



SCHOOL OF LAW

President Barack Obama
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Dear Mr. President,

It is with the greatest of ardor and enthusiasm that I write to urge that the Presidential Medal of Freedom be awarded to Fred Ross Sr. posthumously.

I was privileged to have been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton. Those who were awarded the Medal at the same ceremony were an impressive set of Americans who came from all walks of life, including one who was recognized posthumously. Yet, I would be hard pressed to imagine that those of us who were recognized contributed more to the welfare of individuals and our country than did Fred Ross Sr.

Several other recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom would not have come to the attention of the President but for the work of Fred Ross Sr. I was invited to the ceremony when Sylvia Mendez was awarded the Medal. She was the young student who helped integrate public schools pursuant to the case *Mendez v Westminster* declaring discrimination against Mexican Americans unconstitutional. And it was Fred Ross Sr. who had organized the Mexican American Community to challenge school segregation. This case was based on new legal ground – that discrimination, even if the schools were equal, was unconstitutional. Later, with a former governor of California as Chief Justice, the Supreme Court embraced that concept in *Brown v Board of Education*. When I was in high school, my own community in Orange County, was urging the desegregation of the grammar school I had attended. After many hearings a reluctant school board agreed, but I have long wondered whether the school would have been desegregated if the federal courts had not already declared segregation unconstitutional. Dolores Huerta, who worked closely with Cesar Chavez was awarded the medal. More recently, you recognized the special place Cesar Chavez has played in our country's evolution to a more inclusive and responsive society. It was Fred Ross Sr. who trained Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta.

I did not meet Fred Ross Sr. until 1959 when I joined the Community Service Organization (CSO). By that time Fred had accumulated vast experience and accomplishments from helping farm workers during the depression, Japanese Americans during World War II, and Mexican Americans after the war. My contact with Fred Ross Sr. was, of course, the CSO. I learned of his successful effort to form the CSO in Los Angeles; through voter registration and community organizing. Ed Roybal was the first Chicano to be elected to the City Council. Only in the last couple of years have I learned of the relationship of those early political victories to the later

success of an African American, Tom Bradley, who became the first, and thus far the only, African American mayor of Los Angeles. The CSO was the best and most effective grass root organization to which I have belonged. Our chapter registered voters, organized get out the vote drives, taught English, helped immigrants become citizens, encouraged civic engagement, and lead the way to local improvements as well as fruitful legislation in Sacramento. Fred was key to the success of the CSO and later the United Farm Workers. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta were the staff for CSO. It was there that they were trained by Fred Ross Sr. I observed his skills for many years since I was an active member and officer of the CSO. When he went on to work closely with the United Farm Workers I could see the same passion and the skill he had always shown. His low key approach, his determination to have our country live up to its ideals, his mastery of organizing and his ability to recognize leadership qualities enhanced the best interests of our country.

I can think of no one more deserving of being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Please advise if I can be of further assistance or can provide more information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cruz Reynoso". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Cruz Reynoso