



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

CHRISTEL DEHAAN

STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre



KIM'S CONVENIENCE

BY INS CHOI
DIRECTED BY CARA HINH

STUDY GUIDE

October 20 – November 15 | Janet Allen Stage

Artwork Design by Jake Lebowitz

OneAmericaSM
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Content Spotlight

Contains profanity (including the F word), racial profiling, references to physical abuse, and brief staged violence.

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hilarious and heartwarming

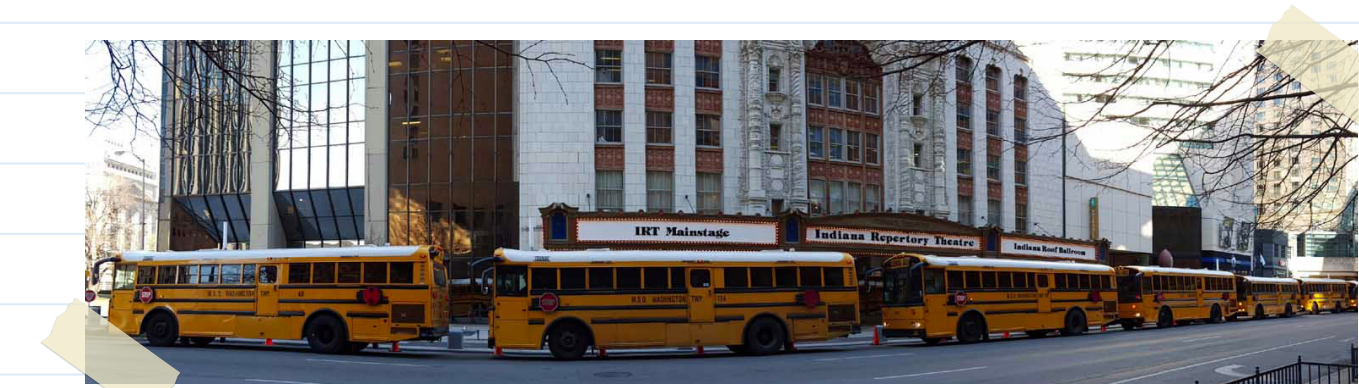
Before it was a beloved hit series on Netflix, Kim’s Convenience was a humorous, award-winning stage play. For over 30 years Mr. Kim, a first-generation Korean immigrant, has dispensed fatherly wisdom, history lessons, and potato chips from behind his convenience store counter. Now he faces a changing neighborhood landscape and children whose dreams are different from his. This show is a laugh-out-loud, deeply moving, feel-good story of love and family.

Recommended for students in grades 7-12

*The performance will last approximately **90 minutes**, with no intermission.*

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You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show.

Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

- Leave mobile phones, cameras, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home or turned off.
- You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.
- The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.
- Don’t talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can’t hear you, they can.
- Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.
- Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show, or during intermission.
- Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.
- Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.
- Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington St., between north bound Illinois St. and southbound Capitol Ave.

- The physical address of IRT is 140 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Buses should unload and load directly in front of the theatre. (Do not block the entrance to Embassy Suites garage.) Please plan to arrive 20-30 minutes before your performance is scheduled to begin.
- You will be greeted at the curb by an IRT Staff Member and directed to the correct entrance.
- For shows on the Janet Allen Stage, students and teachers will take the stairs to the 4th floor.
- The teacher named on the reservation should check in with the IRT Education staff member stationed in the lobby.
- Your group will be ushered to your assigned seats.
- Students and chaperones should follow instructions of all IRT Staff for your safety.

