



Training with men to feel the reality

by JEN PARA

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to interview the late head of Silat Seni Gayong, Cikgu Siti Kalsom, in 2006. I asked her many questions and one in particular, has really stuck with me as I have trained. I asked Cikgu Siti Kalsom, "How do you feel about some

women and men choosing to train with same sex partners?"

She responded, "I do not really agree with it because in gaining knowledge we have to share with others and we do not know the advantages of others especially the opposite sex partners. The dangers, like raping, should be

avoided by women. So, women should train themselves with men to feel the qualities and to upgrade their skills especially in close combat." (The full interview appeared in "Seni Beladiri Magazine in May of 2006.)

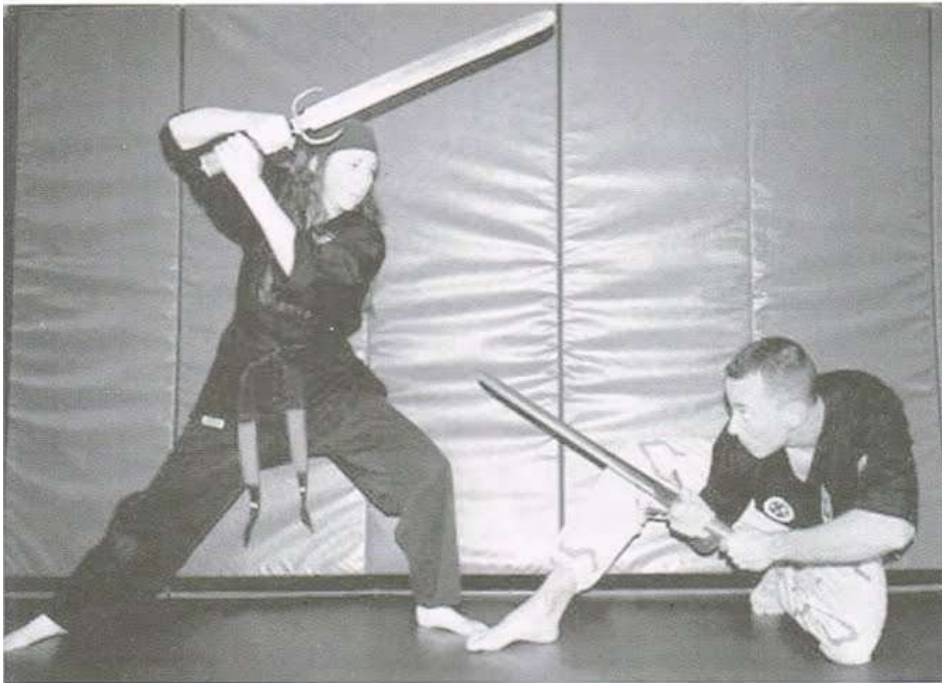
Her words have made me look at my own training and teaching. I agree with her; it is important for women and men to have the experiences of training together. It is beneficial for both genders.

For women, we learn the realities of training with different sizes and strengths. We gain knowledge, learn balance and have the opportunity to feel the differences between training with men and women.

For men, they learn to train for different heights, different center of gravity and learn to never underestimate an opponent. Smaller people can pose a great threat.

There is an importance to training for real situations. If you





can expose yourself to as many different scenarios as possible in training, you may be more prepared if you ever are faced with having to protect yourself.

If a crime is going to be committed against a woman the majority of attackers are going to be men. According to the American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence, nearly 25% of all women in the United States will be the victims of rape and/or physical assault; and 100% of the rapists and 92% of the physical assaulters are men. If a woman only had ever trained with other women, she will not be prepared when faced with a real-life scenario.

The realities of training are that we are different. Men and women are physically built differently. Men tend to be stronger than women, but women tend to have more stamina. Men's center of gravity is higher up on their body.

Ask a man to stand straight with his feet together. Give his shoulder a push and he will have to step forward to regain his balance. Ask a woman to stand with her feet together and give her shoulder a push. She can regain her balance without moving her feet.

Something as small as a center of gravity difference is a huge factor if you've never trained with someone of the opposite sex. You don't know how they will react if you've never felt the difference between sweeping a man to the ground versus sweeping a woman to the ground.

I have had to opportunity to talk with some of the female Silat students in Malaysia over the years. I am always curious to talk and learn more about people's experiences in training in Silat, especially my Silat sisters. I am

an American woman. I have had an experience training very nearly, only with men. I face some similar stigma here in the United States that other women in martial arts face all over the world. I have had men train with me like I was a porcelain doll, easily broken. I have had men train overly aggressive with me. I have had men question me while I was teaching.

The hardest experience for me personally, was when we had new male students in class and they flat out refused to train with me. One went so far as to back away from me while we were all chatting about Silat. I had never been treated as someone that was not good enough to speak to before because I was a woman. I was furious, insulted, and hurt and I had to leave the room several times during training to calm myself down. I was ready to stop training then and there.

Cikgu Sam hadn't been there when everything happened, but he saw me leave the room several times. I didn't want to tell him what had happened, I was afraid that he would think I was over-reacting or that I should just accept that treatment because I was a woman.



The other students told him what happened and he was very angry with those other guys for not treating me with respect. He told them they would need to train with everyone if they wanted to continue training in Silat with our group. They never returned.

I learned a valuable lesson that day with regard to being an instructor. Cikgu Sam as the instructor, made sure that our training was realistic, and that he protected his students. Cikgu Sam showed me that day, that there is a heavy responsibility that comes with being in a teaching position. He saw an issue and addressed it.

