



미주한인재단

Korean American Foundation

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January 21, 2016

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Korean American Foundation of USA and would like to draw your attention to the extraordinary life of Col. Young Oak Kim who served in World War II and the Korean War. Col. Kim was not only a war hero, he was a humanitarian whose community service activities changed the lives of countless Americans. I am requesting that Col. Kim's military and humanitarian records be reviewed and his actions rewarded with a Medal of Freedom.

Col. Kim was born in Los Angeles on January 29, 1919. The son of Korean immigrants, Col. Kim grew up during a period of racial discrimination and hardship. Despite these obstacles, he surmounted the difficulties and went on to become one of the most celebrated heroes of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regiment during World War II. Though he was placed in the mostly-Japanese Nisei Unite, he argued with his commanding officer to let him stay saying that they were all Americans fighting for the same cause.

During WWII he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his brave actions in Italy during the Battle of Anzio and the liberation of Rome. He earned a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, two Legion of Merit honors, and two Purple Hearts. France later awarded Kim with the Legion d'Honneur and a Croix de Guerre. Italy awarded him a Military of Valor Cross and a Bronze Cross of Military Valor.

When WWII was over he returned to civilian life. But in 1950, after the outbreak of the Korean War, he reenlisted in the U.S. Army and went to the frontlines. While he was in Korea he became the first minority to command an Army battalion. During that war he earned a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and a Purple Heart. Col. Kim was later awarded Korea's highest military honor for his actions during the war.

But his military successes are not the only things that should be recognized. While serving in Korea he and his unit supported an orphanage; many of these children went on to become teachers, leaders, and artists. Col. Kim's compassion and humanitarian efforts touched the lives of everyone around him.

When Col. Kim retired from the Army in 1972 he dedicated the rest of his life to helping others, especially those who are needy in the community. For the next 33 years, Col. Kim worked as a humanitarian and philanthropist. His community service work included:

- Member of the Board of Trustees, LA Chapter of the United Way
- Chairman of the Center for Pacific Asian Families (CPAF)
- Vice Chairman of the Japanese Museum National Museum
- Founding Co-Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the Korean Health, Education, Information and Research Center (KHEIR)
- Founding member of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the Korean American Coalition (KAC)



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- Chairman of the 100th/442nd/MIS Memorial Foundation
- Chairman Emeritus, Go For Broke Education Foundation
- Developed and helped secure funding for the Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC)

KHEIR became one of the largest ethnic charity health organizations in America. Col. Kim's humanitarian work included helping battered women and children through the Center for Pacific Asian Families which became the first and largest shelter in Southern California for victims of domestic violence. Col. Kim also served as a mentor and as a bridge between Korea-Japan relations; he promoted cooperation and ethnic peace.

Today, there is a school in Los Angeles named after Col. Kim. In Korea, children learn about this American-born Korean who served the United States with valor and honor. Although Col. Kim passed away from cancer in 2005, he remains a role model for all ages, ethnicities, and future generations.

Korean American Foundation of USA is a national organization, leading 48 city chapters nationwide; to celebrate "Korean American Day" each year on January 13th, following the passage of U.S. Congress in 2005. We emphasize community service and focus on educating the next generation of Korean American history, culture, and heritage. I truly believe that Korean Americans like Col. Kim represent American values and that his contributions to the American way of life were extraordinary. Therefore, I humbly ask that you consider awarding Col. Kim the Medal of Freedom for his amazing contributions to our great country.

Sincerely,

Sung Woong Kim, President
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