I was the first child in that community that was, at that time was called hyperkinetic disorder, now known as ADHD, so I was taking medications at school and once other kids start framing that out, they were merciless. There were all kinds of names: pill popper, hothead, druggie, all kinds of name-calling going along there and then, there's also the, that's bad enough when you're getting it from your peers but then when you were getting it from adults too who thought, well, this is a made-up disorder, all you need is a nice, swift spank to the bottom and we'll get you to focus right. Teachers that didn't understand. Teachers that weren't refusing to cooperate so I dealt with bullying violence from both mental, and sometimes physical, as a child. A lot of people experience that to some extent but then there's a whole slew of other stuff that comes that's changed over time. I mean, I didn't have to deal with cyberbullying. That's changed. That's something that's relatively new. I had help trying to get my children to deal with that but it's a whole new animal. It's morphed! It's still the same animal. It's still bullying, a form of violence but it's changed its attacks. Now using teeth in a different way, so to speak.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Maybe we should define violence because if we're going to have a conversation about this, I think, this is kind of the nerdy way. I know it's cliché when you start having a conversation you have to define the subject and teachers in college got really mad that I use dictionary definition when I work on it.

**Michael Rowe:**

Yeah, what is this?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh, we're not going back there. We're not going back to him! Can you define this for me? If you get that joke or you don't, it says something about how old you were in 1994? I want to say 94. If I said, what is



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your definition of violence? What does violence include? What does violence not include? What would that be?

**Michael Rowe:**

For me, violence includes anything that is causing harm, psychologically, mentally, physically and spiritually to another by intention. For me, that's what it comes down to. There is always going to be some form of, and that excludes some form of violence, in my opinion because there are people that are unintentionally obtuse and don't recognize that they're being rude or abusive verbally or even accidentally when they're bumping into people, they don't know they're doing it and yet, they might be hurting somebody. That's a form of violence still but I don't really consider it so much when I'm talking about violence.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do we need to throw something in about against the victim's will?

**Michael Rowe:**

Against the victim...yeah, definitely against the victim's will, at the target's will, whatever you want to call the victim, the target, the receivee, where they least expect, hey, stop that, excuse me and yet, it continues so, but, for me, violence takes many...yeah, I've experienced a lot. I've experienced a lot of different types of violence like I said from bullying when I was a child to...I've worked in law enforcement, I've dealt with investigations on the street, arresting individuals, I've been in Corrections, I've been deployed to a warzone so for me, violence takes...is a different animal with many respects but I think, there's two psychological type of definitions, I would guess, a friend of mine, Rory Miller brings up. Social violence and asocial violence and those are two main broad categories and the defining moment of violence, it's a lot like when I was in the military and we had to define terrorism. Terrorism has over a hundred and eighty definitions in the United States alone depending on what agency you're talking about so I don't know if that would help.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If we're not going to...if we can't get too deep into a formal definition, let's start talking about, if I was to ask you for the situation, the, let's say not common occurrence, but the scenario that is most different between the reality and the perception from someone who's not experienced it. What is that situation? Is that a mugging? Is that a sexual assault? Is it a drive-by shooting? Which scenario leads to the biggest gap in understanding?

