

# Liquor Store Dreams

A FILM BY SO YUN UM



POV

DISCUSSION GUIDE





# Table of Contents

Film Summary	5
Using this Guide	6
A Note to Facilitators	7
Share Community Agreements	8
Common Concepts and Grounding Knowledge	9
Participants	11
Key Issues	12
Background Information	13
Discussion Prompts	21
Closing Question / Activity	28
Resources	29
Teaching Guide	30
Credits & Acknowledgements	32

# Film Summary



In *Liquor Store Dreams*, two Korean-American children of liquor store owners reconcile their own dreams with those of their immigrant parents. Along the way, they confront the complex legacies of L.A.'s racial landscape, including the 1991 murder of Latasha Harlins and the 1992 uprisings sparked by the police beating of Rodney King, while engaged in current struggles for social and economic justice.

# Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use *Liquor Store Dreams* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

## A NOTE TO FACILITATORS

Dear POV Community,

We are so glad you have chosen to facilitate a discussion inspired by the film *Liquor Store Dreams*. Before you facilitate, please prepare yourself for the conversation, as this film invites you and your community to discuss experiences of Korean Americans, immigrants, mental and emotional health, Black Americans, and police brutality. These conversations require learning truths about society, culture, and political motivations that typically have not been taught in schools. We urge you, as a facilitator, to take the necessary steps to ensure that you are prepared to guide a conversation that prioritizes the wellbeing and safety of people of color, and youth in your community. Importantly, this film shares experiences through a lens of joy and resilience, rather than focusing on trauma, and we hope this guide will aid you in conversations that expand understanding while maximizing care, critical curiosity, transformation, and connection.

## Tips and Tools for Facilitators

Here are some supports to help you prepare for facilitating a conversation that inspires curiosity, connection, critical questions, recognition of difference, power, and possibility.

# Share Community Agreements

## Community Agreements: What Are They? Why Are They Useful?

Community agreements help provide a framework for engaging in dialogue that establishes a shared sense of intention ahead of participating in discussion. Community agreements can be co-constructed and created as an opening activity that your group completes collectively and collaboratively. [Here is a model](#) of community agreements you can review. As the facilitator, you can gauge how long your group should take to form these agreements or whether participants would be amenable to using pre-established community agreements.

## Opening Activity (Optional): Establishing Community Agreements for Discussion

Whether you are a group of people coming together once for this screening and discussion or a group whose members know each other well, creating a set of community agreements helps foster clear discussion in a manner that draws in and respects all participants, especially when tackling intimate or complex conversations around identity. These steps will help provide guidelines for the process:

- **Pass around** sample community agreements and take time to read aloud as a group to make sure all participants can both hear and read the text.
- **Allow time** for clarifying questions, make sure all participants understand the necessity for the agreements, and allow time to make sure everyone understands the agreements themselves.
- **Go around in a circle** and have every participant name an agreement they would like to include. Chart this in front of the room where all can see.
- **Go around two to three times** to give participants multiple chances to contribute and also to give a conclusive end to the process.
- **Read the list aloud.**
- **Invite** questions or revisions.
- **Ask** if all are satisfied with the list.



# Common Concepts and Grounding Knowledge

## *A Note on Language Use in the film:*

The authors and characters in the film use several terms to reference the civil disturbances that took place in Los Angeles on April 29, 1992, including “uprisings,” “sa-i-gu,” and “riots.” Although we use these terms in the discussion guide to be consistent with the film, there is considerable disagreement among Koreans, Black Americans, and pundits over the proper name for these events. “Riots” emphasizes the destruction and violence that is triggered by irrational emotions and senseless attacks, whereas “uprising,” “rebellions,” and “civil unrest” are associated with acts of civil resistance and disobedience to perceived injustices or authorities in the system. Some Koreans choose to adopt the more neutral term “sa-i-gu” (or 4/29) in the tradition of Koreans who use dates to mark significant milestones in history.

## Anti-racist

One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their continued actions and/or by expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and do not need developing. Anti-racism is a journey and not a destination—it is an orientation toward how we live our lives in pursuit of racial justice.

## Model Minority

Asian Americans are often stereotyped as studious, successful, smart—a model minority who excel in education and accomplish the “American dream.” Despite its positive overtones, this stereotype is damaging for Asian Americans and other students of color. The model minority myth pits students of color against each other and ignores the reality of systemic racism that Asian Americans continue to encounter.