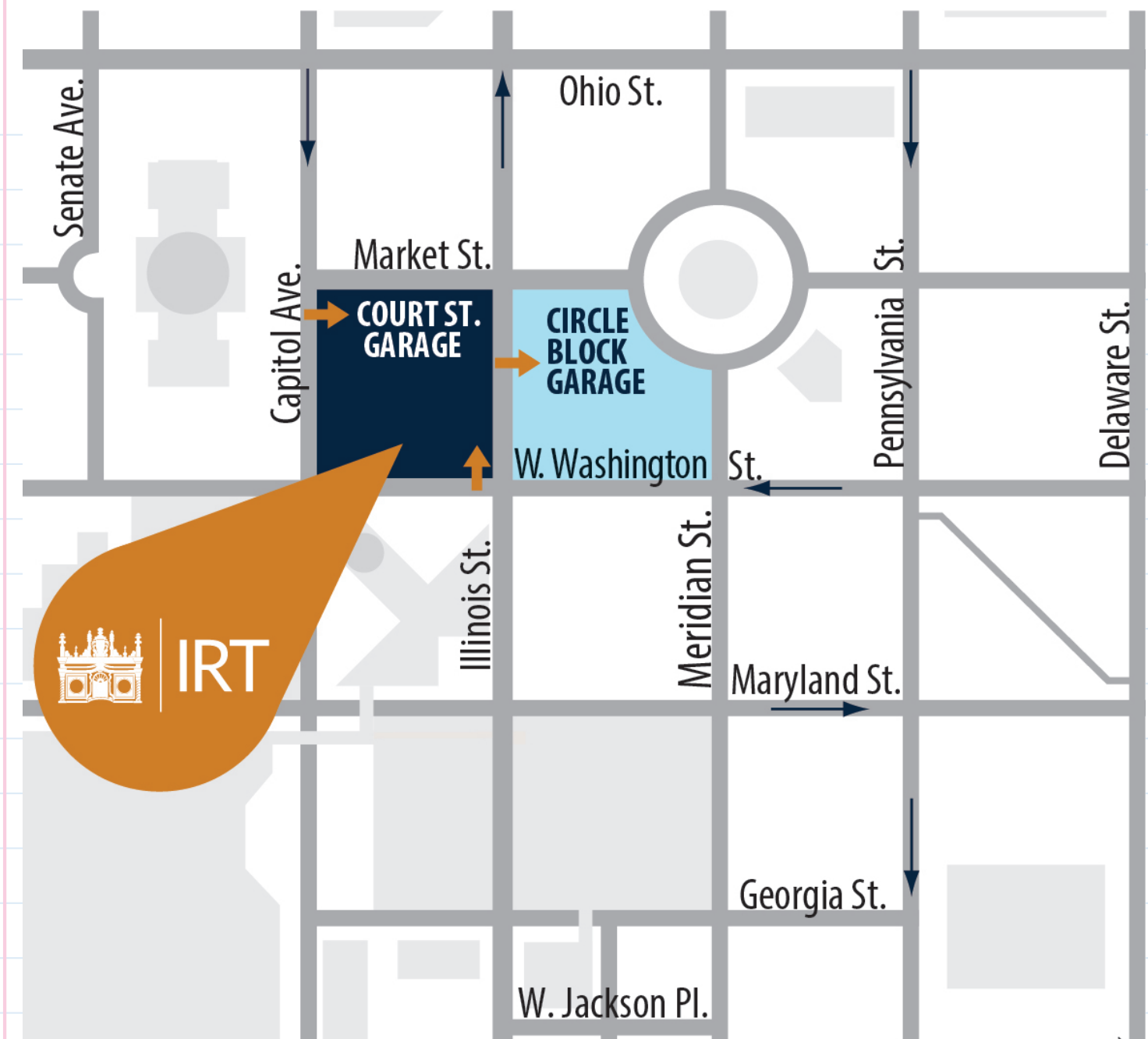
LATE ARRIVAL

If you believe that you are going to be late, please contact the IRT House Manager, Katy Thompson at 317.916.4803. Provide them with a phone number and the name of the school so that Education staff may be in contact with you.

- You can contact IRT Education (education@irtlive.com) with non-emergency information on the day of the show.