**Michael Rowe:**



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I think all of them until you've experienced them have a major gap. Speaking-wise, let's just say, I mean, a lot of parents might get this analogy, they may be played some baseball, they may be played some football at one point and their kid wants to play and they need a coach. They never coached anyone, right? So they coach the little league whatever sport and they win three or four games and they're feeling pretty good about themselves but they wouldn't want to expect to get a call from, on my example, the Nebraska Cornhuskers aren't about to ask and help me come out and coach one of their football team basically because my kid won 3 out of 4 games in their Little League, Midget League, whatever it's called these days, program because they won three and yet, for the most part, many martial arts instructors I've encountered, they either had no real experience dealing with violence. They've never been mugged. They maybe usually bullied a little bit verbally and maybe have a few fights as a kid or maybe young teenager but they've never been held hostage, they've never been shot at, no one tried to stab them, it's all theoretical. It's something that they never had really felt that holy moly, I might be seriously hurt if what I do next does not protect me and everything is theoretical and then, yet, we don't have people that, in most cases, a lot of martial arts instructors, they're all great instructors, don't get me wrong. The instructors I'm talking about, it's not that they don't have great skill. They have wonderful skills. They have wonderful years of tradition behind them and those movements that they bring in practice, at one point, were used to keep somebody alive but, for the most part, when you got peak time of peace like until recently, I mean, until 2001, United States had a very long run of not being really been actively involved in a lot of problems worldwide. There was a little flare ups here and there in some of our military people have to deal with some forms of violence on the seas and on land but now, they have a greater experience and understanding and I think that's the same with a lot of people. Law enforcement has one type of experience but their job is to run towards the problem. Self-defense, we're teaching you to survive, get away from the problem, move on and get out but there's a lot of people teaching that that really have no understanding of what it is. I know many men that have taught women self-defense but literally have no idea what a woman's feeling when a rape is occurring.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I have to admit. I have always found that a bit weird.

**Michael Rowe:**

But there weren't a lot of women out there teaching the self-defense at that time when that was happening so the men were doing the best they could with what limited understanding they have. To me, it's like the high school jock teaching about anti-bullying but they were the ones that were bullying. When they were in high school it's like now that they have kids, they understand that that kind of behavior isn't acceptable, but when they were children, the only reason they understand bullying was because they were the bully. What would have stopped me if I did this then is what they theoretically teach you and it's a lot of theory and until it becomes practical, it's kind of unemotional and that's the



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biggest gap is the emotional gap that changes from the theoretical practice in the lab or dojos, dojang, whatever you want to, kwoons if in Chinese. We're practicing. We're working with theoretical violence and then, you get on the street and someone drives by and starts shooting. Maybe not at you but at this guy just 12 feet away who's in their territory that wasn't supposed to be in there or you happen to be involved in a neighborhood you didn't know and you get someone defending their territory, so to speak, a lot of cross-training, what Rory Miller calls the monkey dance. You know what I mean? But you don't know you're in it until it starts happening. Until that happens, the emotional aspect isn't there. We watch it, we see it on the news, sometimes we hear of something really bad happening and we feel like of sympathy and maybe a little bit of empathy of what's going on but once you been in it until it happens, you really don't know about that visceral feeling. That blood draining from everything right towards the knees to be done and you got that whole adrenaline, endorphin cocktail mix running through your body so I think that would be the biggest area that is left out in our training environments, for most of us is dealing with that emotional component and the reason a lot of us gets missed is the instructor hasn't experienced it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For some people, why that's important might be obvious but let's make sure that we address that before we move on in case it's not, for someone. What happens under that emotional influence, that emotional component, that changes the reality of the situation?

**Michael Rowe:**

Reality...we all have that. We've all heard of that fight or flight response and that's Darwin evolution, whatever theory you want to go with. That's the body's natural reaction of hey, we're going to have to run for our lives or fight for our lives and for some people, that triggers into their...there's actually a third one comes in and it's also freeze because some people will get that total deer in the headlight look because they can't believe this is happening to them. They heard about it in the news but I can't believe that it's happening to me. That whole chemical of endorphins and adrenaline that can come to the body does a lot of things that if you've never experienced it, you're not going to be ready for. Things like tunnel vision, you're not going to have a big, wide angle when you're in the dojang practicing your self-defense techniques. You get an idea of what's coming. You know you have nice, soft mats to fall onto, you got an instructor keeping you safe. He's not going to let anything really bad happen to you so you don't really get that tunnel vision and you can see and even when you do multiple-type opponents even in the classroom setting, you know you're somewhat safe. You know the instructor is not going to let bad things happen. Tunnel vision when it really starts happening, you got only what's right in front of you. it's just that alone is very disconcerting because you have to be constantly looking around to see if he got friends. There's someone coming to do things because he's losing because you successfully defended yourself, you got him on the ground, you're about to escape and you turn right into, oh, his



