

For Brannon Beliso, owner and head instructor of One Martial Arts in San Francisco, strength begins inside, stemming from passion, patience, mindfulness and love. Perhaps this outlook, coupled with Beliso's unmistakable conviction and charisma, is what makes One Martial Arts stand out from a number of competing karate schools in the same vicinity.

With 350 students and a waiting list, One Martial Arts is thriving. Its excellence in curriculum, execution and staff is buttressed by Beliso's dedication to help his students enrich the quality of their lives.

"My school is called 'One' because it's about all of us trying to be better people through art," Beliso explains. "Most karate schools are named after the head instructor.

For me, that's ego-driven. There's no two, three, four, or less. We're all one, we're all equal. If you create a very positive, proactive environment, then people can grow."

Beliso's martial arts training began at the age of five when he studied under his father, Leonardo Beliso, whose stellar reputation in the business spans some 40 years. Brannon has a 7th Degree Black Belt and is the youngest professor in the martial arts system. In addition to teaching for his father, he has taught at the schools of Rick Alemany and Ralph Castro, who developed the hybrid of Kenpo Karate that Brannon works with.

"What I dig about Kenpo compared to a lot of older systems is it allows you to evolve," he states. "Each user takes it and makes it his own. When I studied Kung Fu, they did it the same today as they did a thousand years ago and I found that very rigid."

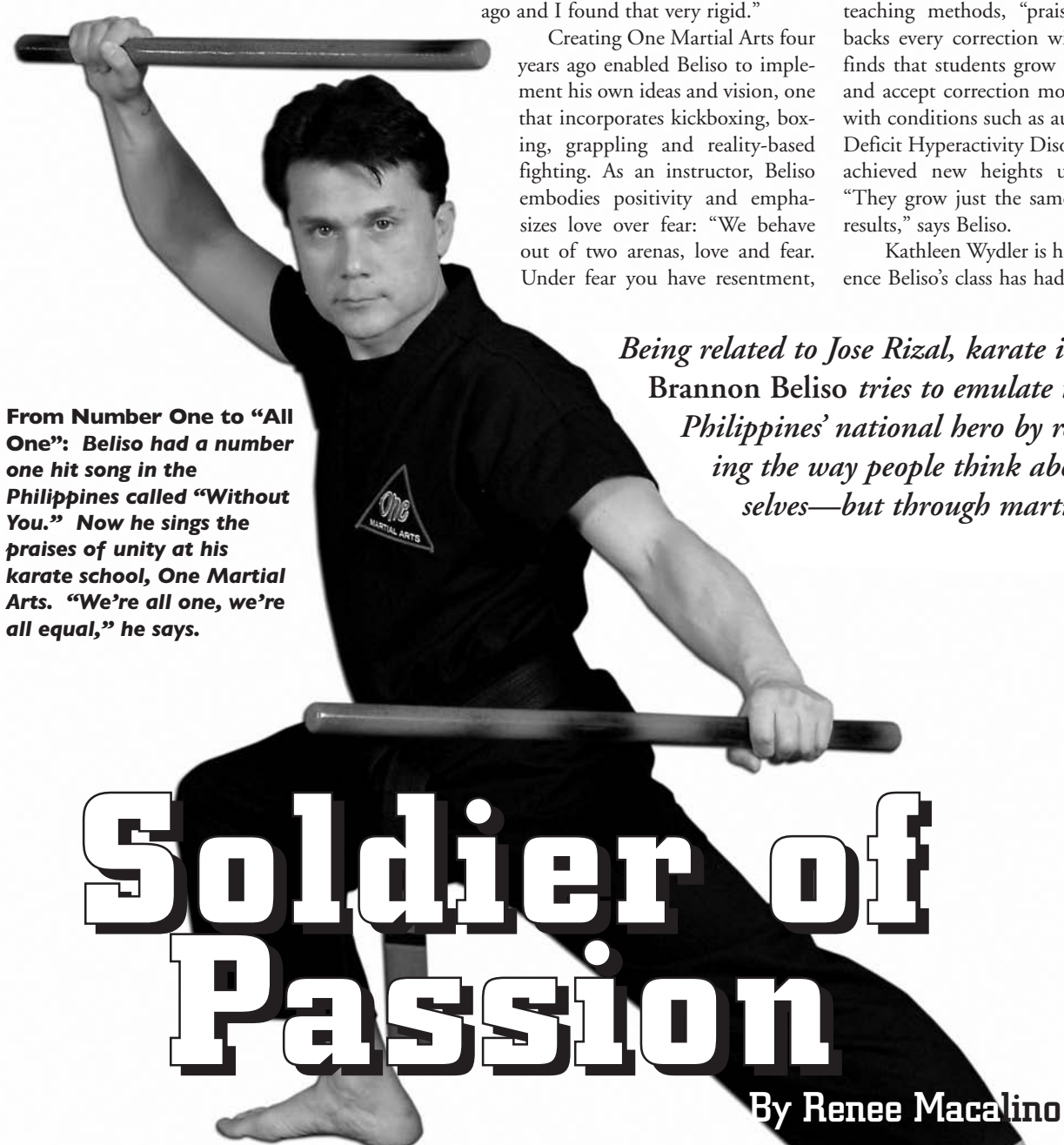
Creating One Martial Arts four years ago enabled Beliso to implement his own ideas and vision, one that incorporates kickboxing, boxing, grappling and reality-based fighting. As an instructor, Beliso embodies positivity and emphasizes love over fear: "We behave out of two arenas, love and fear. Under fear you have resentment,

