



January 12, 2016

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

Dear President Obama:

The Korean American Bar Association of Southern California 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 *Korean American Bar Association of Southern California* ("KABA") is a pro-bono organization of attorneys which promotes excellence in the practice of law, supports the advancement of Korean-American candidates to the judicial bench, and hosts monthly and annual pro-bono legal clinics for the local under-served communities. KABA has over two hundred members including numerous Judges, partners in major law firms, and attorneys in important non-profit and community leadership roles. The KABA Foundation also awards multiple scholarships to law students on an annual basis. The Los Angeles area has the largest population of Koreans living outside of South Korea (over 300,000) and KABA maintains an active and highly visible role in the community.

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.

In accordance with Colonel Kim's advocacy for racial equality, youth, the elderly, women, and the poor, KABA continues Colonel Kim's social justice and community work. KABA maintains an active presence in the Los Angeles Korean American Community through its dedication to providing pro bono legal services. Monthly legal clinics and law days are held regularly in collaboration with community and legal non-profit organizations. KABA also strives to maintain relationships with aspiring attorneys by providing support and mentorship to law students. Colonel Kim's exceptional community service is in inspiration to KABA, and KABA will continue its mission of providing legal support to the Korean American Community and bringing about the advancement of Korean Americans in the legal field.

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 Korean American Bar Association Southern California, we recognize Kim's pioneering leadership and value the altruism, courage, and commitment to equality that his 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,

Lloyd Lee, Esq.

President, Korean American Bar Association of Southern California

Lloyd@pro-esq.com

Ph. (213) 289-3535