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buddy but you didn't see him. You also didn't hear him because your hearing kind of goes. It's another feeling that goes bye-bye. A lot of our small, untrained fine motor skills which we don't use under stress deteriorates so finding a pressure point gets a lot more difficult when everything has hit the ventilation system, so to speak, and if it keeps going, eventually, all you have are those big, gross motor actions like throwing a kick or throwing a punch. Complex skills gets harder and harder to combine. Complex skills are those where we have to what some form of time to put them together so that emotional thing that goes in place in training is very rarely ever there. I teach knife disarm and knife self-defense techniques in my classes and when they're all first taught, we teach with a little bit of a nice, safe training object: a rubber knife. If you get poked with it, it bends. Nothing bad happens but after you get the general movement then we move to an aluminum trainer so it looks a little bit more like a real knife but if you get poked with it, it hurts a little bit so you don't like that and then, at some point, I actually utilize what is called a shock knife. It's kind of like when you're hit with a stun gun. Not a taser, mind you, but you get a little electrical shock if you touch the edge of the blade and when you're really worrying about, oh, that's going to hurt; well, a cut's going to hurt too. It's going to cause severe bodily injury or honestly, death. The actual performance of the same technique which when we're using the rubber knife looks so beautiful suddenly is very ugly. It might work but it's very ugly now. It's not as pretty because their vision goes. Some of that adrenaline kicks in so that's one component where we work in my classes. At least, we work with that. The emotional adrenaline dump is something that always goes in there and there's a lot of aspect to it just get crazy. Our whole emotional system about what's going to happen if I succeed here and then, somewhere in the back of your head might be that little voice going, okay, can I just rip his arm off? A bit Superman-ish but oh, I take the knife and I stab him with it! Oh, now, you've gone too far. Now, you got to worry about courts and that's a whole other emotional things as people start really worrying about. It's funny, while in the middle of fighting for your life, a thought may go that like okay, if I take this too far, I can go to jail and that starts interfering with the whole thought process and which thought process. All those emotions start swirling around like hurricane.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And so, on one side of the spectrum there, you have the fear of going too far but then, on the other side, I think a lot of us as martial artists are dismissive of the idea that given a situation, we will have no problem pulling the figurative trigger. We will have no problem harming someone if need be when, in my very limited experience, I see the exact opposite. That a lot of people are so apprehensive to cause harm to another that situations that could have been dealt with early on have ultimately escalate beyond where they should have.

**Michael Rowe:**

Exactly. A lot of people have a little false sense of security because of their training environment. In reality and I cannot remember where I've heard this but I really believe it entirely, when we're talking





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about dealing with violence and fighting back and protecting ourselves and doing the utmost extreme, we're talking about making cripples and corpses and widows and orphans and if you're not doing that in every class, obviously, most of us aren't. actually, probably all of us are. If you're not doing that in every class of creating cripples or corpses, you're obviously putting in safety measures, controls so we have safe training environments. I always tell my students, we got to stop at certain points. We have to had some form of control, otherwise we'll have no one to practice on. That old apocryphal story of how samurai swords were tested on prisoners, whether it was true, whether they were alive or dead or what happened there, I don't know. I wasn't there then. I've heard this story and I'm sure many of your listeners have heard of it if they worked with samurai swords. At one point, they would mark how many corpses did this sword go through before it stopped but that's...what does this do? What are we capable of doing? There are a lot of people out there when training is the biggest thing that comes down to and the more realistic our training, the less we're going to have to adapt the training when it comes to reality but we can't be totally realistic. Even, I hear people talking with these UFC backgrounds of how it's the greatest sport that simulates real self-defense and real violence and yet, you know, there's still a lot of safety rules in there. They still have a referee. There's no...it's not Sparta, it's not the Roman Coliseum yet where anything goes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are more rules than there used to be.

