

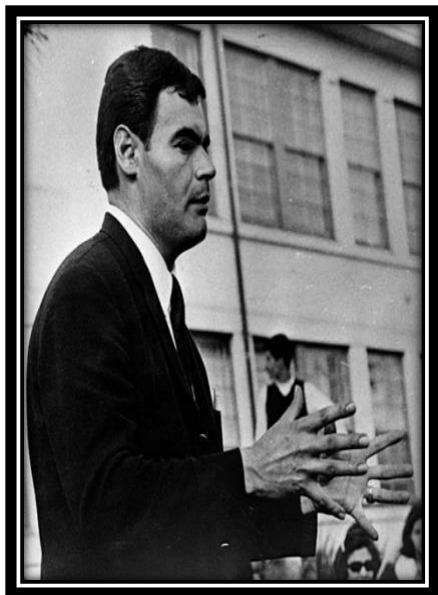
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Sal Castro

teacher, activist

"Here's a protest: any kid with a book"

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Background

Born: October 25, 1933; Died: April 15, 2013

Sal Castro grew up in Boyle Heights, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, California. When he was in elementary school, his second-grade teacher made him sit in a corner because he could not speak English. Instead of feeling bad, he decided that his teachers should be the ones learning to understand him instead of the other way around.

Castro graduated from Cathedral High School in 1952. After that, he joined the US Army and fought in the Korean War. After the war, Castro went to Los Angeles City College, and studied in business. He graduated college in 1961. His experience with discrimination made him frustrated. Instead of acting out, he decided to become a teacher to make a difference.ⁱ He began teaching in the Los Angeles Unified School District soon after.ⁱⁱ

Castro's Resistance

Castro got a job at Belmont High School in East Los Angeles. As a teacher, he encouraged Mexican American students to run for student office. He encouraged them to speak Spanish when they gave speeches to the school. This got him in trouble at Belmont. He transferred to Lincoln High School shortly after. He worked with other students to create a list of demands for the school board. They wanted to improve the run-down classrooms and provide more learning opportunities in English and Spanish. In fact, many of the schools in their district had little money and almost no good resources.

At Lincoln High School, there was a high drop-out rate and many students never went on to graduate from college. He decided to organize walkouts with his students to present the school board with their list of demands. The walkouts were successful, and the school board was forced to hold a meeting to discuss their concerns.ⁱⁱⁱ

Achievements

Sal Castro wanted his students to feel pride in their Hispanic culture. His relationships with his students were based on trust, courage, and a desire to learn from each other. Many of his students became successful educators. In 2013, a middle school was named after Castro. He was successful within his community and helped his students realize that they should be brave and fight for what is right.