anger, prejudice, jealousy, insecurity, ego. And then you have love—compassion, passion, patience, understanding, forgiveness. If I always behave out of love, I'll make the right choice. If I behave out of fear, I'll make the wrong choice."

Beliso incorporates this state of mind into his martial arts doctrine, teaching self-defense for the sake of self-preservation rather than fear, inspiring passion and stressing how vital it is to have presence of mind during each and every moment.

Growing up in San Francisco's Mission District, Beliso says martial arts saved him from a lot of negative influences that could have steered him in the wrong direction. For today's youth, Beliso works hard to provide a constructive and healthy outlet, giving every class and student his full attention. One of his teaching methods, "praise, correct, praise," backs every correction with two praises. He finds that students grow from their mistakes and accept correction more readily. Children with conditions such as autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have achieved new heights under his tutelage. "They grow just the same. I've had amazing results," says Beliso.

Kathleen Wydler is happy with the influence Beliso's class has had on her two daugh-



From Number One to "All One": Beliso had a number one hit song in the Philippines called "Without You." Now he sings the praises of unity at his karate school, One Martial Arts. "We're all one, we're all equal," he says.

Being related to Jose Rizal, karate instructor Brannon Beliso tries to emulate the Philippines' national hero by revolutionizing the way people think about themselves—but through martial arts.

Soldier of Passion

By Renee Macalino Rutledge

ters. She says the class gives children a strong base from which to stand up and say “no” when they have to. According to Wydler, Beliso is especially good at keeping the class focused, giving positive reinforcement and teaching discipline without yelling. She says, “He’s really great working with kids who are shy or scared. He helps them find a way. You watch these kids grow.”

Beyond the martial arts studio, Beliso is an advocate for women and children, having witnessed the vulnerability of these two demographics. His community-based activities include free workshops such as “Go Away Now” and “Easy Defense,” donations to 40 school auctions, scholarship opportunities, speaking engagements on subjects such as self-esteem, life balance and addictive behaviors, and sponsorship of such activities as a kick-athon for St. Jude’s Cancer Research Hospital.

“I like to give back to the community,” says Beliso. “Being born and raised (in San Francisco), it’s very important to me.”

Beliso has come a long way from his celebrity days in the Philippines. In the late ’90s, his number one hit “Without You” stayed on the charts for over six months. But Beliso decided to abandon the celebrity



The Teacher: Beliso has helped cultivate maturity and self-esteem in youngsters. Rather than show children how to beat someone up, he teaches them to become focused individuals.

lifestyle at the height of his career after learning a life lesson from Filipinos—you don’t

need money to be happy. In fact, Beliso doesn’t place much value on material affirmation. Though he’s won about 150 championships, not a single trophy adorns his studio. In commenting on his professorship, Beliso states, “To me, a belt holds up your pants. Nobody cares; nobody walks through this door and asks me, ‘What degree are you?’ All they care about is can you teach my child focus, can you teach them respect, can you help them become a better person.”

But Beliso has another claim to fame with which he feels more deeply connected—his kinship with the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal. The relationship was discovered when Beliso’s grandfather, Luis Beliso, Sr., was named as a beneficiary to a sugarcane plantation that belonged to the Rizal family. Court documents later revealed that Beliso, Sr. was the illegitimate son of Soledad Rizal, Jose Rizal’s sister.

As the great-grandnephew of Jose Rizal, Brannon says passion is something he and his celebrated ancestor share: “My great-granduncle lived by passion. Everything I read about him up until his execution was based around passion... If I could summarize anything, live life passionately. Don’t waste one second.” ■