**Michael Rowe:**

There're a lot more rules than it used to be and there are a lot in the arena, a lot of things that people have this false impression. I think that maybe a UFC person would have a much better job dealing with, I'll say, a much more good time dealing with the emotional and adrenaline cocktail that they're going because they feel... those punches aren't being pulled and if they get into an arm lock, it could break if they don't give up, if they don't tap out. There's always a possibility of some serious bodily injury happening in that octagon so they're used to dealing with that emotional cocktail a little bit better but if they get in a real situation where a knife or a gun is pulled, they're going to feel that cocktail again. A lot more straightforward because, depending on how much training they've actually done with it. I mean, how many people train with a loaded weapon on their dojang floor? None that I know of.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hopefully, none.

**Michael Rowe:**

And rightfully so! I would never encourage that. I mean to say, okay, here's a weapon pointed at you, is that a loaded gun? I don't know. We'll find out. Disarm me. That's not the way we do it. We love to have



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training situations to be as realistic as possible but there are training situations get too realistic like, I know, I read in the news not too long ago about an active shooter-trained situation happened on a campus and no one except a very handful of people knew it was a drill and there was some real big blowback on that because it was too real so, I mean, we deal with that whole emotional aspect in every aspect of our training and it's really, really hard and as you would say, it's very hard to get past the surface to the exact feelings because they are very visceral. When somebody is going to seriously harm you and you don't know whether they're going to...if you've been knocked unconscious, you have no idea what they're going to do to you. You don't know if they're just going to take your wallet and go, shoot you in the head, stab you, leave you alone, you have no idea and so, when that really hits the fan, so to speak, your brain process it starts to shut down because it hasn't been prepared for it. It's not ready for it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How do we work on preparing for that? How do we bring some of that emotional stuff into our training? Obviously it's never going to be completely real? How do we get it closer?

**Michael Rowe:**

One: it requires open-mindedness on the instructor's part. First thing they have to realize: hey, I don't have a clue what I'm talking about here, practically. This is theoretical for me. We could talk about time travel in the movies and it's all nice theory but what would really happen? What would a real flashpoint experience happen? We don't have a clue! No one's done it yet that we know of. We don't know so getting close as we can to reality without hurting somebody, I think the biggest thing is coming up with different ways. Different methodologies and rotating through them so that you never get really used to one limitation. Moving really, really, really slow, I like that one the best. We utilize...yeah, everything is slow motion going nice and soft but kind of Tai Chi-ish in some respects but when I'm sparring with somebody at that speed, even the eyes can become a target because I can touch the eye as I'm going slow enough that the person can move back with. They realize my eye was entirely open. Part of the course is getting everyone to move at a slow speed. It's so easy to defend against the punches coming at you slow and you suddenly go to normal speed so it's really tough but then, at the same time, if I change that up, then, of course, I also go in a more of a boxing match where people are actually hitting really. They're hitting at full speed and almost full power but, of course, with protective gear on to some extent. People do have to work the next day, they don't want broken noses and broken ribs so we work that whole range. Some people that deal with violence with work with things with less and less restrictions on. Law enforcement and military personnel, they can use ammunitions out. Ammunitions great. It's being fired at a weapon that you're already used to and you feel it. It will leave a paint mark. Won't kill you but you realize you've been hit and then, of course, there's learning to never...just because you got hit with something good, you can acknowledge it but you don't get up after that point



