

City and County of Denver



Hon. Paul D. López
Councilman, District Three

March 13, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to urge you to confer the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Fred Ross Sr. in recognition of his life's work on behalf of strengthening our democracy immeasurably by engaging thousands upon thousands of people to work to uphold our nation's ideals of liberty and justice for all.

Fred was a legendary community organizer whose work changed the course of history and effect is still felt today. In the thirties and early forties, he organized Dust Bowl refugees in refugee camps to form camp councils. In the forties and fifties he organized communities across California to fight segregation through building organization and voter registration drives. In the fifties he recruited and trained Cesar Chaves and Dolores Huerta, and later trained thousands of organizers in the United Farm Workers (UFW).

Fred had a firm conviction that we all have the ability – and the duty – to stand up to injustice. Not only did he believe that a small committed group of individuals can change the world, he had developed proven methods for how that can happen. He taught us how to organize communities, person-by-person, living room gathering-by-living room gathering. He showed us that if we went out and talked with people one-on-one that we could inspire them to act. And that with our help, they themselves could become effective organizers who convinced their friends and colleagues to come to a "house meeting" and take action. And as those people in turn engaged their networks, more and more people would join, creating a powerful campaign.

His belief that developing a personal connection is more powerful than any other outside force to empower communities is the backbone of how we organize today. He believed that we need to ask a lot of ourselves and each other, and that not only is this how to build a campaign for change, but that in the process we grow as individuals as well. I suspect that is why the leaders and networks he developed have had such an impact over the years.

Fred Ross Sr. has created a stronger democracy and more justice in America. His impact is still being felt through the many leaders he inspired and trained. You can help keep that legacy alive honoring him posthumous.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul D. Lopez", written over a light-colored background.

Hon. Paul D. López
City & County of Denver, Council District 3

CC: Senator Michael Bennet

