

# Wesley Snipes has swept the floor here!

September 21, 2015

4:02 PM MST

Do you know what famous hip-hop group [Wu-Tang Clan](#), actor [Bokeem Woodbine](#), musician [Tricky](#), actor-director [Kadeem Hardison](#), actress [Michelle Forbes](#), actress and TV talk show hostess [Rosie Perez](#), actor-songwriter [John Leguizamo](#), songwriter-actress [Bjork](#), actor-film producer [Wesley Snipes](#) have in common? Aside from being well-known entertainers, they all have learned Chinese [martial arts](#) and more importantly they all learn from the same Sifu (or martial art teacher) – internationally renowned Shaolin Kung Fu Master [Shi Yan Ming](#) of New York.



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Master Shi Yan Ming  
*The USA Shaolin Temple*



*The USA Shaolin Temple*

The Shaolin Temple was first established in Henan, China approximately 1,500 years ago. It is the origin of Chan (or Zen) Buddhism. To protect the temple from the wars and guard against robbery, Shaolin monks were trained as martial artists and called warrior monks. Shi Yan Ming is a 34th generation Shaolin warrior monk.

Throughout Chinese history, there have been hundreds if not thousands of martial art styles and forms. Many have their roots in Shaolin Kung Fu. Some people attribute Shaolin Kung Fu as the origin of all Chinese Martial Arts. Master Shi Yan Ming shared a different insight. According to him, martial art is as old as human beings. Prior to the Shaolin Temple, there were multitudes of martial art styles existing in China. Legendary Indian-born monk Bodhidharma (lived in the 5th or 6th century) came to the Shaolin Temple and created a few Kung Fu and Qi nurturing exercises including the most recognized **Yi Jin Jing** (Tendon Changing) and Bone Marrow Washing Qigong routines to improve the health of long-sitting monks. Shi Yan Ming stated that Shaolin Abbot Fu Yu during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.) was very enthusiastic about martial arts and invited martial art masters from all over China to the Shaolin Temple to demonstrate their art and exchange knowledge and techniques. This summit was hosted three times in nine years during Fu Yu's tenure. Shaolin Kung Fu adopted and integrated some of the profound martial art principles, skills, weapons, and forms from other styles and developed itself into a vast and complete martial art system with at least one hundred and seventy forms, over a dozen weapons with multiple forms for each weapon in addition to several Qigong forms. The participating martial artists subsequently learned the enhanced Shaolin Kung Fu system and popularized it when they returned home.

Conventionally, people divide martial arts into two camps: **internal (Neijia) arts** and external (*Waijia*)

arts. Internal martial arts focus on the Qi cultivation. The form is normally relaxing and a practitioner uses softness to overcome incoming brute force. Taoist Monk [Zhang San Feng](#) (lived around 1300 A.C.E.) was credited for creating internal martial art theory and some movements. External martial arts are characterized by fast and explosive movements with a focus on physical strength and agility. Commonly, people consider Shaolin Kung Fu as the pinnacle of External martial arts. External style training begins with a focus on muscular power, speed and application, and only comprises the Qigong aspects in advanced training. Most Chinese martial art styles are classified as external styles. Nevertheless, Master Shi disputed this type of categorization.

Master Shi asserted that Shaolin Kung Fu is a form of action meditation. Zen meditation should be present during all actions including walking, sitting, and martial art practicing. It does not matter if we realize it or not, all our activities including sports like swimming and golfing all require Qi. He emphasized the importance of *Fang Song* (relaxing) to allow Qi flow freely. Without a relaxed mind and body, the speed of muscle movement will be hindered. Without speed, power cannot be generated. He pointed to a heavy chair made of a piece of solid wood in his Manhattan studio during our interview. Since the chair is too heavy to be picked, the power of the chair is limited. On the other hand, if he threw a piece of rock. Due to the speed, he could create a lethal power. You can click a link [here](#) to see a *History Channel's* program on Shi's speed. He commented that children's minds are pure and it is much easier for kids to relax and adults need to learn how to open their mind and let go of thoughts and ego so they can relax and focus on movements.

Born in China, Shi started his martial art training at age 5. He was the best warrior monk among his peers. In 1994, Shi founded [the USA Shaolin Temple](#) in New York City and now has branches in Austria, Mexico, South Africa, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, and Argentina. In 2010, the temple acquired 80.88 acres of land in Fleischmanns, NY as an additional training/retreat center. He has trained tens of thousands globally. His 5,000 plus square feet Manhattan studio is located on Broadway. Inside, I found students from several other countries practicing during their lunch break. Shi's teaching method is unique. He wants newcomers to observe a class before signing up for classes so they understand that they need to work hard and endure soreness from arduous practice. He also wants them to understand Chan philosophy first, even children. Among his students, there are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, etc. Master Shi said that Chan's philosophy is simple that is "heart to heart" and "mind to mind". He never tries to change others' beliefs but he wants everybody to have an open heart, respect their own body as a temple, take responsibility, be honest, treat others equally, let go of ego, maintain perspective, and let the mind be free and flexible. Some of the young students in their twenties' I met told me that they felt grounded after studying with Sifu.

For the Internal Martial Arts, especially [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji), practitioners keep the elbow slightly bent and never locking it. It appears that the External Martial Arts the elbow is straight when throwing a punch. Master Shi said that it is not correct. The principles of Shaolin Kung Fu are "bent but not bent too

much”, “straight but not totally straightened”, “the internal and external fully coordinated”, and “well balanced between softness and hardness”. In many ways, these principles are same to what the Internal Martial Arts abide by. Actually, they also teach Tai Chi at the USA Shaolin Temple.

Master Shi stated that Buddha treated everybody equal and that’s how he treated students. Aside from the celebrities, he taught doctors, lawyers, bankers, students, housewives, workers, and even homeless people. There were students who had been studying there since the temple first opened 21 years ago. The lead singer-songwriter of Wu-Tang Clan and movie actor-director [Rza](#) started his lesson in 1995 and continues his learning currently. During a break, I noticed some students were vacuuming the floor, wiping the equipment, and dusting the shelves. They moved very fast and efficiently. I asked them whether this was mandatory. They said no. Shi Yang Ming proudly said that many students viewed the studio like their home and were willing to clean the place and even Wesley Snipes has swept the floor.

## SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Kung Fu Body Conditioning](#)
- [Yi Jin Jing: a source of Shaolin kung fu prowess](#)
- [Want to be a superman? Train with Kung Fu Body Conditioning 2](#)
- [Bette Midler and Tai Chi](#)
- [Qigong for veterans](#)



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