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because our bodies would get used to doing things a certain way and they become training scars. We get used to really used to doing them so we have to limit the training scars as much as possible which means never giving up for us. I've been experienced in law enforcement and military. People can keep fighting. They'd been shot 10, 11, 12 times, even once in the head and they're still fighting. They're still going on. The bad guys can do it, why can't I? yet, everyone I know, they go play paintball, they get hit once with the paintball, they go, oh, I'm done now then they walk to the outplace. It's difficult when you got the rules and you're playing with your group and then, it develops and mentality. You got to keep changing that up a bit. Everything is different. We have to play by different rule sets so your mind never really grasps just one rule sets so much. It's more adaptable, I think. It's my solution. There are probably others who would think my solution is probably rudimentary at best, too. I have my students. We won because competition is fun and I have a lot of children in my school. Competition can be fun and it's hard to talk about violence to them but I prepare them. Hey, we'll play by Taekwondo rules and then, we'll play by Judo rules and then, sometimes we'll play a little bit with Jiu Jitsu rules getting a whole realm of hey, what's allowed? And much like a society, I mean, what I'm going to do to my uncle who was drunk and just being...goofing around is going to be totally different to what I'll do to somebody who's trying to hurt my kid so, the rules change in society as well based on the situation so it's one way to keep the mind flexible.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Got it. now, one of the things that we haven't talked about today is the unexpected. Whenever we talk about a drill in a class, whenever we talk about a seminar, anything like that, we're talking about a situation that you know is happening which always makes it easier. How much easier is debatable but it's always easier to address but my understanding of violence, and certainly my understanding is nowhere near yours, is that violence is, most often, unexpected. Is that a fair statement?

**Michael Rowe:**

I think it's a very fair statement. When we're in class, we don't just only have, for most classes I've done, you don't have a melee or rappel or something on the front line reach around, grabbing someone from the second line by the collar, slap them upside the face. It just doesn't happen. What happens is okay, we're going to practice [00:35:06] now and you need the partners. Okay, you might mix them up. Okay, I want some small people with the big guys and mix it around. Men with women sometimes but you, in the mind, you get somewhat prepared for the event that's about to happen. On the street and while I work in the correctional setting, currently in the jail, even, violence just...one moment you're talking to them and this, BAM! There's someone there grabbing you, they're hitting you, they're kicking you. I remember as a kid and then as a young adult, this whole concept is Stranger Danger. We prepare a generation of kids to always on the lookout for that stranger so I ask my students, okay, some guy you don't know rolls up and says, hey, I'm looking for my dog, can you help me? No, I'm not going to help



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him look for his dog. No. What if Pastor Bob came up and said, hey, I'm trying to find my dog and you know Pastor Bob has a dog, would you get in the car with him? Oh, yeah! But why? Because it's Pastor Bob. I'm not poking fun at the, or making light of the situation that happens, these are in the news. Our group of trusted people, scout leaders whether boys scouts or girls scouts, teachers, family members, we find and the statistics show that most of the real violent things that happen to us have a real chance of being someone we know versus the ones we don't know and when it happens, I mean, it's, one, what they want is to be with someone that we trusted to suddenly doing something that we would think is unthinkable. Rape, assault, murder. These are people that we trusted and then somewhat put on a different hat and miraculously changed on us and our brains are going to reel with that. they're changing the role and that emotional, that's, what to most people is mental overload. Ian Fleming wrote a character for James Bond. James bond's character always said I'll treat anyone professionally with kindness but I have a plan that will kill everyone in the room.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's unpack that for a second because that statement is very easy to dismiss as being unnecessary. Here's why I want to unpack that and I want you to unpack that from your perspective, from your knowledge. I live in Vermont. I am permitted to carry a firearm in Vermont. I sometimes do and I have a lot of people who are not fans of firearms and who look at that and say, why? What's going to happen? You're going to be fine. Do you really think that there's going to be a problem? And my response is always two parts. First, if I thought there was going to be a problem, I wouldn't be going there but secondly, and this is one of my core philosophies, I can be underprepared or I can be overprepared. I will never be perfectly prepared because I don't know what's going to happen. I don't have the gift of foresight but I will always choose to be overprepared and part of that, is often, having a firearm ready.

