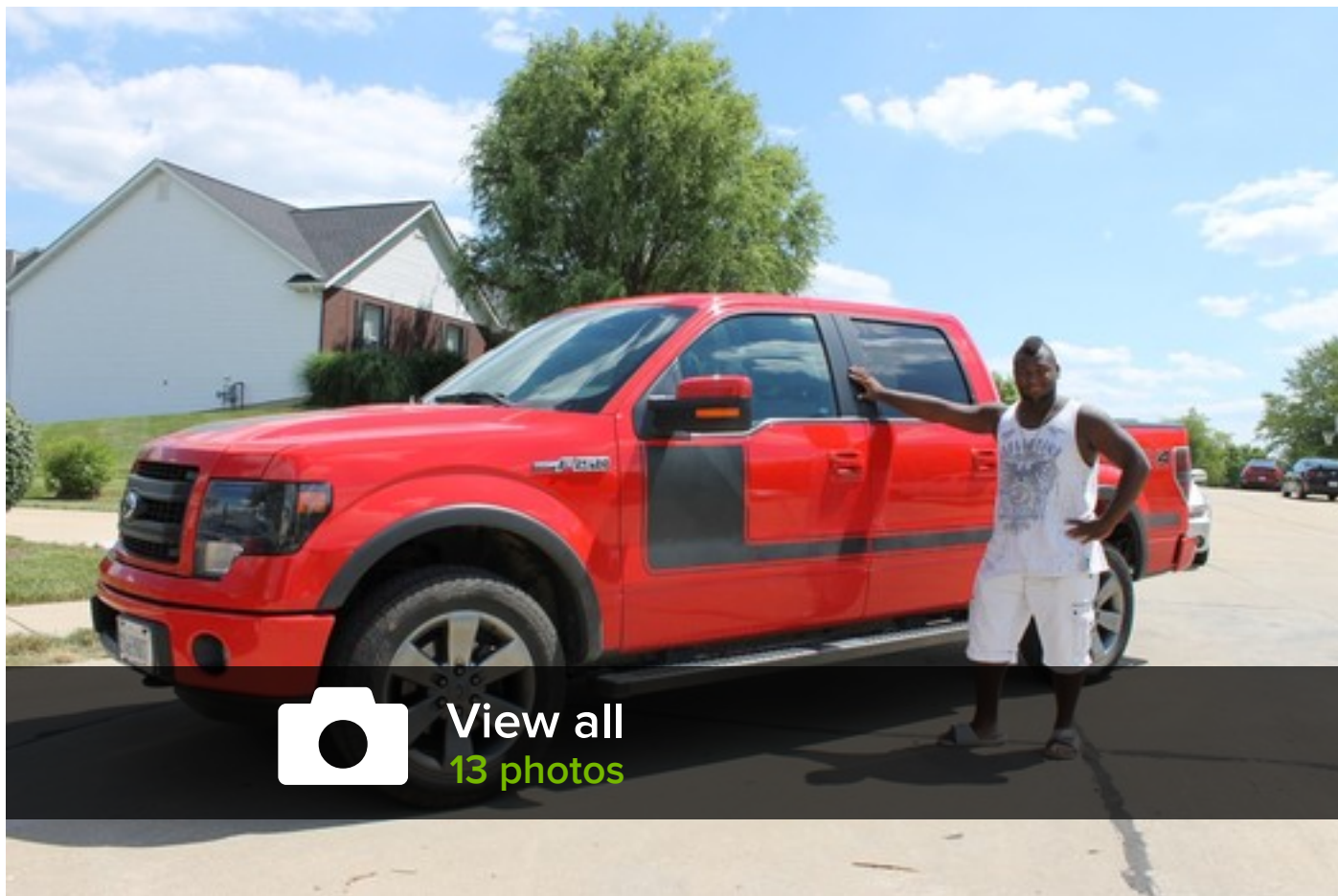


Is Niko Alsup the next generation of Tai Chi Sifu?

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Niko Alsup

Violet Li

Niko Alsup of O'Fallon, Illinois was about 9 when I first met him at Missouri Botanical Garden (St. Louis, MO) on Chinese Cultural Days. He was a polite and playful kid following his dad Sifu LeRoy Alsup around and demonstrating [Tai Chi](#) with him. Last year I attended a Push Hands practice in St. Louis. Niko actually showed me a few drills. He surprised me with his proficiency in the art and he was eloquent in relating Tai Chi principles to the movements. Early this year, 21-year-old Niko participated in International Chinese [Martial Arts](#) Championship (ICMAC) hosted in Los Angeles, California by ICMAC Worldwide Circuit and won six gold medals and Grand Champion of Tai Chi (Taiji) – Advanced Men Division.



Niko Alsup

Wearing a Mohawk and Tai Chi outfits, Niko stands out. Since childhood, Niko always follows his passions and works hard. He fondly remembered watching his dad practicing Tai Chi at age 6 and decided to study as well. He would practice an hour or two per day on his own and more recently, four hours a day. At ten, he won his first gold medal at a local tournament over kids who practiced Karate – there wasn't any other kid doing internal style Martial Arts then. He did not care that he was the only kid practicing a slow cotton-soft kind of martial art with a bunch of grown-ups and none of his peers knew or wanted to know anything about Tai Chi. He won multiple medals at regional and national tournaments before the LA Tournament.

In high school, he picked up an electric guitar and started playing it. He was given advice from a friend's father but is mostly self-taught. He enjoys a wide range of genres including Jazz, Rock, Metal, Blues, and Progressive Rock but is currently mostly influenced by English musician [Guthrie Govan](#) due to Guthrie's incredible skill and application. Three months into playing the instrument, he started to write music. To date, he has composed about 70-80 songs, with ten of them for Tai Chi. He stated the challenge of song-writing is to be creative not generic. He mentioned that learning Tai Chi and creating music have similarities and both require focus and holistic awareness. During this year's Chinese Cultural Days celebration, his dad's Tai Chi school Mid-America Tai Chi Academy used Niko's song for Yang Tai Chi demonstration. Interestingly, the metallic sound worked well with the soothing Yang Tai Chi form and Push Hands. When asked how challenging it is to write songs for Tai Chi, he said that he had inspiration from his dad and that it wasn't difficult at all and he had fun in the process.

Niko has two dreams. One is to be heard internationally and recognized for his musical creativity. The other one is to spread Tai Chi wide and far across his community to better people's health. He has also

participated in many activities to bring Tai Chi awareness to people. Besides demonstrating at Chinese Cultural Days, he presented the art at [AQurld Waves](#), community events, and even a Rams' football game with cheerleaders. Niko has assisted his father with Tai Chi teaching. Currently, he is teaching women's safety by applying Tai Chi techniques, Tai Chi classes at a hospital, and many other programs. With his goals set and backed by hard work, Niko's future is as bright as his red truck.

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