

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to join the growing number of voices encouraging you to bestow the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Fred Ross Sr. posthumously.

Over the last two years, we have been researching and making a feature documentary film on the life of Dolores Huerta, a 2012 recipient of the Medal of Freedom and one of Fred Ross's most accomplished students. During this process, we have become aware of Mr. Ross's work and his enduring legacy as one of the greatest organizers of the 20th century. Many have chronicled the highlights of Fred Ross Sr.'s fifty years of fighting for social justice. His work with the farmworkers as a teacher and mentor is well known. His organizing with Dust Bowl refugees in the 1930s and 1940s and with Japanese Americans during World War II, his work with African American and Mexican American families fighting for desegregation in Orange County, his efforts on behalf of domestic workers and immigrants, and his work against police brutality are less well known.

Fred Ross Sr. trained and taught a countless number of people the skill and art of building power to advance human and civil rights, particularly in historically marginalized communities of color like our own. He encouraged many young men and women to question the existing structures of power and to take on leadership roles in order to create change. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta have both called Fred Ross Sr. their "greatest teacher and mentor." California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso and labor leader Eliseo Medina are just a few of the young people he mentored who have dedicated their lives to social and

economic justice. Even those of us who did not know him personally are the beneficiaries of his organizing, and that of the organizers who fought for and continue to fight for racial, economic, and social equality in our country.

Fred Ross Sr. also understood the importance of building institutions and the legal structures that codify the principles of social and economic justice into law. The landmark case, *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1947), which ordered the desegregation of schools in Orange County, California, and the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975 which codified labor rights and protections of farmworkers who were not protected under the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, are primary examples of the fruits of Fred's vision and work.

As citizens, filmmakers, and as men of color, we are deeply indebted to Fred Ross Sr. for teaching communities how to build power in order to hold government, business and the broader community accountable, and for reminding us all of the principles and standards set forth in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights that ensure equality and "justice for all." As the militarization of local police agencies and the recent string of senseless killing of young brown and black men remind us, the struggle for justice is far from over. Its fulfillment will require the vision and relentless hard work of leaders and grass roots organizers who live out the enduring legacy and spirit of Fred Ross Sr. Conferring this award upon Fred Ross Sr. nurtures and feeds this spirit. It reminds us -- in a day and age where so many feel unheard and powerless -- that each one of us has the ability and power to effect real and lasting change.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Peter Bratt, Producer-Director, Dolores Huerta Film Project

Benjamin Bratt, Consulting Producer