

# Business Asset

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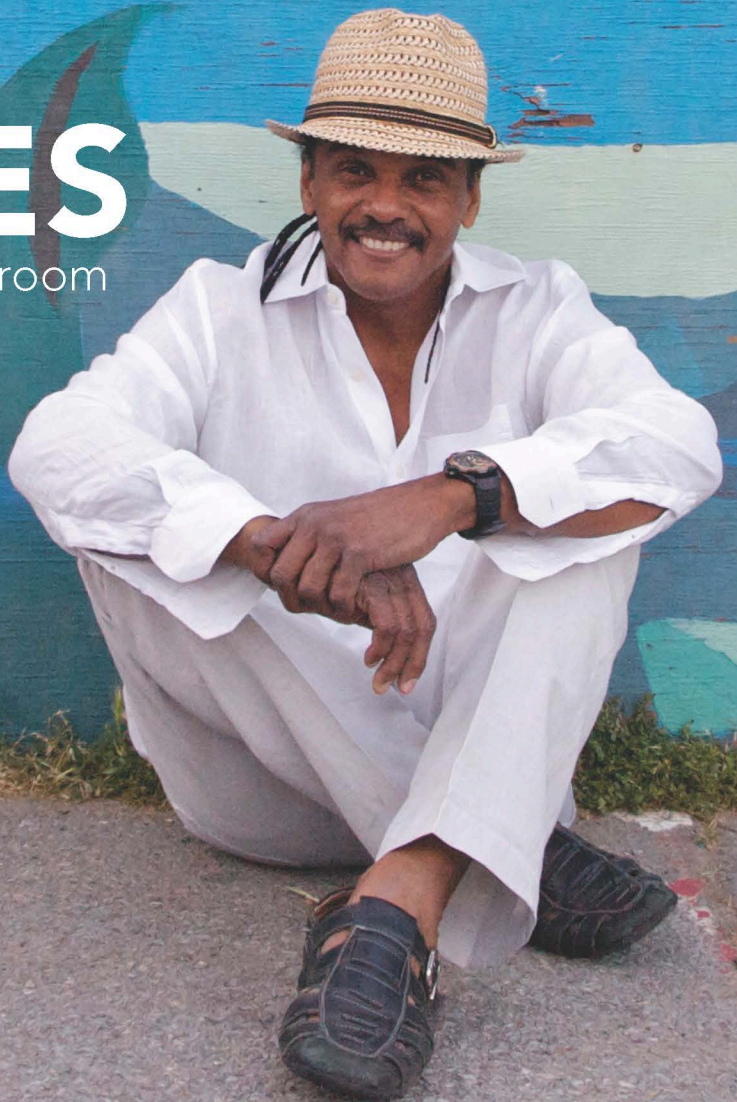
HELPING YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS SUCCEED

## Rolling with the **PUNCHES**

from the Streets to the Boardroom

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# Rolling with the **PUNCHES**


from the Streets to the Boardroom

BY AMY MORALES

Andre Salvage grew up on the streets of Compton. Homeless at a young age, his prospects seemed dim; typical of many stories you hear in the news. This story might have ended there, but Andre Salvage was different.

He's turned what could be an otherwise difficult start into four distinct, successful, interwoven businesses: martial arts instructor, self-defense coach, business and school consultant, and live performance artist. Asked how he did it, Salvage says, "Find something you love and become an expert in it, no matter what it is – even if it's...dolphins. There's a reason why you're here. Find that reason and make it part of your business, your life. You have a message, and you have all the answers inside you."

Salvage began teaching Kung Fu in Los Angeles in 1979. (He is a Master in Kung Fu San Soo, with senior ranking in three other styles). It was around this time that his very dear friend was attacked by three men that she knew – and died as a result. Salvage's outlook was not given over to fear, but empowerment. In his words, "I know what it's like to fight on the street, and I learned that the unpredictability of what happens is magically dissipated by the movements of Kung Fu San Soo... one's life should not be



lived preparing for violence.” Salvage was driven to build a program bringing together women, the martial arts, and self-defense. He went into prisons to interview perpetrators of assault crimes to find out what they look for in a victim and situation. He took what he learned from those interviews, combined it with his own experience in the martial arts, and developed comprehensive self-defense programs for men, women, and children.

Participants in his self-defense classes are taught how to be aware of their surroundings, trust their intuition, and be assertive when they are made to feel uncomfortable. (Salvage will readily point out that being assertive prevents 80 percent of attacks before they start.) Participants are also given the tools to defend themselves physically against an attacker – in the safety of the classroom, a heavily padded, specially trained “assailant” enacts a typical assault, and participants are shown ways to respond and fight back. Often, that “assailant” is Salvage himself.

