



Episode 399 – Martial Artists Can Be Bullies Too | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 399. Yeah were almost at 400 and today I'm going to talk about bullying and the unfortunate fact fact that martial artists can be bullies too. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder whistlekick and I love the martial arts. I spent a tremendous amount of my day on martial arts related stuff, whether it's training or recording these episodes or writing content there's a lot that goes into it. We bring you two shows a week all for free and you can find out more at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com but if you head on over to whistlekick.com, you will see all the things that we've got going on from our products, of course this podcast, the morning video that I do everyday live on YouTube, and a ton more. So check out whistlekick.com while you're there, if you make a purchase, PODCAST15 get you 15% off everything that we make.

Now about a week ago a situation popped up that was a bit upsetting. But I was going to let it go and then I read something from someone past guest friend of the show Kyoshi Dave Kovar posted something on Facebook and were going to link it in the show notes hopefully it's still there when you listen to this. And it really struck me and it made me feel like I had to say something. See I've been looking for what to talk about with episode 399, it didn't have to be significant but I kind of wanted to be. See as the show grows I'm getting more confident talking about my personal opinions and how I think martial arts should go and I get more confident because I get good feedback from all of you whether you agree or you



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don't agree. I'm fine with people disagreeing with me, but what I like is intelligent conversation. If we disagree let's talk about why we disagree, let's try to find some compromise, some understanding of each other and if we can't let's at least shake hands and be respectful and say I don't agree, because that's okay. Now without taking anything away from Kyoshi Kovar who honestly wrote something very, very articulate the piece was about martial artist and they're occasional failing when they post online. See, online bullying doesn't just happen outside martial arts, it happens within martial arts, it happens between martial artists and unfortunately, the worst of it, at least from what I've seen happens between martial artists about martial arts subjects. It's something I've spoken of a bit on the show the idea that really we need to be more aware of how we conduct ourselves as martial artist because the world sees it and if we truly want people to see us as examples, as role models that people want to aspire towards, if we want people to enroll their children in our classes, we need to be better about ourselves and policing each other for the poor behavior that some people, some martial artists exhibit. Yes martial artists are people too, we are all fallible just because you earn a black belt doesn't mean you suddenly are free of temptation and all the horrible things that sometimes people can do but we need to try. We need to hold ourselves and each other to a higher standard that's really, that was my take away from Kyoshi's post on Facebook.

Now a week ago, I posted a written interview with a somewhat controversial figure in the martial arts. And in fact I'm not even going to name his name, not because I want to be disrespectful to him, but because I want to let this episode stand as much on the generalities of the subject as possible. We are going to link in the show notes to the interview that I did. It is someone that some of you will know of, it's someone that others will have no idea who they are, but it doesn't matter because what matters is what happened after I posted the interview. As of right now that interview is one of the top posts that we've ever had over at martial Journal and for those of you don't know martialjournal.com it's a project that whistlekick funds but we don't have our name all over it because honestly I just think it needs to exist so it exists. And it's either the top or the second most commented piece over at Martial Journal. Tremendous number of comments most of them came in the first 48 hours and a huge number of them were from people who were attacking me personally. In fact, I can honestly say I have never received so much hate and so much disrespect as I did from this interview. Every bit of it coming from people who simply have issues, various issues, I'm not going to speak to them, validate or invalidate any of them because it doesn't matter. The guest the person that I interviewed, some of these people knew me. In fact I received some rather concerned emails from past guests who had been on the show, people who knew both of us. But at the end of the day I conducted an interview. Now, for right or for wrong whether you like the person or you don't like the person, whether you like the interview I did or you don't, there is a way to conduct yourself respectfully in a way that it's not. Let's be honest many of us do things that many others would disagree with in fact I would venture to say every single person out there could find something wrong something disagreeable with what every other person on earth does. Does that mean we wholesale write them off? No we look past that. Yes there are some things that are unforgivable, if you were to severely intentionally harm someone that's something I'm not gonna be



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okay with we're probably never going to be friends after that. But I even say probably because who knows, who knows what the circumstances are and I don't want to make broad sweeping rules to govern my life when I can simply decide in the moment. Abraham Lincoln said I never had a policy, I simply did what was right at the time. I might be paraphrasing, might be messing up a few of those words but that's the gist. So when we take a look at the way people conducted themselves, here we have a written interview that a number of people felt didn't need to exist and their response rather than ignoring it, or rather than having a respectful conversation and I will say a number of the comments, the minority but more than a couple were respectful and were able to articulate their point without calling me names. In fact, I learned of a new Facebook group simply because I was tagged in it in a horrific manner. And when I joined the group so I could defend myself for conducting and posting this interview, I was met with some of the most horrendous filthy disrespectful comments I have ever witnessed online. If you've ever seen the cesspool that YouTube comments often devolve into, it was like that. I've never been the subject of anything like that before in my life and I found it a bit humorous, sad, and a little hurtful because to me I can understand how someone can be so rude. I've never treated anyone like that in my life and in fact, I couldn't bring myself to do it in response. I simply left the conversation because that's what a mature adult does.

