

# Advice for Weapons Practice in Public Parks

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In Asia, practice of many activities in public parks is common, and is taken as a usual part of life. In the West, the public, and the local councils, may view it as an intrusion on their 'privacy' (in a public park?). Whatever the rationale, many park-goers would feel a little perturbed when confronted with a few 'wackos' doing their thing in their park.

In the case of martial arts practice, since this is a 'foreign' practice, this feeling is even more so. Martial arts practice that involve weapons are sure to aggravate many park users in the West.

In addition, depending on the community and the laws of the country, it may be illegal to practise martial arts weapons in public parks! Whether the 'weapon' is merely a practice sword made of wood is not the issue. If the law has foolishly classified it as a weapon, then it is not allowed.

As an Arnis and Tai Chi practitioner, I have practised a few times in public parks on numerous occasions, and I have also gathered views and response and opinions from friends on how to deal with this issue.

From the responses I have reviewed, there are some which perhaps may be effective, courteous and non-confrontational:-

- 1) If there are children in the park, politely inform the parents/whoever that you are just performing a cultural exercise.
- 2) Be ready with a smile and at the earliest opportunity, tell them it is a health exercise, just like jogging or aerobics, and is a very good exercise because not only it involves most muscles of the body, but trains in co-ordination and reflexes.
- 3) You are not using real weapons. You use imitations for the exercise and sport you are performing, just like western fencing.
- 4) Your activity has nothing to do with violence. It is a discipline, and trains in mental, emotional and spiritual control. People who are violent and abuse weapons are not martial artists. Martial artists are trained not to abuse weapons.
- 5) This world is a violent place. Sheltering children from it will make them horribly unprepared and inadequate when confronted with it in life. Adults should expose and educate children to the real world and encourage discussions and dialogue, not hide the facts. We should not just ignore violence - hoping it would go away. Would they approach a traffic accident & rebuke the victims, saying there is already too much death in the world, don't expose our children to any more?
- 6) The children were not witnessing "Violence" - they were witnessing "Training".

7) The true source of violence, fighting and conflict are actually from inside of us. It is our violent emotions, self-righteousness, ego, greed and confrontational natures that are the sources of violence. We should address such issues instead.

8) If you face the cops, trying making friends with them, or better still, get to them first, by frequenting their police training centers.

9) For ignorant onlookers, you don't always have to respond. Just acknowledge them, give them a nod, ..... and go on training.

10) "I'm too poor to hire myself a bodyguard, so until then, I must practice to defend myself from criminals and crazy people, who attack innocent people - like me, you and maybe even your children over there."

Just some examples. May work .....

Written by John Chow