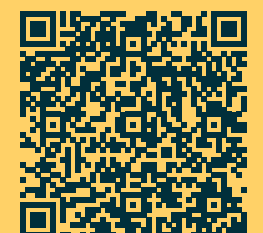
PARKING

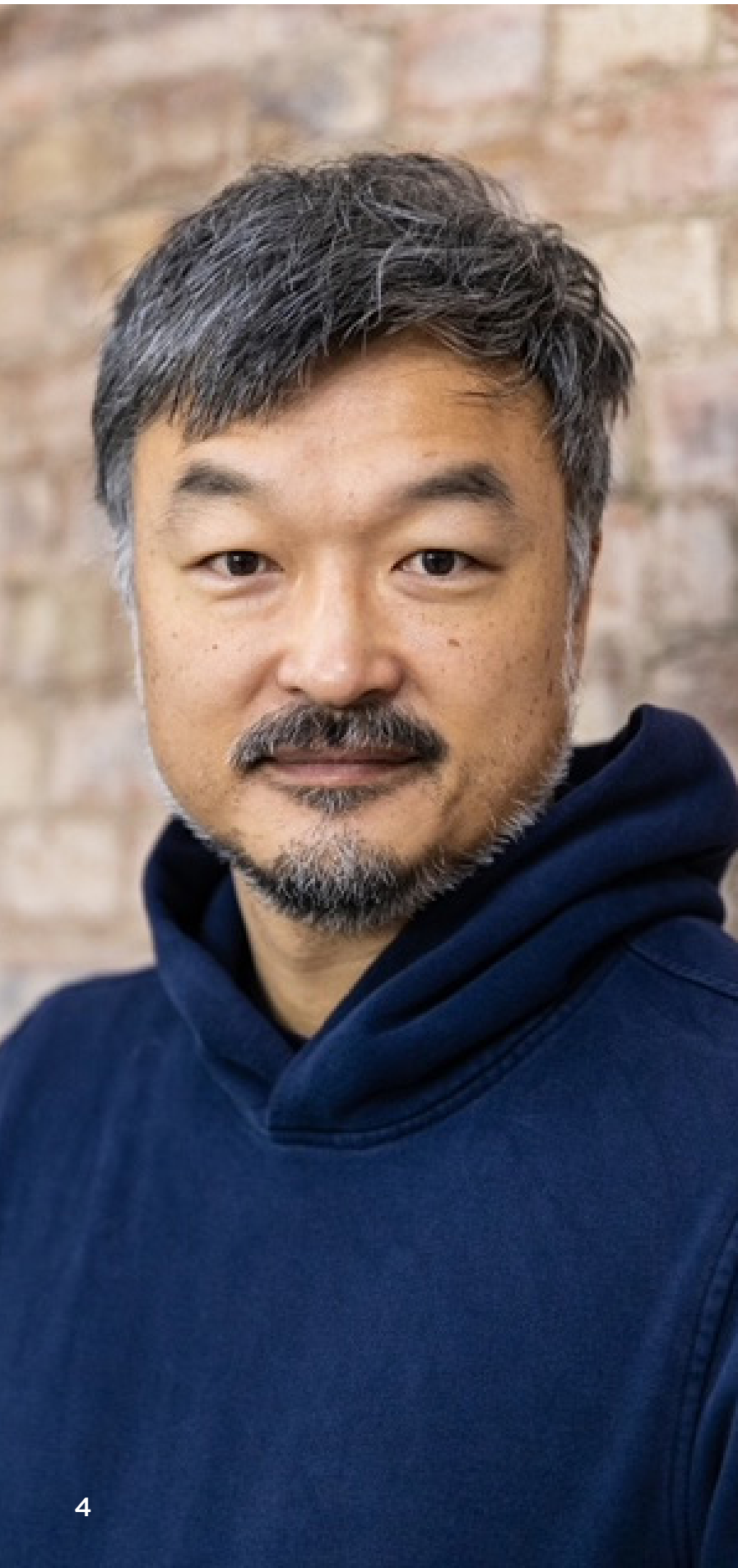
- Buses may park for free at Victory Field unless they are having an event - we will inform you if that is the case. The House Manager will give you a parking pass for each bus when you arrive at the theatre. It should be displayed in the windshield.
- Continue east on Washington St. past the JW Marriott and turn left across Maryland St. into the Victory Field lot.
- **PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restroom spaces available. We apologize for any inconvenience.**
- For car, and van parking information, please visit irtlive.com for the most up to date information
- **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking information in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**



