

Nina Helstein
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Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to urge you to award Fred Ross, Sr. the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The people who know Fred Ross' accomplishments as an organizer think of him as legendary. The fact that he is not widely known by the general public is a tribute to the mastery of his organizing skills. There are organizers who are more famous than he because they were the face of various struggles, becoming personalities in the public sphere. Fred Ross, equally committed to empowering people in their lives, worked painstakingly, individual by individual, to enable people to speak for themselves through the creation of their own organizations. As he helped them realize this vision, it became their faces and voices that were known to the public, not his own. This is the mark of a truly great and devoted organizer.

In these times of Citizens United, corporate influence on governing, and efforts to deny voting rights, we need more than ever to appreciate and recognize organizers who have shown us the importance of empowering working people, those living in poverty and those who have come to this country for work. We need to be reminded by Fred Ross's life work that our democracy depends on citizens making their voices heard.

Mr. President, you have talked movingly to us about the difference people can make by speaking up. Awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Fred Ross, Sr. would be consistent with your efforts to encourage us to participate in the shaping of our world.

Sincerely,

Nina Helstein