

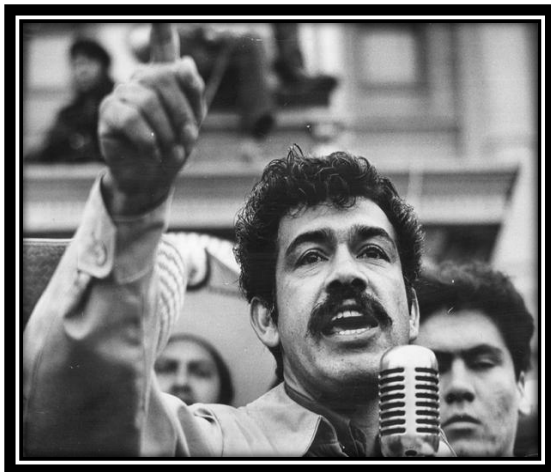
## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### RODOLFO “CORKY” GONZALES

boxer, chicano activist, poet

*“I shall endure! I will endure!”*

Page | 1



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#### Background Information

Born June 18, 1928; Died April 12, 2005

Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales was born in Denver, Colorado, as the son of two immigrant farm workers. He attended high schools in Colorado and New Mexico, while simultaneously working in the beet fields. He graduated from Manual High School when he was 16. He then pursued a career in professional boxing, where he collectively amassed 63 wins, 11 losses and 1 draw<sup>i</sup>. He earned a place in the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in 1988 and is known as one of the

highest ranked featherweight fighters in the world. His uncle, who often called out his fiery tendencies as a child, nicknamed him Corky: “He was always popping off like a cork.”<sup>ii</sup>

#### Gonzales’ Resistance

Gonzales was a Mexican-American boxer, poet and political activist. He was a core figure in the Chicano Movement, which sought to improve rights for Mexican-Americans. Gonzales introduced his vision of the “Chicano” in his poetry piece, *Yo soy Joaquín* (known in English as *I Am Joaquín*). He coined the “Chicano” as someone who was neither Indian nor European, neither Mexican nor American, but a combination of all these respective identities. His poem is remembered as one of the founding pieces of the Chicano Art Movement, which was the creative branch of the political Chicano Movement.

In his early career, Gonzalez was involved in promoting the Democratic Party. However, his unsuccessful efforts to advocate for change led him to lose faith in America’s two-party system. He sought alternative ways to make a difference for Mexican-Americans.<sup>iii</sup> He went on to found the private school Tlatelolco in 1971, which focused on building student’s self-esteem through culturally relevant lessons. Gonzales is also known for convening the first-ever Chicano Youth Conference in 1969. Gonzalez worked tirelessly to fight for communities who were taken advantage of by the government and who demanded their rights as U.S. citizens.

#### Achievements

Rodolfo Gonzales is remembered as “the fist” of the Chicano Movement. The US government did not formally recognize him for his activism. In 2018, a Denver, Colorado, public library was named in his honor.

## Essential Questions

1. Rodolfo Gonzales was a professional athlete who later became a political activist. How can celebrities such as athletes help to create awareness of social issues?
  
2. Gonzales lost faith in America's two-party system, so he sought to create his own and worked outside traditional political and social systems. Do you believe you can change systems from within or should people work outside the system to make change? Why?
  
3. ***"I shall endure! I will endure!"***
  - a. Fighting for social change is often a long, hard journey. What can a person do to stay motivated and willing to fight to make sure they can "***endure***"?

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<sup>i</sup> Alvarez, Martha (May 4, 2009). "[The 40th Annual Corky Gonzales Symposium: The Voice of Activism in Denver](#)". Thomas Jefferson Journal. Archived from [the original](#) on March 16, 2012. Retrieved October 29, 2019

<sup>ii</sup> Mariscal, Jorge (April 28, 2005). "Civil Rights Icon 'Corky' Gonzales Dies". New America Media. Archived from the original on March 6, 2012. Retrieved October 29, 2019.

<sup>iii</sup> "Rodolfo Gonzales, 76, Boxer and Activist, Dies". The New York Times. April 16, 2005.