When I started teaching, I always have in my mind that I owe my students good training, support and a training environment that is both challenging and nurturing. Students need to know that their instructor will support them and address any issues that come up.



Some women in Malaysia have expressed to me that they don't train with men because something inappropriate could happen. I feel that it is my job as an instructor to make it clear that there certain things will not be tolerated and if something ever becomes an issue, it will be address immediately and appropriately.

Cikgu Sam has taught me that the sin of the instructor is double that of the sin of the student if that student uses that knowledge for something bad. I have to make sure that those people I am training are good people with integrity who deserve the knowledge that I have to share.

If a student demonstrates to me that they have an integrity

AZLAN GHANIE turut diburu media

Tidak dapat dinafikan, penerbit majalah SENI BELADIRI (SB), Azlan Ghanie yang memburu guru untuk diwawancara eksklusif, turut menjadi buruan media, baik dalam dan luar negara.

Baru-baru ini beberapa penerbit luar negara dapat 'menangkap' Azlan Ghanie yang berada di pejabat SB di Taman setapak Indah, Setapak, Kuala Lumpur.



KENA TOPIK... baru Azlan Ghanie setuju diwawancara.



BEZA.. antara mata lembing dan tombak diperjelaskan.

Walaupun penerbit itu berada di luar negara, namun ada yang sanggup menunggu kepulangan beliau, semata-mata hendak jua bersua, bersalam dan bergambar bersama.

Kisah mereka akan disiarkan.

Sungguhpun begitu, tidak semua keinginan atau permintaan penerbit baik dalam dan luar negara diterima. Sudah banyak ditolak kerana dirasakan, guru-guru lain wajar diketengahkan juga.

Namun baru-baru ini, harapan penerbit tempatan tidak ditolak kerana ia menyentuh senjata Melayu iaitu keris. Azlan Ghanie menjawab pertanyaan tentang keris berdiri, terbang dan sebagainya.

Ramai yang ingin tahu akan jawapannya. Namun tidak semua soalan diberi dengan jawapan tepat.

issue, I will not train them. I owe it to my art and to the other students to protect my Silat.

I understand that men and women training together in Malaysia can have different cultural and religious issues. When I go to Malaysia and train, I try and respect this difference. I admit, I am not in total agreement on this issue, but I try and remain open-minded.

When I first trained in Malaysia in 2005, Cikgu Jazwan had one of his Malaysian students come and train with us since we needed another partner to make the numbers even for training. I trained part of that day with a young man who wasn't comfortable training with me because I was a woman.

He only came that one day to train with us; we spent the rest of the training time with the three of us taking turns instead of training with a partner.

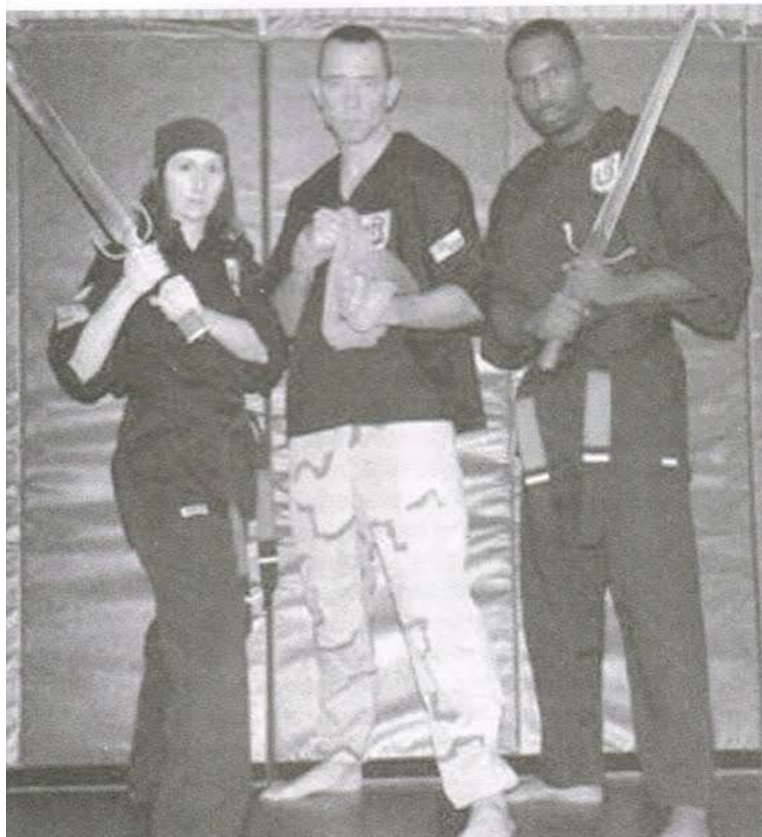
I was again, really angry that my gender was an issue for him training with me, after that day when I saw him at the gelanggang, he wouldn't shake my hand even though he did before we trained together.



It is hard for me to remain open-minded when I feel like my very presence as a woman is making someone uncomfortable. I saw this guy in 2009 again and I brought up the fact that then in 2005 he didn't want to train with me or shake my hand. We talked about it and he has since become a good friend of mine in Malaysia, who shakes my hand when I see him. For me, men and women training together is essential to understanding Silat. As you train

more and more in Silat, you tend to make it your own, you develop what works for you best and work hard to experience as much different training as you can so if you ever have to defend yourself or your family, you can.

As a woman, training with men is essential to my Silat training. It makes the training real, it helps me find out what works for me, what works for different scenarios and what works for different opponents.



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