



# YOU CAN'T GROW WITHOUT DEEP ROOTS

*A reflection on storms, surrender, and the strength we build beneath the surface.*

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PETER LICIAAGA

# **You Can't Grow Without Deep Roots**

By Peter Simon Liciaga

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## Introduction: Before the Storm

Every season of growth begins with a storm.

I don't always share the details of the storms I've faced—some are still too fresh, too personal. But one thing I've learned, from the South Bronx streets I grew up on to the stages of international theater, through failed businesses and broken moments, is this:

You can't grow strong without deep roots.

In times like these—where uncertainty is the air we breathe—this message is more than a nice idea. It's a survival truth.

Especially for those of us between 50 and 67, raising families, running businesses, leading communities, and holding space for so many others.

We're the roots for others.

But what are we rooted in?

## Chapter One: My Foundation Was Broken Before It Was Built

I grew up in the South Bronx, where survival was a skill, and strength meant keeping your guard up.

There wasn't space for vulnerability. No talk about emotional strength, trust, or purpose.

But I found something early on—through movement. Dance. Martial arts. Discipline. These became my roots.

Not perfect ones, but real. They kept me from falling when the chaos tried to pull me under.

When I was 9, I told my sister Loretta I'd one day become a karate teacher. That vision—wild as it seemed—was a seed.

But life doesn't grow in straight lines.

## Chapter Two: Dreams That Had to Die

In 1998, Renee and I were living what many would call a dream. Performing around the world. Stage lights. Applause.

But when we decided to start a family, we knew we couldn't raise a child as gypsies.

We came back to Mount Laurel. Bought a condo. Invested in a dream: my first karate school.

I had passion, talent, and vision—but no roots in business.

After one year, the money ran out. The school closed. I had to leave Renee—pregnant with Alexandra—and go back to Germany to perform again, just to survive. That storm nearly broke me.

But that season taught me:  
Surrender isn't failure—it's trust.  
It's letting go of control... and finding peace  
in something greater.

## Chapter Three: Real Roots Are Quiet

Roots aren't flashy. They're not loud.  
They do their work beneath the surface.

For me, roots meant family. Faith. Knowing I wasn't walking alone.

Even in darkness, there was light holding me up.

When I came home, Master Dinoto gave me a place on his team. I started teaching again—not alone, but as part of something greater.

Over time, that seed grew.

Today, I stand beside Master Colan Magill, continuing a 30-year legacy of building strong kids and strong families.

But none of that would've lasted...  
Without the storms.  
Without the roots.

## Chapter Four: For the Ones in the Storm Right Now

Maybe you're there now. In your storm.  
Trying to lead a family, run a business, hold it together.

Let me say this:  
You are not weak for being tired.  
You are not broken for needing help.  
And you are not alone in the storm.

The strength you need won't come from pushing harder.

It will come from being anchored in something greater than yourself.

- Your faith.
- Your family.
- Your calling.
- Your Creator.

Whatever it is—root yourself in it.  
Because the winds will come. And it's your roots that'll keep you standing.

## Chapter Five: The Practice of Living Strong

What does that look like today?

It looks like waking up with intention.

- Breathing before reacting.
- Choosing how you respond.
- Trusting that your story isn't over.

For me, it's movement. Morning walks.

Writing. Teaching.

Showing up even when I'd rather stay hidden.

You don't have to roar today.

You just need to whisper, "I'm still here."

That whisper?

That's how roots speak.



## Final Words: You Were Meant to Grow

This moment you're in—it's not the end.

It's part of the process.

Part of the deep work.

Part of your becoming.

So plant yourself in something real.

Let the roots grow deep.

And trust this truth:

You can't grow without deep roots.

So start there.

Let's keep Living Strong—together.

—Peter



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