So now that we talked about the back story the context how we deal with this? How do we address bullying by the people who say they are helping stop bullying. Now I don't mean to speak to anyone specifically but broadly, we as martial artist as martial arts instructors, the martial arts industry have said, we are qualified and skilled at addressing the subject of bullying and yet we as the martial arts industry have shown that we are also very good at bullying each other. Now, I suppose we can make some rationale for saying that because were really good at doing it, we are also good at talk about how to stop it. You can make a case for that if you are a former burglar or a former computer hacker turned security expert, but I don't think that works here. The fact of the matter is that a lot of this seems to start from disagreements in the standards meant by certain terms. People will disagree over what it means to be a black belt or a master or a Grand Master or what is and is not Shotokan karate or jeet kune do, and that because of those disagreements, people feel hey you're wrong and now I have to attempt to influence your opinion and the opinion of everyone around you because otherwise, I don't feel that the standard I'm holding myself to is worthwhile. Well, that is just silly. Isn't it? If you believe strongly enough in what you have done in the martial arts, it shouldn't matter what other people are doing. Yes, there are things that matter because they negatively impact the martial arts overall. But you know what, if someone claims to be a Grand Master of a particular style of karate and their technique is terrible, people are going to figure that out. You don't have to turn into a jerk and tell the world. There's an old saying be careful of arguing with a fool because people from a distance can't tell who is who. That's exactly what happens, it's as silly as you fighting with someone to stop them from being violent or a cop speeding up to pull you over because you were speeding. I'm attempting to inject a little bit of humor into what is feeling like a very serious conversation but I hope you get the point.



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So what we do? Well, we have to stand up collectively as martial artist and call out bad behavior it doesn't matter whether were talking about online billing or in person bullying, it doesn't matter what their rank is, it doesn't matter what style they practice, it doesn't matter if it's non-bullying but equally disgusting behavior. We can't ignore it, not because were martial arts but because were people, because were human beings who want to see the world move forward. I don't care if you're a white belt and you're seeing disgusting behavior from 10th degree black belt. If you are unsure of the way to handle it it's probably not that disgusting, because I'll tell you what if you are a white belt and you saw a 10 degree black belt in the grocery store kicking a child, that has nothing to do with rank, it has nothing to do with style, it's disgusting, it is terrible, illegal, immoral behavior and you do what you have to do to stop it. There are always resources and it is all of our responsibility. If you care about the martial arts, it's on you. I've gotten into plenty of fights online defending a number of the principles that I feel strongly about. The idea that no one has the right to bully others, I've taken heat for that now and if you refer back to a number of these Thursday episodes, I've said some fairly controversial, unpopular at times, things and I've taken heat for that from strangers, from friends, from people I love dearly. I don't pretend to have all of the answers, I'm simply trying to express my opinion in the hope that we can have discussion and we can advance the ideas and people will be willing to take action. And let me say it another way strongly so there is no question. If the only way you can express your opinion is through tearing someone else down, then you are either ignorant or you have a rather poor stance in the discussion. I am always able to find a way to express my opinion without resorting to calling someone names. Man I'm trying to find another way to say that that doesn't sound like I'm being childish and I'm not coming up with one, may be in part because I'm upset.

I really want to hear what you think. I really want to hear from people that have found ways to address this. I want to hear from you if you're working hard to make the martial arts better. As we crossed the threshold in episode 400, I want to hear more good stuff because unfortunately as the show grows, I'm catching more negative. Doesn't mean I'm going to stop, it doesn't mean the mission is changed, but it means I need a little more support and the best way to support, you probably thought that was gonna turn into a commercial and I was gonna ask you to buy stuff, No. The best way you can support is to offer your positive feedback and I don't just mean hey Jeremy this was a great episode, I love that but what I mean is here's what I'm doing, here's how I'm working to change the world, the martial arts world, my local backyard, I don't care what the scale is. I want to know what you're doing in a positive way to address this subject. Best way to do it please leave comments on the show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com it's episode 399, let's collect them there, of course if you want to share privately Jeremy@whistlekick.com. Social media we are @whistlekick Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram lots a good, positive stuff going on there. And yes if you want to make a purchase whistlekick.com or Amazon put the code `PODCADST15` only gets 50% off at whistlekick.com actually I just added a new item today, I had new stuff like all the time because it's fun so check it out. That's all I've got for you today. I need to go sit in the corner and contemplate. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.



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