

December 23, 2015

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

Dear President Obama:

I, Woo Sung Han, am 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.

I am the author of Colonel Young Oak Kim's biography. I spent six and a half years to write this book beginning February, 1997. During my research, I became very well aware of Colonel Kim's heroic actions as a U.S. Army officer during WWII and the Korean War as well as his numerous humanitarian acts after his retirement from the U.S. Army in 1972 until passing away in 2005.

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 nor 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 Korea, 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 Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean American Centers. 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 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.

The Young Oak Kim Academy in Los Angeles is the only junior high school in the U.S., named after an American of Korean ancestry. Since its birth in 2009, approximately 320 students graduate from this public school every year with a dream of becoming another leader like Col. Kim to lead future America into a prosperous country of liberty and justice.

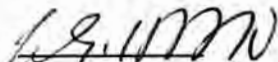
The Young Oak Kim Center for Korean American Studies at the University of California, Riverside, established in 2010, is the first university research center named after a Korean American in the U.S. history.

The Los Angeles Unified School District is considering Col. Kim's biography to be an official reference book for modern history class for high school students in the district.

His story was even introduced in the only National Language textbook for all the 5th graders in Korea in 2010. He now is one of the nine military leaders, from whom the Korean Army officers learn leadership officially. The Naval War College of Korea has an official policy of allocating two hours every year to teach its student officers Col. Kim's leadership.

I 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,


Woo Sung Han