

Honorable President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington D. C.
c/o Julie Chavez Rodriguez,
Associate Director of Latino Affairs and Immigration for the
Office of Public Engagement at the White House:

Dear President Obama:

I'm writing you to request that Fred Ross Sr. be given the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Fred died in 1992 but he was a trainer and inspiration for many of us who are committed to social justice. In the mid seventies as an organizer for the United Farm Workers (UFW) union I met Fred Ross Sr. In the late seventies in a series of meetings with Cesar Chavez, he encouraged those of us working with NIA Cultural Organization to organize domestic workers. He told us that if had he not been successful at organizing farm workers he would have organized domestic workers because they both had been left out of the National Labor Relations Act. We considered the idea and discussed it, many of us had domestic workers in our families and it made sense, we agreed.

Cesar was delighted and the UFW provided \$1500 a month and in 1977 sent Fred Ross to train us. Fred was in his late sixties but still full of energy. We were a Black Nationalist organization focused on fighting institutional racism and connecting to our history, we had not done very much work outside of those issues, aside from working with Cesar as part of our multi cultural efforts.

Fred's approach was very different. We had never met anyone like him. He taught me the house meeting method and the nuts and bolts of organizing. Slowly we built the union meeting domestic worker one by one getting them to host house meetings and from those meetings more meetings by 1978 we founded the United Domestic Workers Union. The union is still growing today as a statewide local for the American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees Union.

I worked with him again in the mid eighties to train organizers for the Farm Labor Organizing Committee in Ohio and again with Neighbor to Neighbor a national grassroots organization that was a leader in the fight for peace and justice in Central America, and in the fight for universal health care.

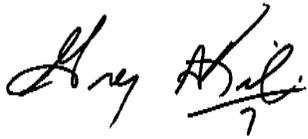
The major influences in my life have been Malcolm X, Cesar Chavez, Dr. Maulana Karenga and Fred. I learned a great deal from Fred, his values, and his commitment to empowering people. His training shaped my life as I have gone on to become an organizing trainer.

In 2008 I was a trainer in the Obama Fellows program in Florida. I helped lead the Camp Obamas in Los Angeles and I was the South Los Angeles Regional Field Director for Obama for America. Much of what we did in the campaign came from Fred's teachings, lessons and vision.

To this day I still refer to Fred's teachings; *"Short cuts usually end in detours which lead to dead ends"* and *"Organizing is providing people with the opportunity to become aware of their own capabilities and potential."*

Fred has trained, been the inspiration and had a major impact on three generations of organizers; all have made a contribution to creating a better America. I strongly support the Medal of Freedom for Fred Ross Sr. it would be a fitting acknowledgement to him and for all of us who have spent our lives applying what we learned from him.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Akili". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Greg Akili