

# Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales

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## Annotated Bibliography



**Who was Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and how did he affect the Chicano student movement in the 1960s and beyond?**

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**Book:**

Alaniz, Y. , & Cornish, M. (2008). *Viva La Raza : A History of Chicano Identity and Resistance*. Seattle, WA: Red Letter Press.

*Viva La Raza* or *Long Live the Race* written by Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish covers the struggles of the Chicano people in America from the American occupation of Northern Mexico territory to the Chicano movement of modern times. Alaniz and Cornish split this book into three main parts consisting of Part 1 Theory, Part 2 History, and Part 3 Strategy. This book is a valuable source of information for the research topic because it covers both aspects of the research question; who is Corky Gonzales and the youth movement. More specifically, the authors go into detail as to how Gonzales butted heads with Jose Angel Gutierrez over philosophical differences within LRUP, which partly led to the demise of the party. Gutierrez opposed overall reforms and worked toward a moderate approach while Gonzales called for overall, more radical reforms. This article also covers Gonzales' direct relationship to the student movement in the chapter "Chicana/o Sun Rising: El Movimiento." The students who were part of the *La Raza* movement were most influenced by Gonzales' call for Aztlan or the creation of a separate Chicana/o state which was a large part of his epic poem *I am Joaquin*. This chapter goes on to describe how Gonzales formed Escuela Tlateloco which provided free bilingual classes to elementary and preschool students, and talked about the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference which was also put on by Gonzales' Crusade for Justice. Overall, this book best shows Gonzales' direct and lasting influence on the Chicana/o student movement.

**Book:**

De Leon, A. , & Griswold del Castillo, R. (2006). *North to Aztlan : A History of Mexican Americans in the United States*. Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson.

In their book *North to Aztlan: A History of Mexican Americans in the United States*, Arnaldo De Leon and Richard Griswold del Castillo combat the contemporary view of many that the South West has been “Mexcanized” by showing the over 400 year history of Mexicans in the South West, long before the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The authors of this book, in the section entitled “Chicano Literature” start off by stating that *I am Joaquin* is considered by many literary critics to be one of the first-published poems of the Chicano movement. They also state that “It’s opening lines set the tone for what followed,” talking about the vivid, straight-forward language that Gonzales used to describe the struggle of the Chicanos under Anglo rule. This book is also a great resource to find information on the urban student movement. The authors show the dismal attendance rate for Chicanos at high schools and colleges and how many students were involved in Gonzales’ national youth conference in 1969. Corky’s idea of creating the state of Aztlan set the students to becoming more active and starting protests like the strikes in Los Angeles. This is another great source for the connection between Corky and the Chicano student activism in the ‘60s and ‘70s.

**Book:**

Garcia, I. (1997). *Chicanismo : The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

*Chicanismo: The forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* written by Ignacio M. Garcia, is a book that describes the philosophical styles that shaped the movement and the “militant ethos” that emerged as a result of it. The author describes the Chicano militant ethos as : the collective defensive and offensive mechanism that the Mexican American community uses to combat racism, discrimination, poverty, and segregation, and to define itself politically and historically.” Garcia provides a clear and concise background of Gonzales describing him as a man who went from a boxer to a business owner to a Democratic party member to finally a person disillusioned with the “poverty politics” who seemed to only have interest in the black minority. Garcia focuses on Gonzales’ transformation into his new philosophy that scorned assimilation, stressed understanding one’s roots and ultimately lead to the formation of his epic poem *I am Joaquin* which made Gonzales one of the most famous faces in the movement. Garcia also describes how, as part of the rejuvenation of Chicano pride, Gonzales tried to “revive” old heros and also create new ones. Instead of America’s founding fathers, he emphasized looking at heroes like Francisco “Pancho” Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara. This book provides a good perspective on how Gonzales contributed to the formation of “Chicanismo,” which provides a good framework to understanding what the student movement stood for in the ‘60s and ‘70s.

**Book:**

Gonzales, R. , & Esquibel, A. (2001). *Message to Aztlan : Selected Writings of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press.

This book is a compilation of speeches, plays, poetry and correspondence written by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, one of the Chicano movements most influential figures in the second half of the twentieth century. It includes what is arguably his most famous contribution to the movement, the epic poem *I am Joaquin* that Gonzales wrote in 1967. This book is different than all of the other sources used for this research in that other than the forward and introduction, the book is entirely the words of Gonzales himself. The introduction written by Antonio Esquibel in 2000 states that "The goal of this book is to present Corky Gonzales' thoughts, ideas, and direction for the Chicano Movement as he expressed them in the '60s and '70s through his works and his own words." As stated in the introduction, the intended audience of this book is Chicano Scholars and students who are interested in how Gonzales influenced the movement in the '60s and '70s. In relation to the research question, Chicano students in the '60s and '70s would have gone to see Gonzales' speeches or read his plays and poetry. For this reason, this book is a good source for seeing exactly how Gonzales affected the nation's young Chicano movements. Also, the author of this book wants to show that Gonzales is not a "one-piece author." Because of a car accident in 1987 and a consequent double bypass surgery in 1989, Gonzales was not able to complete another book, but works like *Raices... Raices...* and *America... America... America...* show just how influential and literate a man Gonzales was.

Journal Article:

Jensen, R. , & Hammerback, J. (1982). "no revolutions without poets": The rhetoric of rodolfo "corky" gonzáles. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46(1), 72-91.

This journal article by Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback starts out by stating that although recent articles have been written about Cesar Chavez, Jose Angel Gutierrez, and Reies Lopez Tijerina, the other three main actors in the Chicano movement of the '60s and '70s, there have yet to be any "rhetorical studies" to come out focusing on Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. Although this article was published in 1982, I found this statement to be true as I had a hard time finding any other scholarly sources beside this one and Gonzales' own *Messages to Aztlan* that focus primarily on Gonzales himself. This article is very important to this research paper because "Corky" Gonzales is the main subject of study and not just one person in a series of others. The authors spent almost half of the article on Gonzales background, more than is found in most other sources. They go into great detail about Gonzales' past and the events that led him to become involved in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. For example, Jensen describes how Gonzales chose to be a boxer because "it was the quickest way out of the slaughterhouse" and how through his boxing fame, he was able to acquire a bail bonds business and automobile agency and become the first Mexican American as a Captain of the Denver Democratic Party. Jensen and Hammerback go on to describe the environment the Mexicanos found themselves in and how they had an uphill battle against the media, politics and infighting.

.edu web source:

Van Ingen, L., (2011). Gonzales, Corky (b. 1928). Retrieved From

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.ha.015>

This is a scholarly website dedicated to all things, places, events, and people related to America's Great Plains region which "includes all or parts of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba." The article on Corky Gonzales is well written; in a more literary and less academic way, but by doing this, article conveys the "essence" of who Gonzales was very well. A good example of this is how Van Ingen describes Gonzales' education. Although he never completed college, he learned for the people he met, his own experiences, and by reading "the likes of Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway." The author argues that instead of looking at his credentials, one must look at his array of writings including speeches, letters, editorials, plays and poems. This book is essentially a short biography of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, but because it is clear, concise and points out the main events and influences in his life, it is a great source for the research of this topic.