## Classism

Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It’s the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class. Policies and practices are set up to benefit more class-privileged people at the expense of less class-privileged people, resulting in drastic income and wealth inequality—and the culture that perpetuates these systems and this unequal valuing.

## Colonization

Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession, or subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachment. The result is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.

Ongoing and legacy colonialism impact

power relations in most of the world today. For example, white supremacy as a philosophy was developed largely to justify European colonial exploitation of the Global South (including enslaving African peoples, extracting resources from much of Asia and Latin America, and enshrining cultural norms of Whiteness as desirable in both colonizing and colonizer nations)

## Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw as a practice and approach to interrogating the permanent role of race and racism in society. Understanding the historical foundations of “race” as a social construction that has been central to the formation of American economic structures, institutions, laws, policy, and sociality, CRT recognizes that while race is not biologically “real,” institutionalized racism is a fundamental aspect of historical and contemporary American society and education that disproportionately impacts people of color.

CRT is intersectional in its framework, which means this approach to framing and teaching recognizes that other identities, such as sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, and different ability levels, intersect with racism and racial prejudice and other modes of discrimination to cause harm to people and communities that have historically been marginalized.

CRT recognizes that racism is a permanent structure in American society and that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and legal imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans continues to shape American society and schooling.

## Discrimination

The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories.

In the United States, the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investiga-

tion or lawsuit. The law also requires that an employer reasonably accommodates applicants’ and employees’ sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer’s business.

## Dominant Narratives/ Official Curriculum

In a paper titled “The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?” Michael W. Apple discusses how decisions to define some groups’ knowledge as more legitimate than the knowledge of others leads to the knowledge of the former group coming to be understood as “official knowledge,” while other knowledge is perpetually marginalized.

## Equity

In basic terms, to achieve equity is to treat everyone fairly. An equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harm other social groups/communities. Sometimes for the purpose of equity, justice demands an unequal response.

## Hidden Curriculum

This phrase refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school. While the “formal” curriculum consists of the courses, lessons, and learning activities students participate in, as well as the knowledge and skills educators intentionally teach to students, the hidden curriculum consists of the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school.

## Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. Institutional policies may never mention any specific racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

# Participants

## **So Yun Um**

Documentary filmmaker and narrator who documents her life as a liquor store baby

## **So Yun's father and mother**

Owners and operators of a liquor store in South Central

## **Danny**

Filmmaker's friend who is also a liquor store baby

## **Danny's mother**

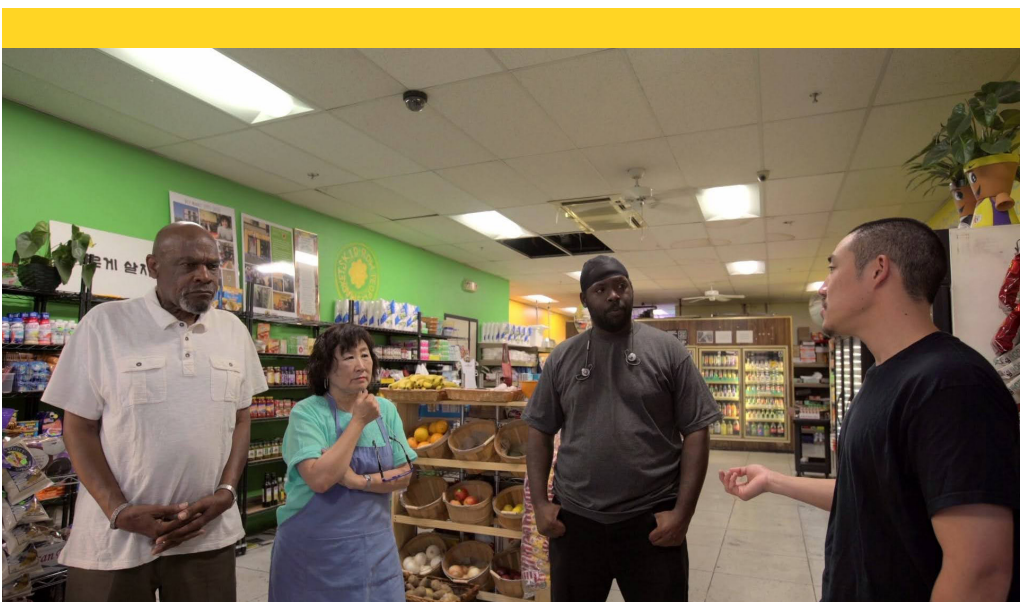
Owner and operator of the liquor store on Skid Row with her son

