

From: John Adler <john.adler@seiu.org>
Date: February 18, 2013, 4:05:27 PM PST
To: Julie_C_Rodriguez@who.eop.gov
Subject: *Presidential Medal of Freedom for Fred Ross Sr.*

President Barack Obama
c/o Julie Chavez Rodriguez
Associate Director of Latino Affairs and Immigration
Office of Public Engagement
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

This is the first personal letter I have ever written to a President of the United States. I am about 6 weeks older than you are, and, like you, I set out to make a difference in the world as a community organizer. I still work as an organizer today, and the main reason is that when I first graduated from college, in 1984, I had the good fortune to be trained as an organizer by Fred Ross, Sr., the legendary organizer who was then nearing the end of his career in organizing and training organizers as I embarked on my own career. Over the last 29 years I have endured as an organizer, including the last 21 years working for 1199/SEIU (with our mutual friend and brother Patrick Gaspard) and for SEIU. I spent the last 2 1/2 weeks of both the 2008 and 2012 elections away from my family working in Cleveland to help bring Ohio home for you. I am writing this letter to urge you to posthumously award the President Medal of Freedom to this mentor of hundreds of organizers (thousands, if you consider the organizers that Fred's disciples themselves trained) for social justice.

I am sure you are receiving many letters that detail the remarkable particulars of Fred's life and achievements. I graduated summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa from Yale University, and I learned more that I have used every day for the last 29 years from Fred in one month than I did in 4 years of college! I met Fred when he was 74 years old at a training for organizers in the movement for social justice in Central America, and then worked with him over the next several years training farmworker organizers in Ohio and Michigan, and leading trainings with him of dozens of organizers for justice in Central America in Los Angeles and Chicago.

I can think of no better way for you to honor the great organizing tradition of which both you and I are part than by honoring Fred Ross Sr. with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Adler

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