People noticed. And when the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women recognized his program as the top assault-prevention class in L.A., Salvage knew he was on to something. While other assault-prevention classes focused solely on the physical aspects of self-defense and “created a lot of angry women just looking for a fight,” his was the only class that included assertiveness training and the role-play that comes with it. Another aspect of the classes that make them stand out from others is Salvage’s delivery. His soft-spoken, easy-going demeanor

# What is Kung Fu San Soo?

Kung Fu San Soo was practiced for about 2,000 years in the Guangdong province in southern China. Family practitioner Jimmy H. Woo brought San Soo to the United States in the 1930s and, in 1962, opened the country's first Kung Fu San Soo studio in El Monte, California. San Soo incorporates the Five Family Fist and not the animal styles familiar to many Americans. As Woo said, "We fight like men, not animals."

Kung Fu San Soo is not a sport, and practitioners do not spar as in many other martial arts. In San Soo there are no rules in a fight, so the style is technique-oriented; fighters learn to improvise and use what they know. Threats are removed as quickly as possible through taking the initiative and keeping the opponent physically and mentally off balance. San Soo practitioners use technique and knowledge of reaction to make up for any lack of size or strength.

San Soo fighters may appear to be on the defensive, but they are actually attacking their opponent with blocks, kicks, punches, joint locks, eye gouges, throws, and takedowns. Targets include the eyes, nose, throat, neck, groin, knees, and vital organs. Being offensive in the process of defending is important.



belies a no-nonsense background. He uses the principles he's learned through San Soo and growing up on the streets, where he developed a keen understanding of awareness, assertiveness, and intuition. As he explains, "My first memory of being alive is being homeless in south central LA." In 1995, he moved to San Francisco and opened his own Kung Fu studio, for which several of his children have helped man the front office over the years. He's been there ever since.

Salvage started holding intensive, day-long self-defense workshops and classes in his studio, and soon began taking them into schools and corporate settings. As corporate clients began requesting shorter versions of his assault-prevention classes, he re-formed them to become communications-only classes. Salvage centers his business-communications workshops on conflict resolution, team building, and trusting your intuition. "Trust your intuition when it comes to the decision-making process. We have two energies: We have our ego, which protects us and makes us feel good; and we have our true nature, where we're comfortable, confident, and sure. Don't do anything from a place of fear or ego. Recognize when your ego is in the way." Interestingly enough, Salvage reflects that the most productive workshops are those in which the CEOs and upper management are attending right alongside all the other employees.

With the downturn of the economy in 2008, Salvage's business-communications classes saw a steep drop in revenue. Then, one afternoon while talking with one of his daughters, he

started to give her advice. His daughter interrupted him and said, "Dad! I don't need a teacher right now, I need a dad." Salvage decided to run with that thought, and began to expand the focus of his workshops. He started working more intensively with schools to help students, parents, and teachers learn about how to help kids deal with safety, stress, assertiveness, and communication. Salvage has seven children of his own, so he brings a special expertise in communicating with youth. In 2011, he finished an assessment to help the Oakland Unified School District ward off any gang-related problems in the school system. He focused on recognizing where and how change could occur, and he used his first-hand experience to explain to educators and administrators how poverty consciousness was playing a major role in the continuance of school and community violence.

A few years back, Salvage was giving a nationally simulcast lecture when he was asked a question and realized that he was hesitant to give his full opinion within the corporate confines of the lecture. So in 2011, he premiered his one-man act, *No Enlightened People Have Ever Come Out of the Ghetto*. The show gives him more freedom to say exactly how he feels. Plus, he gets to portray some of the more colorful characters he's met throughout his life. He explains, "I didn't always recognize these moments for what they were, but looking back I see how these life events showed me how to be at peace in the world." Salvage is using his business skills to produce, develop, and publicize

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALISON LEAF



## Master Salvage's Core Principles 3

- 1. Trust your intuition.** Listen to your inner voice and recognize when someone is trying to influence you. Understand the difference between your intuition and your fear.
- 2. Be assertive;** speak up and set boundaries. It's okay to say no or not be nice all the time.
- 3. Physically stop someone from harming you.** Never fight to get away; fight to hurt and incapacitate.

the show, which is currently playing in San Francisco and Los Angeles. He plans to move the show to other venues throughout the country. He has also contributed to Listen to Your Mother: San Francisco, a national series of live performances in celebration of Mother's Day.

Throughout all of his endeavors, Salvage uses social media, newspaper articles, and most importantly, word of mouth to promote his services. "I try to provide good quality, good people, and do the best job I can." He is a big proponent of shamelessly asking: "Do you know of anyone who might be interested in...?" In 2005, he also released a CD discussing his three core principles of awareness, assertiveness, and self-defense. He is always on the lookout for new projects and new business opportunities.

And, of course, he makes sure to keep his talent, passions, and message at the center of it all. **BA**



### VITAL STATS

Andre Salvage

#### Strike:

Kung Fu San Soo Master, assault-prevention instructor, business/school consultant, live performer.

#### Block:

Andre Salvage and Associates  
San Francisco, CA  
[www.andresalvage.com](http://www.andresalvage.com)

#### Takedown:

Salvage knows the importance of staying as agile in business as he is in Kung Fu.