## **Mark**

Employee at Best Market

## **Julie**

So Yun's sister, who also helps out at the store



# Key Issues

*Liquor Store Dreams* is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Korean immigrant entrepreneurship
- Asian immigrant families
- Generation gap
- Korean-Black relations
- 1992 Los Angeles riots/civil unrest/uprising or sa-i-gu
- Policing and community relations
- Anti-Blackness and racism
- Mental health issues among Asian Americans

# Background Information

## **Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurship**

Since the 1965 Immigration Act reopened the doors to massive immigration from Asia, Korean Americans have consistently attained one of the highest rates of entrepreneurship among not only foreign-born Asian groups but all minority ethnic and racial groups in the United States. In some regions, including Los Angeles, they have created occupational niches in retail and manufacturing, grocery stores, restaurants, beauty and skincare, healthcare, technology and entertainment, and professional services. Their concentration in self-employment has been attributed to several factors, including their middle-class urban backgrounds and their effective use of family, kinship, and ethnic support networks to obtain startup capital, labor, information, and financial support. However, Korean immigrant entrepreneurs are also inclined to start their own businesses as a response to limited mobility, discrimination, and structural disadvantages they face in the general labor market.

Although some Korean entrepreneurs cluster in more familiar ethnic enclave economies like that in Koreatown, the withdrawal of corporations from inner-city areas and the upward mobility of Jewish merchants before them have opened up other opportunities for Koreans in poor Black- and Hispanic-dominated neighborhoods where the startup capital, firm competition, and language requirements are relatively lower. As middleman minorities, Korean immigrant entrepreneurs benefit from some ethnic and class privileges over the communities they serve, even as they are subjected to long work hours and crime, exploitation from suppliers and landlords, and hostility from local minority patrons and activists.

In order to minimize financial costs and other risks, smaller Korean businesses often rely on unpaid family labor or low-wage Hispanic workers, which aggravates social stressors and burdens for both the family and laborers. In the case of the family, the wife will often cooperate or manage the business while their husband finds a second job; children may be asked to take on adult responsibilities at home or at a family business, which can disrupt their childhoods and educational advancement. The nature of the work blurs the line between family and business and home and workplace and heightens familial conflict, even as it strengthens empathy and obligations among the family members.

Relations between Korean entrepreneurs and their workers are also inherently problematic, because they are built on exploitative capitalist relations in which entrepreneurs can succeed only through the use of unpaid or cheap labor. While African Americans are less likely to be hired because of employer perceptions, Hispanic and Korean workers have little political power, as they are disempowered by language barriers and their legal status and share similar immigrant ideologies with their Korean employers—all of which deter them from fighting back against

low or unpaid wages, discrimination, and unfavorable work conditions. Some progressive grassroots organizations in Los Angeles like the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Advocate (KIWA) have taken up the task of challenging and protesting working conditions in Korean businesses on behalf of immigrant workers.

## **Korean-Black Relations**

Korean immigrants have assumed the labor-intensive job of selling corporate goods in resource-poor neighborhoods in large numbers but face resentment from local patrons and activists, who complain of overpriced goods, poor treatment of Black patrons, and lack of community contributions, such as local hiring. In addition to the impact on congenial community relations due to cultural and linguistic barriers and outside residency, Korean immigrant entrepreneurs mostly arrived in the United States after the 1970s, which stripped them of an understanding of the historical context of American poverty and racism and made them more likely to embrace ideals of meritocracy and capitalist mobility that inspired their personal American dreams. In contrast, Black Americans in these neighborhoods continue to struggle against poverty, racism, and segregation and structural barriers to mobility in the new post-industrial economy, despite the dismantling of racist laws and legalized segregation—all of which have contributed to disillusionment with the American power structure and resentment against competing immigrants. Against the backdrop of high crime, poverty, and limited local resources, these different worldviews collide and breed resentment, misunderstanding, and conflict between the two communities.

