

# School of OOM YUNG DOE®

The GRANDMASTER “IRON” KIM Style™



## 8 Complete Martial Arts Taught As One™

Over the centuries, very few individuals have been able to reach the great heights of skill and ability achieved by their most exceptional predecessors, while also being able to significantly build upon and enhance that legacy. Through consistent dedication to training, building up others, and by clearly demonstrating an extraordinary level of skill and ability-- as demonstrated through his execution of the Kong Gong Sul Bope-- Grandmaster Iron Kim has solidified his legacy as a true Traditional Martial Arts ICON.



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When I first stepped into the school about two years ago, I was looking for something, but I had only the vaguest ideas of what it would be. I was stressed out from my job as a consultant and software developer, and I felt like my body was atrophying away into being merely a vehicle for moving my brain and hands from place to place. I tried a couple different types of exercise, but found nothing that quite fit. By that point, I had learned enough about myself to know that I needed structure, holistic integration between my mind and body, continual learning and challenge, and interaction with other people.

I had just moved into the neighborhood, and I saw a poster for a free self defense lesson at the school of oom yung doe. I knew absolutely nothing about martial arts and hadn't heard of oom yung doe before, but I was willing to try a free lesson. The school was literally on the walk home from work - I'd have no excuse for not going. I found the self-defense lesson fun and valuable, and signed up for more. Providentially, I had stumbled upon exactly what I needed, even though it took me a while to fully realize it.

When I first started training, I found caring instructors who knew my name. They remembered what I was learning, tailored the lessons to fit my physical injuries, and also took an interest in my life outside of class. I remember the first phone call I received when I didn't show up to class - I was surprised and pleased that I wasn't anonymous. They cared enough to check to see if I was alright, and this accountability motivated me to be more consistent in practice.

I also found all the challenge and potential for growth that I could ever have wanted – in mind, body, and spirit. Through the training, I've gained a lot of self-discipline, will-power, and inner strength. One of the ways I've grown is in having the inner strength to be more assertive in standing up for myself and others. That confidence comes from continually challenging myself and knowing who I am. I remember one of the first times when we were pushed to our physical limits and I thought I was going to be in pain forever. I wanted to stop, but with the instructors encouraging us, and the other students struggling through as well, I set my mind and refused to be the only person to give up. When we moved on to the next part of the lesson, my mind and body were ready to continue. I remembered thinking, “Wow, I am stronger than I thought and this has not defeated me.” That lesson is one that I've applied in my life outside of oom yung doe as well. When I'm in a challenging situation, whether it be in work, relationships, emotional or physical, I remind myself, “This too shall pass. It can't be nearly as hard as holding the T position for minutes on end. If I can make it through that, I can make it through anything.” Knowing that I am building the capability to overcome much and be refined, gives me the strength to approach hard situations with courage and perseverance.

In addition to the inner strength, my body has changed drastically as well. When I first started, I couldn't move at all. I hadn't exercised in years and I'm sure I was the stiffest, clumsiest, weakest, and most uncoordinated person of all the students that I started with. This was also the first time in my life that I was learning to move my body in such a coordinated way, and it took all my concentration. In many ways, I felt like I was learning a foreign language with my body, starting with each tiny separate piece as an incomprehensible syllable. Now, I have a firm grounding of the pieces and I'm able to combine them into bigger building blocks of movements. I also appreciate how the instructors explain the significance of the movements and we practice them as part of a self-defense application.

I still have a hard time owning the movements enough to apply them creatively in non-scripted situations, but I'm learning and challenging myself in that area. As much as I love learning the various forms, I'm glad that we learn the practical applications as well. I had been physically grabbed and mugged once, and I remember wishing that I knew how to protect myself. Being a small female, I could be an easy target. I'm less nervous now. If a situation occurs where I would need to protect myself or someone else, I know that I would not be helpless.



In many ways, I feel very lucky to have found oom yung doe. One of the aspects that I most appreciate about oom yung doe is the continual reminder that we need to use what we have learned to help others. The instructors exemplify this in the way they care for the students and fellow instructors, and help out in the community. I have been trying to live this principle in my life, and what I'm learning at oom yung doe helps me do it better. Previously, in my desire to help others, I had sometimes sacrificed my own needs and gotten burned out or resentful. The airplane analogy rings very true for me, "Put on your own oxygen mask before assisting someone else." I'm taking better care of myself so that I can take better care of other people.

I've been participating in improving the lives of fellow learners in oom yung doe, my job, through the Social Justice ministry I lead at church, and trying as best as I can to treat all that I meet with compassion and respect. In the school, I've cleaned up the school after lessons, painted the walls, and greeted new students and helped answer any questions they may have. When the international teams have been in town, I've also been helping the instructors set up and do little behind-the-scenes work. In my job, I know the value of having good relationships with coworkers and I try to be helpful and friendly to my teammates, treating them as whole people. With the Social Justice ministry, I've been helping our church do a needs assessment of our neighborhood and try to figure out an unmet need that we can serve long-term. In the meantime, we've been partnering with other organizations in the work they do, such as delivering Thanksgiving Baskets, building homes with Habitat for Humanity, offering food and companionship at a homeless shelter, and throwing a Christmas party for the children of prisoners.

This chance to test for first degree is a good time for me to pause and reflect on the progress I've made in the past two years. In the course of everyday life, I'm delighted that my body is strong and flexible, and moves the way that I want it to. I was so used to having my body be a limiting factor in things that I wanted to do, and I'm thankful that it's no longer like that. I've learned how to learn, and become more patient with failures, both my own and others, knowing that change and growth is hard work and takes time. I can also see holes where I didn't take full advantage of the opportunities I had and seeing them is a good incentive for me to continue to improve going forward. And I would consider it an honor to earn a first-degree black belt. I know that I would not have gotten there by myself. It would be a testament to all the people who have invested in me, my family, friends, and teachers, and how I'm become more equipped and able to invest in other people's lives as well.

Helena Park

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