**Michael Rowe:**

Yeah, I agree with you on that. In the state of Nebraska, we are allowed to have concealed handguns. We're actually allowed to openly carry as well with a few minor exceptions in some locations, you know, federal buildings, that whole rigmarole which we all know. They take away certain aspects but the second amendment, and I hate to go off that, it's not just about the firearms. The right to bear arms. The right to protect yourself is what it says. The fundamental right, for me, to defend my right and those around me is what we really don't want to take away from us and in order to properly defend myself against the possibilities, do I think that when I go to church in my Lutheran role community that someone's going to come in and start shooting or killing people? I don't think it's going to happen. Has it happened elsewhere? Yes. Because it has happened somewhere else in the planet, it's always a possibility. So, what does that mean for me? I go to worship. I pray. I'm doing all my things, I'm giving the sign of peace to all my wonderful fellows in church but I also know where every one of the exits are and I know exactly what is around me, community-wise. Who's now a new visitor? Well, for two



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reasons. One, I don't know anything about them so I'm going to introduce myself to them later and two, yes, I do keep a little eye on them because I don't know anything about them. When we don't know anything about anyone, we should always be a little bit wary. Who do we worry about more? The total stranger or those we have known to hurt us? We worry about those we know want to hurt us. Count Dracula, would you invite him into your house? No! But if you didn't know it was Count Dracula, could you possibly invite him because he's a stranger and he just moved into the neighborhood? Yes. Oh, you're our new neighbor? Come on inside where we show you the house and now, you just let in count Dracula. That's the thing that happens. We still have to be friendly and professional and courteous to others but that doesn't mean that if vampires really existed, hey, yeah, it might actually help to have a clove of garlic around the house just to see if they move away from the kitchen area. I have these things prepared. I'm carrying a firearm someplace and never having to use it. I pray that it's all I ever have to do when I carry my firearm. I leave the house is that I will unload it and go, okay, I have to give it a little cleaning and I'll put it away and I never have to fire it anywhere except the range but I have mental prepared lines in my head. What lines I'm willing to cross, I already played the what if scenarios to extreme to say when would I use that firearm? What point? When would it get drawn? I've heard people say I'll draw if I thought I was in danger. Well, if you know you're in danger, why would you draw it? But if you know you're in danger and your life is threatened, why wouldn't you if you had the time and the capability to do so? It's like the unarmed tactics that we use. When would you use them? We have to have those lines drawn in our heads otherwise it's all theoretical application and the whole emotions that will come to play when it does happen, quoting another great movie, chance favors the prepared mind. I know Steven Seagal is not in the greatest range in some people's minds but that quote from one of his movies is absolutely true. If you have a prepared mind, chance is going to favor you.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I'm with you. Go ahead, finish.

**Michael Rowe:**

No, I just had one of those thoughts. I told you I have hyperkinetic disorder, ADHD.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's say we got somebody listening and they're starting to wrap their brain around this and, of course, you're never fully going to understand violence until you experience violence so my hope for everyone listening is you never fully understand violence, at least not in a practical, experiential way, that it remains theoretical for you as, fortunately, it has for me but if someone's listening and we've convinced them that their understanding of violence is inadequate, that they should be doing more but they're not an instructor, they're not a school owner, they don't have any say over their curriculum, they just go to class. What can they do?



