

With Martial Arts I found something that tapped into deep pools of strength and self-discipline....

It wasn't so much that I was a bad student; I wasn't a student at all. Despite my flair for truancy, teachers just kept passing me up to the next grade until I reached the notorious Eastside High School, the school portrayed in the movie *Lean on Me*, in which Morgan Freeman plays the tough but loving principle Joe Clark, who cleaned up Eastside by treating it like the war zone it was.

Unfortunately, I went to Eastside before Joe Clark began patrolling it with a baseball bat. One day Mom and I sat down with a guidance counselor and a social studies teacher who explained the school wasn't for every kid and that they ought to face facts: I was probably a lost cause. No way, Ma said was I going to drop out of high school at fifteen ... but, shortly after that meeting I did in fact drop out.

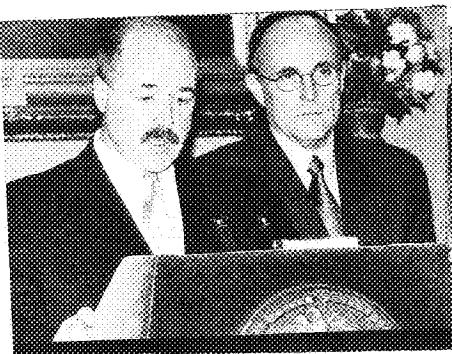
About that time, I became enthralled by the television show "The Green Hornet" which starred Bruce Lee as Kato. I started Martial Arts at a school near my home, in nearby Clifton, New Jersey, and I could feel right away that I had a talent for Martial Arts, that it was something I wanted – more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. I hadn't been into sports in school... with Martial Arts I found something that tapped into deep pools of strength and self-discipline that I was just beginning to discover in myself. By ninth grade I was devouring all the teachers had to offer.



Black Belt Bernard Kerik

The Martial Arts were exhilarating. The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. I think a lot of students start out the way I did, trying to become better fighters and realizing that fighting is only one part of the Martial Arts. I was transformed by the athleticism, the discipline, and the purpose that the Martial Arts gave my life. For the first time in my life I had ambition and drive and I was inspired. It didn't all come from within. I had great teachers who believed in me and I wanted desperately to live up to their expectations. As a young man I was given the gift of guidance when I was in dire need of direction and discipline. The Martial Arts and my Martial Arts teachers gave me that direction and discipline.

The Martial Arts were my first bridge out of Paterson, out of the miserable life that everyone saw for me and that I was making for myself. Mastering the arts was the first thing that began to fulfill me – but I think they were also the answer to all those people who only saw me as a truant and a troublemaker.



Bernard Kerik – 40th Police Commissioner of New York – Shown with Mayor Giuliani

I credit my Martial Arts training with putting me on the path to joining the army and becoming an MP – then moving through a career that included eight years with the New York Police department where I was awarded the prestigious Medal of Valor, among many other awards for meritorious and heroic service. I moved from there to be commissioner of the Department of Corrections and then the 40th Police commissioner of New York City – appointed by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani.

**Bernard Kerik, 3rd Degree Black Belt – Tae Kwon Do
New York City's 40th Police Commissioner
Medal of Valor Winner**