INDIANA STATE STANDARDS

Seeing a performance at Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key literature standards to consider on your trip can be found by scanning this QR Code:





Ins Choi was born in Korea but grew up and currently lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife and two children. Some of his theatre acting credits include *Banana Boys*, *lady in the red dress* (fu-GEN); *Hamlet*, *The Odyssey*, *Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *All's Well That Ends Well* (Stratford Festival); *Alligator Pie* and *Death of a Salesman* (Soulpepper). As a writer, his debut play, *Kim's Convenience*, won the Best New Play award and the Patron's Pick at the 2011 Toronto Fringe festival. It then launched Soulpepper Theatre Company's 2012 season, toured across Canada, and was adapted into a TV series of the same name on the CBC and Netflix for 5 seasons. Ins was a writer, executive producer and co-creator of the TV series. He has also written a solo show called *Subway Stations of the Cross: Songs, Stories and Spoken Words* and was part of the collective that created *Alligator Pie*, *re(birth): ee cummings in song*, *Window on Toronto* (Soulpepper) and *2000 Candles* (Brookstone). His new play *Bad Parent* was produced by Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre for the fall of 2022 at PTE in Winnipeg, the Cultch in Vancouver and at Soulpepper in Toronto. He's also developing various TV and film projects.

Left: Ins Choi

"It's a bigger decision now to be here. Unless this note is also published online, you're only reading this cuz you're in a theater safely gathered as a group to hear a story. In this case, it's a story about an Asian family. I had a conversation with a colleague at the beginning of the pandemic about how to combat the rise of Asian hate crimes. We concluded that in tandem with gathering as large groups to condemn such abhorrent behaviors and engaging in other political activism, the proactive part was continuing to write stories and mentoring younger Asian Canadian/American story-tellers.

Stories? Really? It was a surprising conclusion to us too. **There's a quiet strength in stories as it allows us to see into the lives of others wholly different from ourselves only to realize how similar we all are.** Through stories we're entertained as a group and comforted to know we're not alone both in our struggles and what we find funny. Stories are disarming, engaging our imaginations and viscerally reminding us of when we were all a little more supple. Thank you for being here to hear this story."



SYNOPSIS

Appa, a 59-year-old Korean-Canadian man, operates Kim’s Convenience in the Toronto neighborhood of Regent Park with his wife, Umma. Their daughter, Janet, is a budding photographer, and their son, Jung, has limited contact with the family, mostly touching base by meeting his mother at her church.

One particular day, Appa notices a Honda in a No Parking zone, and he asks Janet to call the police. Knowing Appa’s bitterness about Japan’s invasion of Korea, she reminds him that all kinds of people drive Japanese cars, and that he himself owns a Canon camera and has friends who sell Japanese products.

Mr. Lee, a realtor friend of Appa’s, comes to give a generous offer for the store. Appa turns him down, and Mr. Lee reminds him that with a Wal-Mart opening in the neighborhood, competition for customers will be fierce. Mr. Lee leaves his business card, but not before he challenges Appa to think about a “life plan” for himself, his family, and the store itself.

