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Setting Standards

As I reflect on a year of impressive Kyu and Dan exams, I am reminded of a chat I once had with my Sensei (the late Grand Master Robert A. Trias). We were talking about a couple of people who had tested for different ranks. Many people had observed that someone testing for a higher rank didn't seem to be as "good" as a lower rank candidate. Sensei, in his wisdom and his insight into people taught me this.

We have a minimum standard that people must achieve to earn a new rank. Some people achieve more than that, and so appear "better" than others, however what we are judging on is minimum standard...not comparison. Our goal has always been one of accessibility. To be accessible we have to look at people individually and judge their performances accordingly. Can we offer our students a place to become the best they can be? Yes, I think we can. But we can only do that if we continue to require each individual person to be their best. Rank comes because that person has achieved the minimum required for advancement.

As teachers, it is always difficult to be confronted with the possibility that we will disappoint someone. We have to balance that with: are we being honest and fair to that person, are we fulfilling our responsibility to the style, are we leaving behind a footprint that is true to our Shuri Spiral?

It is with great pride that I say, yes, I think we are doing a good job. The input among teachers has been really important with regard to creating the balance that we need.

So as we end another year, let's take a minute to appreciate each other. To appreciate what we have accomplished and what we continue to accomplish. As I approach my 40th anniversary as a Martial Artist, I am so thankful to all those who came before me, all those who have traveled the road with me for however long and to those, who thanks to you all, will come after me. You, Kyu's and Sensei's alike, are all wonderful Sensei's to me! Thank you for allowing me to teach you as that is how you teach me.

A special thanks to all of the Sensei's for making this life your own.