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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of all the Bishops of the California Catholic Conference, I write to you today to request that you to award posthumously the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the hero and organizer of the oppressed – Fred Ross, Sr.

Fred Ross, Sr. not only dedicated his life to assist and inspire people of all races and backgrounds to overcome fear, obstacles and despair, he was also a mentor to two historical leaders of racial and economic justice, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta (both recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom).

Fred Ross, Sr. selflessly put his Catholic faith into action, fighting for racial and economic justice throughout many decades. His enduring legacy as an organizer who built collective action, citizenship engagement and leadership development is an inspiration to all who believe in the dignity of every human being.

In the thirties and forties, Fred Ross Sr. organized “Dust Bowl” refugees in migratory worker camps. He worked with Japanese Americans during WWII. After WWII, he organized eight Civic Unity Leagues in California’s Citrus Belt, bringing Mexican Americans and African Americans together to battle segregation in schools, skating rinks and movie theaters. In his fight against segregation, he inspired parents to sue the school districts of Orange County – and they prevailed, creating legal precedent for the landmark Brown vs. the Board of Education decision.

In the early 1950s, Ross met Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. He recruited them to become fulltime organizers with the CSO and became a lifetime mentor. He dedicated his talents to America’s farm workers and their struggle for justice and dignity during the 1960s and 1970s.

Jerry Cohen, former UFW General Counsel stated, *“Fred fought more fights and trained more organizers and planted more seeds of righteous indignation against social injustice than anyone we’re ever likely to see again.”*

In recognition of this humble hero of American society we urge you to confer the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously upon Fred Ross, Sr. This recognition would be a beacon of hope for living and future organizers committed to social justice. I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

In the service of Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald Wilkerson
President & Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles

Mr. Edward E. Dolejsi
Executive Director