

Defense class provides inspiration

my voice

allisonkohn
editor's notes

Adrenaline pulsed through my body as I threw punch after punch.

Eyes.
Nose.
Throat.
Groin.

One last hit almost sent the large dummy to the ground. My turn ended and the next girl in line began launching her own set of self-defense moves.

Although my heart was racing, I couldn't help but laugh at how I'd shown the scowling-faced dummy absolutely no mercy.

For the second year in a row, I participated in the Ali Kemp Runway show and T.A.K.E. self-defense class. And for the second year in a row, I came home feeling more empowered and in control of my own safety.

Ali Kemp graduated from Blue Valley North and attended Kansas State University. In June of 2002, while working at a Leawood pool, a stranger sexually assaulted and brutally murdered Ali.

There were no witnesses to the crime and it took police three years to track down the killer.

The Kemp family, with support from the Johnson County Park and Recreation District, Blue Valley Recreation Commission and Leawood Park and Recreation, established The Ali Kemp Educational Foundation (T.A.K.E.).

The foundation honors Ali's life while teaching self-defense classes at colleges, high schools and other venues across the country. Thousands of women each year learn skills to keep themselves alive and arrive home safely.

In my opinion, it's one of the most valuable things a woman can learn.

There are so many ways a woman can put herself in danger. The world is so connected now, nothing is private. Addresses and cell phone numbers are accessible to almost anyone with the click of a mouse. The female

instructor for the T.A.K.E. self-defense class is quite possibly the most intense woman I've ever met. She's a 5'2", ninth-degree black-belt and a two-time Karate Woman of the Year. Her body is a lethal weapon, to say the least.

However, one message she pressed upon all the girls in the class was that it doesn't take difficult martial arts moves or a body-builder physique to keep yourself safe. Being equipped with the right skills and knowing how and when to use them is the most crucial point of self-defense.

The class made me realize I have to be able to keep myself safe. In a worst-case scenario, I can't freeze. In the moment of panic, I have to know I'm in control and I can do whatever it takes to keep myself alive.

Boys, you can laugh.

"I'm pretty sure no girl other than the Olympic weight-lifters could hurt me."

Girls, you go ahead and believe nothing like this could ever happen to you.

"I live in a safe place. There's no way I could be kidnapped, let alone murdered."

Unfortunately, that's probably what Ali thought, too.

Think about someone you love going missing.

Gone, kidnapped, never to be seen again. Imagine the pain it could cause to you, your family, and the rest of the community.

Our area is safe, but the worst things happen when we least expect it. Things like this do happen. Our community isn't impenetrable. We have to be prepared, protect ourselves and look out for one another.

Every young woman needs to understand that she is in charge of her life, and it's important to keep herself safe and be aware of her surroundings.

Guys, you need to look out for the girls.

Offer to walk to her car late at night and make sure she arrived home safely.

It's just the compassionate and safe thing to do.

According to my instructor, the attacker is almost always someone we've seen before — at the store, in the neighborhood or



Senior Allison Kohn practices elbowing a dummy from behind during a T.A.K.E. self-defense class on Jan. 16 at the Overland Park Trade Center as part of her training for the prom fashion show, Ali's Runway. Photo by Jackie Lippert.

somewhere else in the community.

The attacker most likely lives only five miles away from you, and he's studied your every move — when you leave your house, get in your car, and when you're alone and vulnerable.

Don't give him that chance. Don't allow

yourself to be a victim. You don't need to be a ninth degree black belt like my instructor to keep yourself safe.

It's not about winning a fight with a predator, it's about making it home safely. And that's something every young woman deserves to do.

President's 1st year doesn't live up to campaign expectations

my voice



haleyschroer

Dear President Obama, Congratulations, you've survived your first year as America's president. In spite of all the optimism surrounding your election, I think your Nobel Prize might have been a little premature.

Let's review.

According to *The Washington Post*, 598,000 Americans lost their jobs in January 2009 because of the struggling economy. You, however, were seen at professional basketball games and throwing parties on the South Lawn.

The man leading the United States of America should be doing all that he can to improve an economy that hasn't been this down since the Great Depression.

The new health care plan has been out there since the beginning of your campaign, but is it really best for everyone? During that questionable 1 a.m. vote on Christmas Eve, the Senate split exactly along party lines. Blame it on Republican

vs. Democrat feuds all you want, but 40 percent of the Senate voted against this bill.

The people of Massachusetts disapproved this bill so much that they voted a republican, **Scott Brown**, to the Senate for the first time in 30 years.

At first glance, the bill sounds like a good idea. Everyone wants to be equal, especially in anything that concerns money. However, the very fine points show that there's a catch.

Right now, every citizen is theoretically allowed to choose their own health care system and what they want in it.

According to CNN.com's *Money*, the actual bill will require a list of components in minimum coverage, and Americans won't have the privilege of knowing the requirements until the bill becomes a law.

This will make it difficult for the citizens to express their views on the bill.

Most importantly, you've been saying from the get-go that people with existing plans will be allowed to keep their coverage. Well, the bill says otherwise.

Anyone with existing health care is technically allowed to keep their plans unless the components of their plans

change after the bill is passed. On average, employer-provided health care plans change at least once a year, depending on the employer.

Overall, every American will eventually have to use the government-approved options whether they want to or not.

Hopes were high for you last January. At the start of your term, you had an 83 percent approval rating. Eight years of the Bush administration finally ended and a serious change was needed. With your catchy slogan, you seemed like the perfect candidate.

Somewhere, though, you lost your way. Your approval rating last December dropped to 47 percent in the Gallup poll — the lowest rating of any president at this point in your term. In order to continue the economic rebound, I think you need to focus on this issue first and save health care for your second term...if there is one.

You have a whole nation to back you up and three more years to get back on track.

Focus on the unemployment rate and rethink that health care bill. For the sake of the country, I really hope you succeed. Good luck.