Appa turns his hopes to Janet; however, she has no interest in taking over the store, instead intent on making a career out of photography. Umma returns to the store, sees the offer that Mr. Lee left, and thinks they could retire on that sum. When a customer enters the store, Appa suspects he will steal and gives Janet a lesson in running the store/ predicting customer behavior. Though his reasons and stereotypes seem suspect to Janet, he is correct; the customer is stealing. Appa holds his own; he physically restrains the customer, then makes him return the items and apologize profusely.

A police officer arrives to respond to the 911 call Janet made earlier. The responder turns out to be Alex, a childhood friend of her and Jung. Alex asks for Jung’s phone number so he can reconnect, but Appa is avoidant and sends him away with snacks. Later, he returns to leave his number, but Janet reveals Jung

left years ago as a teen, after an argument with Appa turned physical. Changing topics, he notices Janet’s camera bag and she takes his photo. They flirt and decide to go to lunch together.

Appa presses Janet about the store again, insisting it would be fair for her to give half her life over to the business when he has given his whole life to her. Janet reminds him that she has been giving her time freely to the store over the years, without pay. Appa counters with a list of expenses he has paid for her to date.

As the day behind the counter at Kim’s Convenience unfolds, the Kims grapple with questions of loyalty and legacy, past sacrifices and future hopes. Against a bustling backdrop of salty snacks and energy drinks, the concept of a Life Plan proves to mean many different things, and at the intersection of identity, home, joy, and culture sits one complicated theme: family.

“This play is a love letter to my appa and umma and to all first-generation immigrants who call Canada home.”
– Ins Choi

TERMS TO KNOW

1904, Japan Attacks Korea - The Japanese annexation of Korea, formalized in 1910, was the culmination of Japan’s strategic ambitions on the Korean Peninsula, significantly influenced by the outcomes of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Following Japan’s victory over Russia, it secured a series of treaties that eroded Korea’s sovereignty, culminating in the Protectorate Treaty of 1905, which placed Korea under Japanese control.

Appa: “Japan attack Korea 1904, make slave of Korean. I am Korean.”

Insam - the Korean name for the variety of plant that is also called ginseng, which is a root that is used for herbal remedies.

Appa: “Insam Energy Beverage?...Ginseng is Japanese name. Insam is Korean name.”

The Last Samurai and Tom Cruise - a 2003 American epic drama film starring Tom Cruise, who plays an American military captain whose personal and emotional conflicts bring him into contact with samurai warriors in 19th-century Japan.

Rich: “You look Japanese. You look like that guy in The Last Samurai.”

Toyota, Mitsubishi, Honda - all major Japanese automakers.

Day-timer - a personal planner/organizer.

Ddong - the Korean word for “poop.”

Appa: “Okay, Janet, I have to take big ddong now. We continue training after.”



Gamjatang - a spicy pork bone soup.

Pork mandu doondubu - a spicy tofu stew with pork belly.

Moksanim - an honorific Korean term for “pastor” or “reverend.”

Umma: “When Moksanim first start church, only six Korean church in Toronto.”

Halabujee - Korean word for “grandfather.”

Umma: “Appa should know he is halabujee now.”

Beemer - slang term for a BMW, a type of luxury car.

Jajee - slang for “honey” or “darling” in Korean.



Rodney King/LA Riots - Rodney King is a Black man who was savagely beaten by four Los Angeles policemen in 1992. The event was caught on camera and broadcast worldwide. The acquittal of the four officers sparked a fury in LA (already tense from years of racial and economic inequality) that resulted in five days of rioting in the city. It ignited a conversation about racial and economic disparity and police brutality that continues today.

Popo - Korean for “a light, affectionate kiss.”

Appa: “I know she is popo you...but then you try popo her one more time after she popo you. Two popo, too many popo.”

TORONTO REFERENCES AND GEOGRAPHY



Regent Park - The neighborhood where Kim's Convenience is located.

North York, Etobicoke, Richmond Hill, Parkdale - Neighborhoods in Toronto.

Dufferin Mall, Jane & St. Clair - Popular shopping hubs.