Racial tensions between the Korean and Black communities peaked during the 1980s and 1990s, as Korean-owned businesses multiplied in inner city neighborhoods and the media sensationalized intra-minority conflicts. Black activists, such as Danny Bakewell of the Brotherhood Crusade, organized boycotts and demonstrations outside Korean-owned stores to protest poor treatment and exploitation by merchants. In Los Angeles, community relations between the two sides came to a breaking point when a female Korean merchant, Soon Ja Du, shot and killed a black teenager, Latasha Harlins, after a dispute over a carton of orange juice. To add insult to injury, members of the Black community expressed their outrage when Du was given a light probationary sentence with no jail sentence for the crime.

On April 29, 1992, the volatile mix of poverty and segregation, rising interminority tensions, and a long historical legacy of police brutality in Black neighborhoods culminated in an explosive outbreak of rioting and looting that resulted in the deaths of over 50 people, about 16,000 arrests, and more than 400 million in damage, including damage to 2,300 Korean immigrant-owned businesses. The five days of rioting were initially triggered by the acquittal of four White police officers who had been videotaped severely beating an unarmed black motorist, Rodney King. However, the demographics of looters also expanded to include Hispanics, making the riot more multiethnic than past riots. Los Angeles police officers were dispatched, and the epicenter of the riots was located in the poorer, minority-dominated neighborhoods, including Watts and Compton in South Central Los Angeles and north into Koreatown, where businesses were mostly owned by Korean immigrants.



The post-riot recovery process was also challenging, as only a small proportion of business owners had the proper insurance coverage and language and cultural skills to access government assistance, as well as legal tax documentation to recover their assets. During the post-sa-i-gu rebuilding process, liquor stores were a point of contention between Korean business owners and local activists and public officials, especially from African American communities, who pointed to the concentration of liquor stores in Black communities and the many social problems they breed. Although it is difficult to get accurate figures, media and anecdotal accounts suggest that many Korean merchants left these neighborhoods for other regions or industries and were only later replaced by new waves of immigrants. Yet despite the many challenges, there are also areas where Korean Americans have sought potential commonalities or complementary interests with African Americans—especially in terms of their desire for better law enforcement protection and political voice in their communities as evidenced by coalitional efforts and political leanings.

## **Family, Gender, and the Generation Gap**

Different contexts of socialization and daily social and economic pressures aggravate the gap between the cultural outlook and value systems of immigrant parents and those of their American-raised children. Although Korea has modernized rapidly, immigrant parents who arrived in the United States in the 20th century left their country when it was greatly influenced by traditional Confucian values that emphasize filial piety, collective orientation, self-discipline, and ascribed gender roles. Moreover, Koreans who migrated did so because they had faith in meritocracy and the American dream and were preoccupied with economic survival and upward mobility for their children. In contrast, children of theirs who

were born in the United States or raised in the country from a young age are more exposed to American ideals of individual rights, diversity, personal autonomy, democratic values, and the pursuit of happiness. Along with the typical pressures of adolescence and adulthood, children may struggle to reconcile the different cultural expectations of home, their American peers, and the school environment.

The processes of migration and adaptation can also generate social dislocations and disruptions for the family as they struggle to leave behind familiar support systems and navigate the challenges of a new country. Language and cultural barriers, nativist discrimination, weakened support systems, and other migration stressors can strain family relations and reverse the power dynamics among the various members—including those between parent and child and husband and wife. The same holds true for Korean immigrants—especially but not limited to working-class families and those with family businesses—who must draw on all available resources and networks to overcome their day-to-day challenges.

In contrast to the heteronormative middle-class white ideal of home as the woman's domain, women of color have historically shouldered the dual burdens of domestic responsibilities and wage labor because of the economic disadvantages that men of color face in the American labor market. Even in the current post-industrial economy, the gap between the rich and the poor poses numerous employment challenges for migrant men such that in working-class families their wages alone are not sufficient to sustain the family and must be combined with the co- or sole wage-earning contributions of women, who may more easily find underpaid employment in garment work and domestic work, or unpaid family business labor. Even if they take on these duties reluctantly or for the first time, Korean migrant women's entrance into the paid labor force can enhance the decision-making leverage of women in the marital relationship. Korean men may perceive the changing dynamics of spousal

relations as a threat to the patriarchal authority they enjoyed in the homeland, only further aggravated by their racial demasculinization in the United States. In extreme cases, these tensions increase the likelihood of family disruptions, such as domestic abuse or marital separation.

