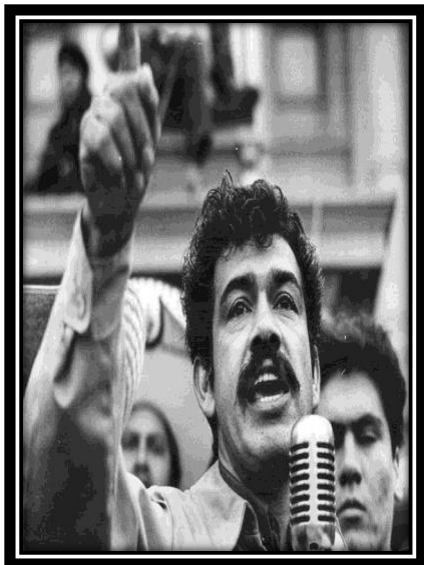


## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### RODOLFO “CORKY” GONZALES

boxer, Chicano activist, poet  
*“I shall endure! I will endure!”*

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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. 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, gave his nickname to him, “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 the 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 taken advantage of by the government and who demanded for 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.