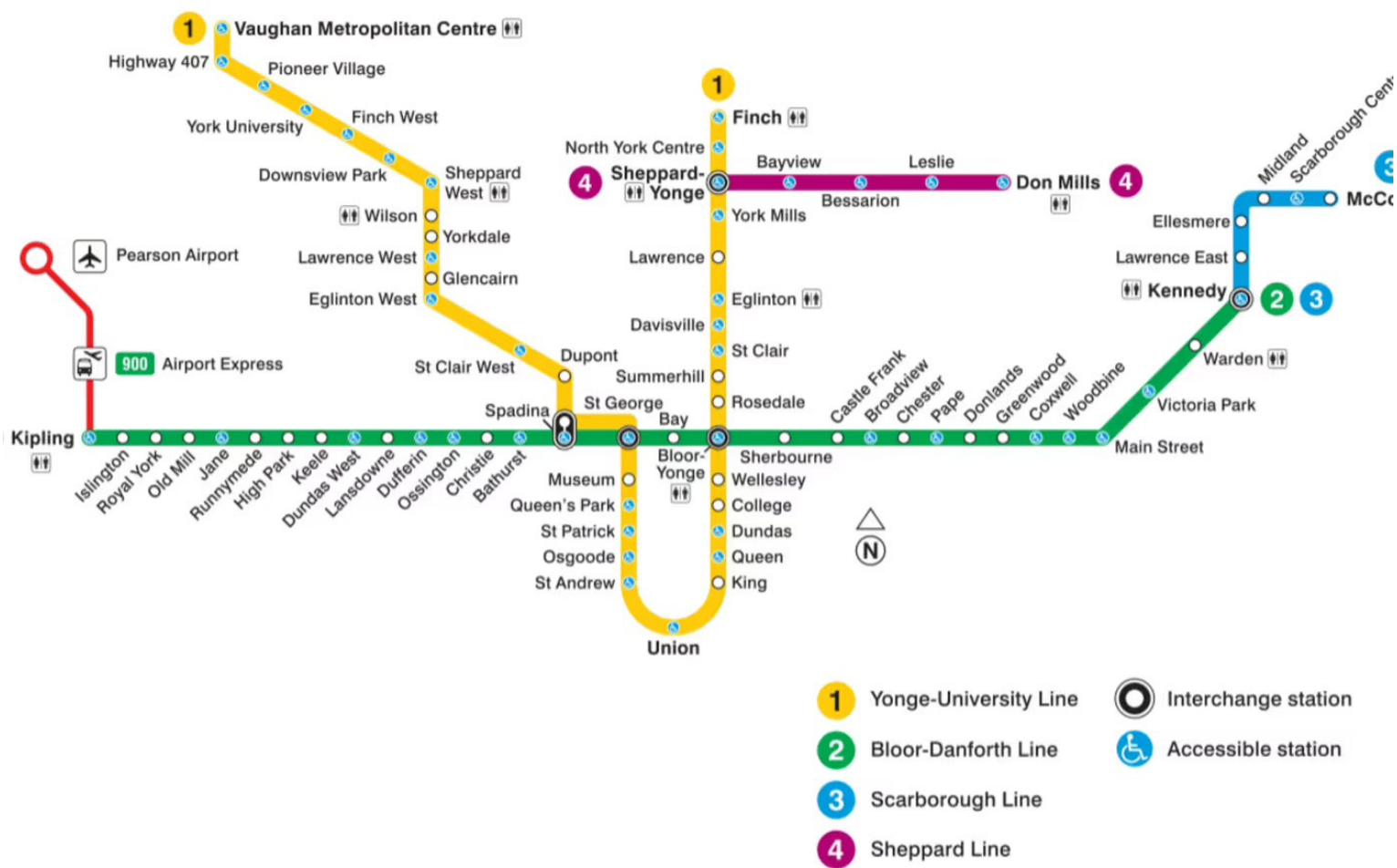
Christie & Bloor, Yonge & Finch, Bay & Dundas - Intersections in Toronto teeming with businesses.

