



THE AMBASSADOR
HO-YOUNG AHN

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

March 22, 2016

Dear Mr. President:

I am honored to support the nomination of the late Colonel Young Oak Kim for the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. With his heroic service in the United States Army and his dedicated leadership in underserved communities at home, Colonel Kim's life embodies the spirit of this medal, awarded to those who make "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public endeavors." Indeed, as the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States, I am proud of the way that Colonel Kim's commitment to service and devotion to his country have helped forge and strengthen the ROK-US Alliance and improved the lives of citizens of both our countries.

Born in 1919 to Korean immigrants, Colonel Young Oak Kim's dedication to his country quickly became apparent. In World War II, he served as the only Korean-American in the all Japanese-American 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team. Transcending the ethnic divisions of his unit, Colonel Kim led the battalion to success throughout the war. In Italy, he played a key role in breaking the Gustav Line which led to the liberation of Rome.

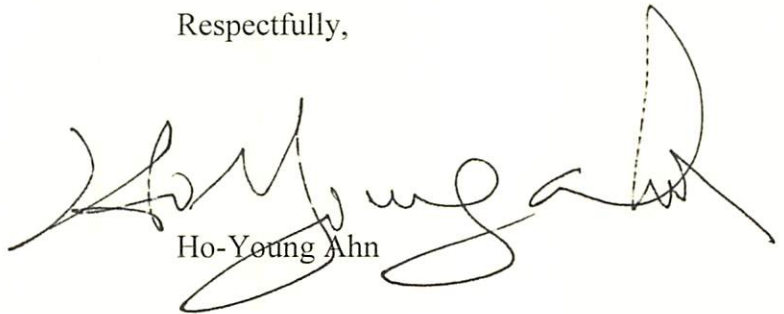
In addition to his love for the United States, Colonel Kim was also devoted to the country of his parents' birth. When the Korean War broke out, he chose to re-enlist in the U.S. Army and insisted on fighting on the front lines. During the war he became the first minority commander of an Army battalion and helped push Chinese troops back above the 38th parallel. But his most important legacy during the war had nothing to do with combat. In 1951, Colonel Kim led his battalion to adopt an orphanage in Seoul and helped care for over 500 children—the only UN military unit to do so during wartime.

Throughout his military career, Colonel Kim was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, two Bronze Stars, and three Purple Hearts for his actions in combat. His valor was not just the result of his devotion to his country, but of his commitment to his fellow man.

After he retired from the military in 1972, Colonel Kim devoted the rest of his life to serving the diverse Asian-American communities of Los Angeles. He founded and supported a number of non-profit organizations in Southern California and became active in efforts to improve the lives of underprivileged Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese Americans.

This spirit of common humanity animates so much of Colonel Kim's life. Indeed, his life embodies many of the characteristics that have led the ROK-US Alliance to endure for so long: a commitment to country, a dedication to service, and the valor of men willing to fight for something they believe in. For this, for his valor, and for his contributions to the ROK-US Alliance, I wholeheartedly recommend Colonel Young Oak Kim to be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Respectfully,



Ho-Young Ahn