DENVER CITY COUNCIL

Proclamation

Proclamation No. 24-1237
A Proclamation Honoring the Life of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and the Legacy of the Chicano Movement

WHEREAS, the State of Colorado, long before its current borders were drawn, was the original homeland of the Ute, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and numerous Indigenous tribes who lived in harmony with the land. Colorado was also once part of Mexico, becoming U.S. territory after the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, reflecting the deep historical and cultural ties that continue to shape the state today; and

WHEREAS, Denver, Colorado, was home to a visionary leader, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, who emerged as a powerful, influential voice for justice, equality, and empowerment for the Chicano community and other underserved communities across the country; and

WHEREAS, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales founded the Crusade for Justice during the Chicano Movement. This movement sought to ensure rights, education reform, political empowerment, and the preservation of cultural heritage, fighting discrimination in employment, housing, and education while providing human services, promoting self-determination and cultural pride across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Corky's wife, Geraldine Gonzales, walked side by side with her husband and familia in full support of the goals and objectives of El Movimiento Chicano and the Crusade for Justice, helping to significantly manifest and celebrate the movement's and organization's familia concept of inclusion and decision making; and

WHEREAS, as a direct result of the Chicano Movement, communities across Colorado and the Southwest United States embraced their history and heritage while also recognizing that Chicanos, just as members of the Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities, have historically faced oppression in this country, fostering a sense of unity and solidarity within the movement; and

WHEREAS, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and the Crusade for Justice walked hand in hand with the American Indian Movement (AIM) in their shared struggle for justice and equality by offering critical aid and amplifying their voices in moments of crisis like the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, and reflecting a united front to dismantle colonial legacies like Columbus Day; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King personally asked Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales to lead the Southwest Contingency for the Poor Peoples March on D.C. in 1968, cementing the strength we gain when we unify and we call on the people of Denver to remember the words Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote to César Chávez, "Our separate struggles are really one"; and

WHEREAS, the Chicano Movement, a pivotal force in the fight for civil rights and social justice during the 1960s and 1970s, sought to address systemic inequalities faced by Mexican Americans and all other underserved communities in education, politics, employment, and cultural representation; and

WHEREAS, the Chicano Movement gained momentum in Colorado through the 221-day strike at the Kitayama Carnation Farm in 1968, Denver's West High School blowouts in 1969, and the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference of 1969 that birthed El Plan de Aztlan and MEChA; and

WHEREAS, the Chicano movement was not led by only a few prominent leaders, but also by students, professors, laborers and community leaders across the Southwest who were great contributors to both local and national efforts to improve the lives of millions of Mexican Americans creating the Chicano movement's prominence; and

WHEREAS, the City of Denver has long been a beacon of Chicano activism and cultural pride through art like Corky Gonzales' poem, "Yo Soy Joaquín" (I Am Joaquín), which became a defining piece of Chicano literature, giving voice to the struggles, pride, and resilience of the Mexican American identity and awakening a new consciousness in generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Escuela Tlatelolco, founded by Corky Gonzales on October 1,1970 went on to graduate over 7,000 students over a period of 47 years after closing its doors in 2017. Escuela Tlatelolco was revered for educating, acknowledging and applying curriculum based on cultural heritage, Chicano/Indigenous studies, and social justice; and

WHEREAS, we continue to see the impacts of the Chicano Movement not only locally here in Denver but in our state and across the country, and although there is still room for improvement we have seen an increase in representation in many spaces and look forward to seeing and perpetuating this increase into the future.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE DENVER CITY COUNCIL:

Section 1. That the Denver City Council does hereby proclaim our deepest appreciation and recognition of the Chicano Movement and the legacy of Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, for the significant contributions to justice, equality, and cultural richness in our community. We celebrate the profound impact of the Latino/Chicano community and its ongoing efforts to uplift and empower future generations, continuing the spirit of resilience, advocacy, and cultural pride that has shaped Denver and beyond.

Section 2. That the Clerk and Recorder of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and transmit copies to the Gonzales Family advocating for Latino/Chicano heritage and civil rights, as a token of our deep appreciation and gratitude for their enduring commitment to justice, equality, and the preservation of cultural heritage for all people.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL October 7, 2024

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PRESIDENT