Kachi, Booungee, Han Kuk Kwan - Names of three Korean restaurants in the city.



IN TORONTO, A NEIGHBORHOOD IN DESPAIR TRANSFORMS INTO A MODEL OF INCLUSION

***Note:** This excerpt is from an article from a 2016 issue of The New York Times, by Dan Levin. It was written five years after the setting of Kim's Convenience. Read more below about the neighborhood of Regent Park, where Kim's Convenience takes place!*



Bathurst > Spadina > St. George > Bay > Yonge > Sherbourne > Castle Frank - a route on Toronto's subway system.

TORONTO — Her face framed by a yellow hijab, Idil Hassan watched her young daughter splash with other children at the Regent Park Aquatic Center, an architectural jewel of glass, wood and chlorine in the middle of Canada's largest housing project.

The center has given Ms. Hassan, a 34-year-old nurse, the ability to do something more than just watch her child: she, too, can join in. On Saturday evenings, mechanized screens shroud the center's expansive glass walls to create a session that allows only women and girls to relax in the hot tub, swim laps or careen down the water slide, a rare bit of "me" time treasured by many of the neighborhood's Muslim residents.

"I wouldn't come before because my religion doesn't allow women to be seen uncovered by men," said Ms. Hassan, a Somali immigrant. "It's really helpful to have that day to be ourselves. I even learned to swim."

Until not too long ago, the mention of Regent Park here in central Toronto brought to mind cockroaches and drug-fueled gang violence. It was an embarrassing stain on a progressive city that for decades had welcomed immigrants fleeing war, famine and poverty only to leave them trapped in an isolated collection of decrepit brick apartment blocks where crime and despair took root.

Hard lessons have been learned, and today, an ambitious rejuvenation plan for the 69-acre neighborhood, with the aquatic center as its centerpiece and a ring of condos that are helping to pay for new subsidized and affordable rental housing, is disrupting entrenched notions of class, race and religion at a time when concerns about income inequality and immigration are growing in the West.

As Canada accepts 25,000 Syrian refugees, the new Regent Park, thick with immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, provides a blueprint for successful economic and cultural integration.

Even as Regent Park has been transformed by sleek glass condominiums and crisply designed townhouses, residents have been given the right to return after living in temporary housing while their apartment buildings were demolished to a new home in the neighborhood, regardless of their income level.

There are no “poor doors” in the new Regent Park. Instead of apartment building entryways segregated by income level, the subsidized townhouses resemble the market-rate homes across the street, erasing the stigma of poverty. A recreation center has opened down the block from a new arts building, both of them free to use.

“We want to make sure people aren’t isolated and their mental health is strong,” said Pam McConnell, a deputy mayor of Toronto who lives in the neighborhood. “You do that by offering activities that bring them out of apartments, so everyone feels like they belong.”

Ms. McConnell said the city has mandated that new businesses in Regent Park — among them a bank, a cafe and a supermarket — employ residents, providing nearly 1,000 jobs, a boon in a neighborhood where around 70 percent of the population lives in poverty, according to the last census in 2011, which listed 10,000 residents.

But mixing incomes goes only so far without incorporating other community needs, Ms. McConnell said.

“You have to make sure the people here who were disempowered gain their power and have their voice always acknowledged,” she said.

Grass-roots participation lies at the heart of Regent Park’s billion-dollar transformation. From the start, the city and the developer incorporated residents’ needs into the design, from ensuring they were not forced out of the neighborhood, to stocking food that met Muslim religious requirements,

and scheduling private swimming and yoga classes for women.

“It didn’t happen by itself,” said Sureya Ibrahim, an Ethiopian immigrant and community activist who is Muslim and who has lived in Regent Park for 18 years. “We had to fight to make the redevelopment accessible and inclusive, but now it’s really a model of collaboration.”