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**Michael Rowe:**

One of the things I encourage, I work with a lot of correctional officers and my school, of course, is very far from where I work, same as where I live and that was kind of by design but a lot of people don't want to make that trip to work with me and I understand that but, every now and then, as I encourage them to get together with a small group of people that have been awakened to that possibility as well and start looking at what's around them. What would change? What things...the what ifs. That is the greatest, I think, tool the ability to ask yourself, what if? The whole white belt mentality towards violence like when their instructor seemed to get totally irritated by it, when they're white belt and they're asking what if they did this? What if they did that? what if they do this and so it spirals out of control. Well, it's martial arts instructors have experience with this and they nip it in the bud rather quickly but that's because they're having a class and they want to continue down a specific viewpoint, a specific path that they had planned and instruction would become chaotic if they didn't do that and having a small group and small sessions, kind of like what we're doing right now, we're just kind of meandering down a path and talking about it and just talking about well, what could I do if this happens? What would I do if I saw this? What would I do...that's a big one. What would you do if you saw this happen? There have been TV shows all around, there's been exposés when people see certain things. You talk to them about it offline, so to speak, and they don't know anything about what might be happening. They're all about the bullying's wrong or men should never pick up a woman and throw her on the table and start hitting her in a public event and they would do something about that. they would intervene and yet, when something gets set up in a realistic scenario and they witness something like that, they don't do anything. Now, there's always a couple that will do something but overall, you'll see what is called apathetic attitude. They don't want to get involved. They're fearful that violence may get turned onto them and if you don't play that what if, what would you do? Where would that line be? I have experienced something similar once. The very first time I was off in college and I moved away from home, I witnessed something that was, to me, very shocking. Both, one, I never would've thought a man would treat a woman in a disrespectful way in a public place, throw her on the table and hit her. I set that example just a few moments ago. I saw this and, initially, my brain was like shocked. I couldn't believe this was happening and then I became more shocked was no one else was doing anything and then, I realized something. I was that somebody else and I stepped up now and I intervened and dealt with the situation. Since that day, man, I'm going to admit, she got hit once or twice more that probably could have been stopped had I said, hey, that's wrong, I'm stepping in and done something but I was dealing with the shock in my head. That might be on my credit, that was only when I was only 17 years old. I've been punched at in my life. I know what to do about violence being directed at me. This was my first, oh my goodness, violence is happening to someone next to me, what do I do? If you realize that, getting together with anyone else and talking through it, whether it's another student that has come to make the same realization, because like I said, at some point at that class, you go, well, I wonder if this would really work? Eventually, you come to the same conclusions that most people come up doing this



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is it's really hard to test it without hurting another person and so, eventually, even the small groups that went to violence test stuff, pressure test, I guess it was called nowadays, realize that you got to put safety precautions in the place otherwise you run the same risk what the instructor realize they don't want to water everything down to become this accused to watering their teaching down but then again, they don't want to create cripples and corpses every class either so, things have changed when I started martial arts in the '70s. I got, when my stance was wrong, I got hit in the legs with a shinai.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I remember that.

**Michael Rowe:**

And what's worse is I was really mad and I kept not getting the lesson and he hit me in the leg with a bokken and I figured it out rather quickly. Negative reinforcement can work really well but you don't see that today because parents will sue the heck out of you and own your school. It's a long line. Krav Maga, with Krav, I started some Krav with some Israelis in Israel and they do some amazing stuff and it's a great system but it's not really, my opinion, anything new under the sun, technique-wise. It was how they trained and then, I got to the United States, with the exception of some of the military groups and some of the law enforcement groups that did the Krav Maga, it's the same as every other martial arts school you go to. They don't want to create corpses and cripples so they pull back and they don't want to be sued so I feel everyone is really hard as an individual. You go, I got this idea and now, where do I go? You got to get out there and wonderful thing that we have today is social networking makes it much easier to find some of these people to get along together and talk to and do some laboratory experimenting, so to speak. Protective gear has gone much better, much lighter, much more compact so you're more maneuverable. I remember sparring when I first started, there was no protective gear. We had this, what, old foam sock gear that you wore over your fist or your feet. Hurt like hell and really kept me from hurting my knuckles and my instep when I kick with it. That's what it basically did. Didn't really protect the guy I was hitting. Chest protectors made you look like a Michelin man. Nowadays, we're getting much more compact. You can make all your natural movements. You can prevent bruising and damaging so a lot of good stuff out there. Of course, that stuff cost money and an average person doesn't want to pay \$1500 for a suit of protective gear which will allow them to beat on each other a little bit more realistically so it's the same old equation. Time, money versus our desire to protect ourselves.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, I think this is a pretty good synopsis. I think we've got a lot...the goal here is, and I think we accomplished this, was to get people a little unsettled with their comfort, with their own understanding with what violence really is. Are there any resources, well first, let's do this: how do people get ahold of you? where are you online, your school, et cetera if people want to reach out.



