

SPORTS / RECREATION / COMBAT SPORTS

You can be part of the YMAA Retreat Center

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While we are mourning the loss of the computer giant Steve Jobs, we should also be paying attention to other heroes especially in our own community who has a vision and determination to create dreams and make new reality.



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Students learning filming
YMAA



YMAA

Globally, there are many [Tai Chi](#) and [Qigong](#) masters who are preserving and promoting the art wholeheartedly. But only a few can be considered visionaries and Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming is definitely one. He started Shaolin training at age 15, and then studied Tai Chi and Qigong. In the martial art world, rarely a practitioner can master both internal and external arts and Dr. Yang is an exception and has talent to become a master in both. In 1982, he established Yang's [Martial Arts](#) Association (YMAA) in the U.S., which has become an international organization with 56 schools in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Holland, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. Dr. Yang is a prolific profound writer and he has written 35 Tai Chi and Qigong related books and produced 84 teaching DVDs/video tapes. His books and videos have been translated into English, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Dutch, Bulgarian, Russian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Croatian, German and Farsi. YMAA is also a major publishing house for martial arts books and DVD authored by other masters and markets them world-wide. Dr. Yang's contribution to martial arts has won him multiple awards and honors including the first place of French Book Award in 1997.

But Dr. Yang never dwells on these accomplishments. His passion for martial arts causes him to reinvent himself again and again. Since 2004, Dr. Yang has worked untiringly to develop the nonprofit [YMAA Retreat Center](#), a training facility in Humboldt County, CA, where he is training a select group of students in a comprehensive 10-year program. Each year, the students will be in the Retreat Center for 39 weeks. Each week they have 36 hours of training (mainly martial arts), 16 hours of lecture and 6 hours of [meditation](#). In 10 years, they will have 14,040 hours of training, 6,240 hours of lecture and 2,340 hours of meditation. The total hours far exceed the rule of 10,000 hours to become an expert in any specific subject, not to mention that all current students have already learned martial arts since

childhood before they were accepted into the program.

So, what is the goal of this highly intensive and extensive training program? According to Dr. Yang, the unique and precious arts of ancient Chinese culture are all but lost in contemporary China, and only a fraction of their complete depth has been transmitted to recent generations. In order to preserve the arts at a deep, refined, and high level, it is necessary to create an environment similar to that of ancient times, without the distracting elements of modern lifestyles. The curriculum is not just martial arts training; it includes history, nature, English, Chinese, music and arts as well as cooking to develop a well-rounded person with deep culture appreciation. But Dr. Yang is not preparing his disciples to become ancient martial arts masters. He fully understands the challenges these future masters face. Therefore, the training courses encompass teaching/instruction, financial planning, business, photography and video making. The goals are:

- 1 A graduated student must be able to defend himself.
- 2 A graduated student must have a high level of morality.
- 3 A graduated student must know how to survive financially in society (business management & financial planning).
- 4 A graduated student must have good language skills (English & Chinese) to read, write, and speak.
- 5 A graduated student must have an abundant knowledge of Chinese martial arts history and Chinese culture.

The 10-year program started in Fall 2007 in the magnificent forest in Northern California. Three years have passed and students have accomplished greatly. Last year and this year, they participated in [Tiger Claw Kung Fu Magazine Championship](#) and won many trophies. The students utilized their training results and produced a quality DVD on [Kung Fu Body Conditioning](#), which they share their training secrets and dazzle audience with the awesome skills they have developed. They write and blog about marital arts and their training. Javier Rodriguez just published an article *Oral Secret of Peng* in the latest issue Kung Fu Tai Chi Magazine.

This Fall they started the fourth-year training. In a way, it is quite exciting for the students since for the first three-years they learned solo-skills and now they are learning how to work with an opponent. You can watch the video on the left about the new training focus and glimpse over a little bit about their life in the Retreat Center.

To undertake such a huge program, it is quite challenging especially the financial responsibility. Dr.

Yang has been very generous in supporting this program by himself for the most part. He is investing not only in these young martial artists but also in the future of the martial arts.

Many have shared his vision and passion. 120 individuals and organizations have thrown their support by donating to this worthy cause. You can also make a donation to this non-profit organization by clicking [here](#).

There are other ways for you to participate in the Retreat Center. You can attend a seminar to train along side the young champions. Some have travelled from other countries to obtain short-term training in this serene place. If you dare to pursue your dream to become a true martial art master, you may want to try out to be a student of the newly created 5-year Program. To learn more about their programs and the Retreat Center, you can click [here](#).

Now you can follow me on Twitter <http://twitter.com/#!/TaichiExaminer> .

SUGGESTED LINKS

- **A great Yang style Tai Chi textbook by Master Yang, Jwing-Ming**
- **Must Try: Tai Chi Ball**
- **Kung Fu Body Conditioning**
- **A Valuable Tai Chi Training Experiment**
- **Meeting Tuey**



Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner