



JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

The Japanese American National Museum is honored and proud to support the nomination of the late Colonel Young Oak Kim for the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. His heroic service in the United States Army and his pioneering leadership in underserved communities deem him a meritorious American citizen.

The mission of the Japanese American National Museum is to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. The National Museum was founded in 1985 by businessmen in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo and a group of highly decorated World War II veterans, which included Col. Kim.

Born in 1919 to immigrant parents, Colonel Young Oak Kim was a valiant Korean American war hero served in the United States Army during World War II and the Korean War. During World War II, Kim served as the only Korean American in the famous Japanese American unit, the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team. The Army offered him a transfer due to fears of ethnic conflict, but he refused, declaring, "There is no Japanese or Korean here. We're all Americans and we're fighting for the same cause." This sentiment underscored Kim's character, having the valor of a warrior with a heart of benevolence.

Throughout his military career, Young Oak Kim earned several awards, including the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross, but he remained a humble global citizen. The Korean War was the first time Kim had been in Korea, and he felt the need to give back to his origins. While serving in Seoul, he led his battalion in adopting an orphanage of over 500 children, who grew up to be successful innovators and leaders in the workforce.

After his retirement from an exemplary military career in 1972, Kim dedicated his life to serving minorities, youth, and the poor in his native Southern California. He was active in working with Special Services for Groups, a non-profit service organization that promoted



equal opportunities for vulnerable minorities. He became a founding member of numerous non-profit organizations in the region, including the Korean American Museum; the Korean American Coalition; and the Korean Health, Education, Information and Research Center. When he was on the board of the United Way Los Angeles Chapter, he added the organization's programs for the Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean American communities. Kim was also chairman of the Center for Asian Pacific Families, which, under his leadership, became the largest women's shelter in Southern California in the 1990's. He was also dedicated to preserving the history of contributions of the Japanese American military units of World War II. He helped to establish the Japanese American National Museum, the Go For Broke Monument, and the Go For Broke Educational Foundation.

Col. Kim not only served as a founding director of the Japanese American National Museum, but was also instrumental in hiring the first President of the National Museum, Mrs. Irene Hirano-Inouye. He also served as a member of the National Museum's Board of Governors from 1994 to 2005. His dedication to promote the mission of the National Museum will never be forgotten.

Col. Kim passed away in 2005, but his legacy lives on through the lives he saved during his service in the U.S. Army and the impact his organizations continue to make on new generations of Americans striving to fulfill their American dream. At the Japanese American National Museum, we recognize Kim's pioneering leadership and value the altruism, courage, and commitment to equality that life's work exemplified, particularly for underserved communities. Because of his exemplary contributions to our nation, Young Oak Kim is a worthy candidate for the highest civilian award in the United States, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Respectfully,

G. W. Kimura, Ph.D. (*Cantab.*)
President and Chief Executive Officer