When support is limited and both parents are working, Korean parents may also find themselves dependent on the relatively greater language and cultural familiarity of their American-raised children, who translate, broker, and manage social and economic transactions with the outside world for their families. Because of long work hours and low wages, working-class and entrepreneurial Korean families are more likely to pass on or share the adult responsibilities of caregiving, household chores, and business operations with their children when their children are at a young age. This is particularly true of daughters and oldest siblings within families because of culturally designated family roles and gendered expectations. However, early adult responsibilities and parental dependency also create additional social and psychological stress for children who shoulder these brokering obligations and burdens at a premature age.

#### Sources:

Bonacich, Edna. 1972. "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market." *American Sociological Review*, 37(5), 547-559. doi:10.2307/2093450

Chang, Edward and Jeannette Diaz Veizades. 1999. *Ethnic Peace in the American City: Building Community in Los Angeles and Beyond*. New York: New York University Press.

Chung, Angie Y. 2016. *Saving Face: The Emotional Costs of the Asian Immigrant Family Myth*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press (Families in Focus series).

Chung, Angie Y. 2001. "The Powers That Bind: A Case Study on the Collective Bases of Coalition-Building in Post-Civil Unrest Los Angeles." *Urban Affairs Review* 37(2): 205-26.

Freer, Regina. 1994. "Black-Korean Conflict," in *The Los Angeles Riots; Lessons for the Urban Future*, ed. Mark Baldassare. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 175-203.

Espiritu, Yen Le. 1997. *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*. CITY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Le, C.N. 2023. "Asian Small Businesses." *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*. <small-business.shtml> (August 8, 2023).

Light, Ivan and Edna Bonacich. 1991. *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Koreans in Los Angeles, 1965-1982*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Min, Pyong Gap. 1990. "Problems of Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs." *International Migration Review*, 3(24), 436-55.

Park, Kyeyoung. 1997. *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Park, Lisa. 2005. *Consuming Citizenship: Children of Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

# DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The discussion prompts, which follow specific chapters of the film, are an invitation to dialogue. Please select discussion questions that are relevant to your community.

## Starting The Conversation

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion:

- What did you learn from this film? Did you gain new insight?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
- Who do you think is the audience for this documentary? What message do you think the filmmaker is trying to convey to this audience throughout the film?
- Did anything in the film surprise you? Was anything familiar?
- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask and what would you want to know?

# The Generation Gap

One of the overarching themes of the film is the generation gap between the worldviews of immigrant parents and their American-born children.

- Did you observe any ways in which the lives of these family members were inextricably intertwined with one another?
- What scenes and quotes highlighted this?
- What about their situations do you think set up this type of complicated relationship?
- If you were in their shoes, what kinds of mixed feelings do you think these experiences would conjure up for you?

Throughout the film, the filmmaker gestures to various food-centered events and mundane routines, such as So Yun and her parents talking and eating Korean food and her father sleeping on a makeshift cot in the backroom of the liquor store.

- Do you think these moments are meaningful?
- What do you think the filmmaker is trying to communicate through these scenes?
- How do So Yun and Danny’s experiences as “liquor store babies” compare and contrast with the experiences of their parents?

- How do family obligations and expectations shape their personal choices and life decisions?
- Do you think any of these dynamics play out differently because of their genders?
- John Lee (California president, Korean American Grocers Association) states, “Your occupation was determined by who picked you up from the airport.” How do family and ethnic community play a role in the lives of immigrant business owners?
- Do the liquor store babies have a different view of solidarity and assimilation than their immigrant parents?

At the start of the film, the filmmaker states, “Growing up, because my parents worked so much, the television and movies were my babysitter,” but then also shows how the same media were sources of shame, rage, racial tensions, and stereotypes. Throughout the film, So Yun communicates feelings of hope, shame, and isolation and describes emotional voids that shaped her childhood, especially in relation to racial conflicts.

- Do you think these feelings are felt personally, collectively, or both? By whom?
- Where do you think these feelings originate?

When the Black Lives Matter movement took to the streets to protest police brutality, So Yun got into a heated argument with her father over the protestors’ response to the murder of George Floyd.

- What in their lived experiences do you think explains their different political positions and personal values on this issue?

