



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
FEDERATION OF LABOR,
AFL-CIO

Maria Elena Durazo
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

Ricardo F. Icaza
President

February 20, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We in L.A. Labor are writing to ask you to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to one of the greatest community organizers of 20th Century America, Fred Ross Sr. During his eulogy for Fred in San Francisco in 1992, Cesar Chavez observed, "Fred Ross gave me and so many others a chance, and that led to a lot of things."

One of the people who were given a chance by Fred was my late husband and predecessor as leader of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, Miguel Contreras. Fred helped train Miguel and a whole generation of community and labor organizers during the farm worker movement in the late 1960s and early '70s.

Fred's pioneering of the modern paradigm of labor and community organizing sparked a movement towards civic and political empowerment by Latinos in East Los Angeles and across California in the late 1940s and '50s that continues to this day. But Fred's work also led to so many other things, including training and inspiring generations of capable and dedicated activists from all walks of life who he taught to transform themselves, their communities and their organizations.

Miguel Contreras began during the mid-1990s into transform L.A.'s labor movement into a model of what a central labor body can do to empower workers and create a powerhouse of progressive social and political activism. I am endeavoring to carry on that work. But none of this would have been possible if Fred Ross had not taught us about organizing, hard work, self-sacrifice and perseverance.

Thank you for considering Fred Ross Sr. for the Medal of Freedom.

Si Se Puede!

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