The aquatic center reflects that ethos of inclusion. After the weekly women’s swim ends, the blinds stay down for a private session popular with transgender people who want to swim without feeling they are being stared at.

Out of the pool, everyone uses gender-neutral locker rooms that provide private cubicles for changing.

New civic amenities like the pool are attracting Torontonians who would never have dared enter Regent Park just a few years ago. “It seemed like the best-kept secret,” said Lisa Qwirke, 37, a research consultant, who often comes via streetcar from her neighborhood for her child’s swimming lessons. “This is an example of community revitalization done well.”

Hawa Elmi, 55, a Somali refugee and mother of 11, began taking women’s yoga classes three weeks ago. “My Muslim friends told me to come,” she said on a recent afternoon before entering the mirrored studio. “Here nobody is judging anyone.”

Above: Hassan Ichiki, whose parents are from Japan and Egypt, practiced at the Regent Park Aquatic Center this month. Photo by Ian Willms for The New York Times.



Raheema Majeed preparing for a yoga class for women. “Yoga relaxes the mind and helps my breathing problems,” she said. Photo by Ian Willms for The New York Times.

Around two dozen women of various religions and ethnicities have joined, including Raheema Majeed, 49, a native of Sri Lanka who carried a blue exercise mat in a sack on her back and whose face — save for her eyes — was veiled by a black niqab. “Yoga relaxes the mind and helps my breathing problems,” she said.

Across the hall, a pair of Chinese men were lifting weights in the gym, while down below, teenage girls in hijabs were shooting three-pointers into a basketball hoop with practiced ease.

Regent Park’s new activity centers are only part of the city’s efforts to engage young immigrants. In addition to the city providing tutors and employment counselors, neighbors volunteer to coach younger residents and guide them away from crime by helping them find jobs or new hobbies, a goal that residents say is made easier with the arrival of new economic opportunities in the neighborhood.

Bottom Right: Idil Hassan, a Somali immigrant, and her daughter Idman head home after Idman’s swimming lessons. Photo by Ian Willms for The New York Times

Abdullahi Maolim, 29, a youth volunteer who is active at a local mosque, tries to help young people find jobs or productive activities when they fall in with the wrong crowd. As a Somali refugee who moved to Regent Park as a child, he understands the stigma and alienation many youths feel.

“Everyone wants to be as Canadian as possible,” he said. “You don’t want people to know you’re Muslim, or an immigrant, or a black person. What they don’t realize is being Canadian means being yourself.”



RESOURCES

READ:



Immigrants shape Indianapolis neighborhoods



Visit Koreatown Toronto: A Vibrant Hub of Korean Culture



How Ginseng Connects Me to the Roots of My Korean American Community



Significant events in the history of Asian communities in Canada - Canada.ca



Korean-born immigrants have quickly made their mark in Canada

WATCH:



A Canadian-American-Korean Story - YouTube



Jason's Story: Embracing the hyphen in Korean-Canadian - YouTube



How did the Empire of Japan annex Korea? - YouTube



Gamjatang Recipe - YouTube

Kim's Convenience (Series) - Netflix



PRE-SHOW / POST-SHOW QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you seen the TV show, *Kim's Convenience*? If so, what expectations do you have for the stage play? If not, what do you already know about the story based on context clues?
2. What other stories have you read or seen that
 - o take place in Canada? Or...
 - o talk about immigration? Or...
 - o involve a family-run business? Or...
 - o combine one or more of these ideas?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What images/characters/moments stood out to you? Why?
2. Do you think children owe anything to their parents? Or vice versa? Why or why not?
3. What characters did you agree with more than others? Why?
4. How did you feel when characters were speaking exclusively in Korean? What do you think they were saying?
5. How do you think Asian representation on stage can be empowering? Why is it important?

ACTIVITIES