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**Michael Rowe:**

Well, my school, I can be reached via my website is [alphaomegamartialarts.org](http://alphaomegamartialarts.org). It's all one word, all lowercase, [alphaomegamartialarts.org](http://alphaomegamartialarts.org) and my email's on the website as well as some of our resources that we have affiliations there. I work with small groups, I do seminars, I go around the country. I've done a few seminars in other countries as well. Ability to reach out for me is always out there available. In terms of other resources out there? I like pointing to people that are on the same path doing a great job. Tony Blauer's group and now, I'm having a massive brain fart. Thank you! I couldn't remember what his name was. Oh, I'm sure he'll let me remember when he hears this interview. Can't remember SPEAR huh, Rowe? Simple acronym! Tony Blauer's SPEAR program. Rory Miller's a great group is kind of mostly a small group of online studying. You just got to go out and do a search term on Google. I don't know where his main website is but you just do 'Rory Miller facing violence,' you'll find his homepage out there. He's got some good stuff out there. There are a lot of good resources out there in terms of dealing with violence and actual practice and there are instructors across the United States that give this and then there are others, they know they need a better understanding and I encourage those instructors out there, hey, the more that you can get experience in it, the better service you can provide your students to prepare them.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And of course, we're going to link to your past episode, Master Rowe, Ahuja's episode and of course, the episode that we've done with Mister Tony Blauer and Rory Miller and we'll drop those in the show notes.

**Michael Rowe:**

Master John Pellegrini as well, I hope.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh yeah! He's absolutely been on the show.

**Michael Rowe:**

Awesome, really, in combat Hapkido and let me talk a little about it. I think our program is a lot like others. We deal with the potentialities of violence and some of our options and Grand Master Pellegrini has always been the one to focus a lot on the what is, not only, workable but what's going to keep you defensible in court as well. Almost all those organizations do that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Perfect. So, the place for those show notes, if anybody's new to the show, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) is the place to go. I appreciate you coming back, sharing all of this and I'm sure you and I are going to talk again but thanks for coming on!

**Michael Rowe:**

Thanks for having me, Jeremy, maybe I won't wait three years next time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of my favorite things about this show is all the wonderful, different people that I get exposed to. The people I get to have conversations with to talk about something like violence, to ask the questions of Mr. Rowe that, hopefully, you would want me to ask. I always try to put myself in the position of the listeners and as we went through today's episode, I really felt like we got in some good stuff. I felt like we unpacked a lot of things about the psychology of violence. Things that aren't often discussed in the wider world of self-defense. I feel strongly that that psychological aspect is the most important aspect and I hope that all of you got as much out of the show as much as I did. So, mister Rowe, thanks for coming back on and I hope we talk again soon. We talked about a number of past episodes today and we have links to all of them over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). Remember, this is episode 397, and if you have something to say, I'd love for you to leave a comment there. Just scroll down below, there's a place for you to leave a comment. Tell us what you think. Do you agree with what mister Rowe and I were talking about? Do you disagree? Tell us why or if you want to leave a private comment, maybe just something for me, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) is my email address and, of course, I'd love for you to follow us on social media. We're @whistlekick on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and everywhere else you might imagine. Don't forget PODCAST15 gets you 15% off everything in the store at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). We've got a ton of projects going on. If you haven't signed up for the newsletter, you should. You can do that in any of our sites and we'll email you, let you know what's going on and we even sneak in a code there too. We want to help you, help us. What's that line from Jerry Maguire? Help me help you. That's something like that. That's all I've got for you today. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!