

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

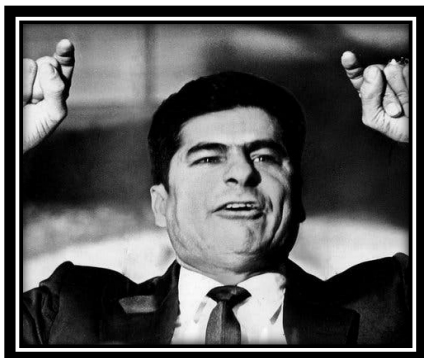
REIES LOPEZ TIJERINA

preacher, activist

"I am not for separatism from the United States.

My motto is justice but not independence from or revolution against the United States."

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Courtesy of United Press International

Background Information

Born September 21, 1923; Died January 19, 2015

Reies Lopez Tijerina grew up in different locations in Texas. At 17, Tijerina was ordained Pentecostal minister from an Assemblies of God Bible institute near El Paso¹, but he never received a formal education. He turned to activism through his experiences with the Church.

Tijerina's Resistance

In the early 1960s, Tijerina took interest in the history of displaced Chicanos (people of Mexican descent) and Latinos (people of Latin descent) throughout the Texas area. In 1963, he established La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Alliance of Land Grants). This organization focused on obtaining land for displaced Chicanos. He worked tirelessly to gain land and get international attention for the cause. He also was the Latino leader for The Poor People's Campaign, which pushed the government to implement a plan to control the unemployment rate and housing crisis affecting the nation's population living in poverty.²

La Alianza relied heavily on physical and verbal acts of resistance to push against land inequality. Many people did not agree with their tactics, and La Alianza member often faced arrest and imprisonment. Despite challenges, La Alianza brought attention to the civil rights issues the Latino community was fighting against.³ Tijerina gave a voice to the generations of Latinos living in America who believed they had lost the rights to their land many decades ago.⁴

Achievements

Tijerina was called a "King Tiger" and "the Malcolm X of the Chicano Movement" for his work with the land-grant movement in the 1950s-1970s.⁵ Tijerina eventually formed alliances with Black Power activists and was a mentor to other early Chicano leaders. He was later arrested and sent to jail for his actions. Despite these issues, he continues to be considered a major leader for the Chicano Civil Rights Movement.

¹ Wright, A. N. (2019). Reies Tijerina. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Reies-Lopez-Tijerina>

² Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. Poor People's Campaign. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Poor-Peoples-March>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Reies López Tijerina and the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse Raid. *Southwest Crossroads Spotlight*. Retrieved from <https://www.southwestcrossroads.org/record.php?num=739>

⁵ Wright. (2019). Reies Tijerina.