At one point, her father argues, “If you want to fight, then you should go to trial and the judge will determine the fault,” but then later he states, “No matter where you go, there will always be prejudice. As time goes on, it will happen again. What fighting can achieve is only temporary. ”

- How do you reconcile these two different statements?
- Have any recent issues or developments in American race relations raised feelings of doubt or ambivalence for you?

At one point, So Yun makes an observation: “I always forget that our parents are also sons and daughters,” and Danny replies, “Wow.”

- Why is this an important revelation for them? How does it change their view of their relationships with their parents?
- Throughout the film, do you think the backstories of the immigrant parents shape the views of their American-born children? If so, how?



# Healing and Reconciliation

Compare and contrast how the two liquor store babies – So Yun and Danny—seek peace and reconciliation with their circumstances.

- Why do you think So Yun sees Danny as a role model in some ways?
- What are some similar or different ways their parents found to move forward?
  - What do you think contributes to the children’s and parents’ differing viewpoints about the children’s life choices?
  - Why do you think Danny gives up his dream job at Nike and continues operating the liquor store business despite his belief that even his father would have disapproved?
  - What irony can be found in his decision?
  - Do you think the children are honoring or rejecting their parents’ sacrifices for them in their actions and life decisions?
- So Yun complains that her parents believe “marriage is an answer to everything.” In what ways do you think the burdens of masculinity, femininity, and marriage/ family play out differently for So Yun and Danny?

In talking about his father, Danny talks about the difference between reactionary and revolutionary suicide, quoting Huey P. Newton: “But before we die, how shall we live? I say with hope and dignity. And if premature death is the result, that death has a meaning reactionary suicide can never have. It is the price of self-respect.”

- What is Danny referring to in these reflections on suicide? In what ways does Danny try to make life and death meaningful?
- For Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving), Danny performs an ancestral ritual for his father and grandfather involving food and includes photos of Latasha Harlins, George Floyd, and Brianna Taylor. Do you think this is related to his worldview and in what ways? Do you think it helps in the healing process?

Danny shares a quote from Mr. Rogers: “A neighborhood was a place where at times you felt worried, scared, unsafe, it would take care of you, provide understanding, safety—that’s what the neighborhood is to us. The neighborhood is not a fantasy place, where all these people got together and everything was happily ever after. When you have different people together with diverse opinions, you have conflict, real conflict.”

- In what ways do you see the same dynamics playing out in your “neighborhood”?
- How does Danny’s decision to change the name of the family business from Best Market to Skid Row People’s Market and include more affordable healthy products mark a turning point in the film?
- Have you ever taken action within a neighborhood to make it a safe sanctuary for its members and create a sense of belonging? If not, what are things you can do?

- The film highlights several points of irony—for example, the ways in which being a liquor store baby creates both shared empathy and intergenerational conflict and how the presence of Korean merchants in minority neighborhoods creates both competition and tension but also, greater interaction and insights that middle-class Americans may not encounter in segregated neighborhoods. Do you think this situation also highlights potential opportunities for healing wounds and finding lines of commonality between the two sides? Give some examples from the film or your personal anecdotes.
- Throughout the film, So Yun captures her interactions with her father as he is helping with the filmmaking and viewing the entire documentary at the end. How does the act of making the film itself bridge a gap and begin healing for the filmmaker?
- What are other ways in which people communicate beyond verbal expressions?
- Do you think the emotional tone of the film shifts by the end of the film?
- In your opinion, why does So Yun’s father choose to close the business as she is making the film?

# CLOSING QUESTION/ ACTIVITY

## OPTIONAL

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions.

**What did you learn from this film that you wish everyone knew? What would change if everyone knew it?**

**If you could require one person (or one group) to view this film, who would it be? What would you hope their main takeaway would be?**

**The story of these main characters are important because \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Complete this sentence: I am inspired by this film (or discussion) to \_\_\_\_\_.**

## TAKING ACTION

Briefly research the history of protests and movements in Korea against Japanese colonialism and labor and democracy issues in Korea. Do you see any historical parallels between Koreans and other BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) that could be used as the basis for inspiring action? The modern response of younger and older generations of Koreans highlights a generational divide in the meaning of protest in both Korea and America. Consider how one can engage in protest in diverse ways.

Jot down what you have learned about the path to healing, recovery, and cooperation in this film. What are some actions you can take in your life or community to bridge the racial divide and conflicts?

