

February 28, 2013

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

Re: Nomination of Fred Ross to Receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Dear President Obama:

We the undersigned respectfully request your consideration of bestowing the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award posthumously to Mr. Fred Ross.

Mr. Ross was a man of great courage and conviction. He provided leadership by example and supported many communities whose members were subject to racism, negative stereotypes and prejudgments to fight for their place at the table as an equal partner. But for Mr. Ross' willingness to stand alongside many of those fighting for equality and social justice, the laws to protect the traditionally underrepresented in California would not have been possible.

In particular, Mr. Ross' dedication in helping the Japanese American community in the San Francisco Bay Area was exemplary. In 1942, Mr. Ross was an employee of the Farm Security Administration assigned to work with Japanese Americans to prepare for their forced evacuation out of their homes into detention centers and then to one of the ten concentration camps created in the US. He was later assigned to serve as Assistant Chief of Community Services at the Minidoka Concentration Camp located in south central Idaho where over 9000 persons of Japanese ancestry were confined until as late as 1946. From Idaho, Mr. Ross was transferred to Cleveland to help many Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) find employment, and then moved to San Francisco in January 1945 to help Japanese American families reestablish themselves in the homes and communities they lived in before the war started.

It is important to note each phase of Mr. Ross' place of employment during these years as that experience shaped his dedication and commitment to the Japanese American community. From the onset, Mr. Ross knew that there was no justification for the President to sign Executive Order 9066 to forcibly remove innocent individuals from their homes and deprive them of all of the rights we are guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States. Yet, he knew that his thoughts and opinions were of the minority and so he dedicated himself to do whatever he personally could to make sure that the Japanese Americans he was assigned to work with were receiving as fair of a treatment as he could obtain for them. While in Cleveland, he led the fight to ensure that Japanese Americans could attend classes at Western Reserve University even though the administration of that campus was thoroughly opposed to their acceptance; when the order was lifted to allow Japanese Americans to return back to the west coast, he accompanied two Nisei men to California and was forced to act as their bodyguard to protect them from the harsh discrimination they faced to even sit and eat a meal in a restaurant; then, when he moved to San Francisco, he fought hard to change some of the practices to prevent discrimination and violence toward Japanese Americans. Mr. Ross suffered with the families that were stoned; helped rebuild homes that were intentionally burned; tried to find housing in neighborhoods

where restrictive covenants were prevalent, and negotiated with city workers to accept and fairly treat Japanese Americans who were more than qualified to undertake positions they applied for.

We, as Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II or are children and grandchildren of those Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) and Nisei who were incarcerated, know that it took a great deal of courage to perform the acts Mr. Ross did to help our community. There were very few 'friends' Japanese Americans could count on to wholeheartedly support them immediately before, during and immediately after World War II but there was never a doubt with Mr. Fred Ross.

Therefore, we ask that you seriously consider the request before you and support this great man of honor, courage, respect and dignity.

Sincerely,
(in alpha order)

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