

February 27, 2013

Dear President Obama,

I write to support the call to grant the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Fred Ross, Sr.

Fred's work as a community and union organizer embodies the very meaning of Freedom and Democracy. Fred dedicated his life to motivate, train and inspire community and workplace leaders, students and activists of all stripes to take hold of the freedom established by our Founding Fathers and use it to the fullest degree to organize for dignity and respect.

In 1977 I had the great fortune to be invited to a two-week intensive organizing training for new UFW organizers, led by Fred. I was 21 and recently joined the UFW as a boycott organizer in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Fred was in the homestretch of his illustrious career. Yet the intensity and passion for organizing he demonstrated was so powerful and fresh. Fred taught organizers and activists the fundamentals of democratic participation-how to mobilize groups of people to stand up for issues they believe in. It sounds simple. But anyone who's tried move people to challenge the status quo and seemingly intractable foes knows how painstakingly hard it can be. Fred showed us that it can be done, with urgency, unbending commitment and attention to the finest details and broadest vision.

After organizing on the UFW boycott, I have now spent more than thirty years organizing hotel and restaurant workers, health care workers, and now with non-profit and public sector workers who are members of AFSCME.

Fred Ross Sr. was a pioneer and among the first to train community organizers. His work created successful democratic organizations of the once powerless, and demonstrates the essence of American Freedom and Democracy.

Fred Ross Sr. deserves the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary Guthman  
Culver City, California