What are ways you can impact Asian American and BIPOC communities? See <https://www.liquorstoredreams.com/impact>.

# Resources

**Koreatown Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA)** combines organizing, leadership development, services, and policy advocacy in order to improve the lives of immigrant workers in low-wage industries in Koreatown and build a foundation for social change.

**Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC)** was established in 1975 to support a growing population of at-risk youth in Los Angeles. Today, KYCC supports children and their families in the areas of education, health, housing, and finances.

**Korean American Coalition (KAC)** promotes the civic and civil rights interests of the Korean American community. KAC endeavors to achieve these goals through education, community organizing, leadership development, and coalition-building with diverse communities.

**Liquor Store Dreams Impact Guide** provides a bank of resources for those seeking to delve deeper into understanding, action, and engagement with topics in the film, including anti-Asian hate, identity, politics, legacy, and the Los Angeles uprisings.

# Teaching Guide

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to discuss moments of conflict in the film *Liquor Store Dreams* from multiple perspectives and identify deeper societal root causes that contributed to these conflicts taking place.

## MATERIALS

- PEN
- PAPER

## TIME REQUIRED

90 MINUTES

## Essential Questions

**Does the perspective of conflict between participants in *Liquor Store Dreams* change depending on whose perspective the problem is viewed from?**

**Are their deeper root causes below the surface that explain why these moments of conflict occur?**

## Activity

### The Tip of the Iceberg Assignment:

Just as only the small tip of an iceberg is visible above the waterline, the things that we observe or experience around us can be caused by underlying systems and broader structural inequalities that are not always obvious at first glance.

### Directions:

Select a specific conflict or problem that is portrayed in the documentary film and explain it from each person's perspective. Does the viewer's perception of the problem change depending on the vantage point of the participant?

Then discuss the deeper root causes below the surface that explain why these problems occur. Think beyond the cultural values that divide generations. You may use these topics and questions to guide your discussion.

### Immigrant Experiences

- What do you think in the past histories and migration/ adaptation experiences of immigrant parents explains why they think so differently from their American-born children?

## Activity (cont)

- So Yun explains that they are some of the last generation of Korean families who kept their liquor store business in a predominantly Black and Brown neighborhood thirty years after the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings and notes, “When I step into my parents’ store, it’s as if we’re stuck in time.” What do you think she means by this?

### Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is typically viewed as a stepping stone to upward mobility in America.

- Does the documentary reveal another side to this image?
- Based on what you saw in the film, do you think there is anything distinctive about So Yun’s and Danny’s experiences as “liquor store babies” that sets them apart from other children of businessowners?
- How are their lived experiences in family businesses shaped by opportunities and/ or constraints and in what ways?

### Model Minority

The model minority myth promotes the stereotype that Asian Americans have been unusually successful in achieving the American dream through hard work, passive obedience, and innate abilities.

- Despite its positive connotations, what are some of the harmful effects of this myth on both Asian Americans and their relations with other minority groups?
- How does this film respond to the model minority myth? In what scenes?

### Systems of Oppression

Near the last segment of the film, Cue JnMarie (founder/ director of Creating Justice LA) states, “The same system affected us totally differently, but at the same time, it’s the same system.”

- What does he mean by this statement in the context of the film?
- Do you think racial and economic inequality contribute to this system?
- Do you think the struggles and experiences of Danny and Mark (the employee at People’s Market) are parallel in any way?
- Are they indeed part of the “same system”? Explain.

# Credits & Acknowledgments



## About the Author, Angie Y. Chung

Angie Y. Chung is professor of sociology at the University at Albany, a 2021–2022 U.S. Fulbright Scholar, and former visiting professor at Yonsei and Korea University. She is author of *Saving Face: The Emotional Costs of the Asian Immigrant Family Myth and Legacies of Struggle: Conflict and Cooperation in Korean American Politics*. She is currently writing a book manuscript titled *Immigrant Growth Machines: Urban Growth Politics in Koreatown and Monterey Park* based on research funded by the National Science Foundation. She has published in numerous journals on race/ ethnicity, immigration, gender and family, ethnic politics, international education, and media.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE PRODUCERS

Courtney B. Cook, PhD | *Education Manager, POV*  
Jordan Thomas | *Education Assistant, POV*