

Tijerina and his closest associates. The chief prosecution witness, a deputy sheriff, was found mysteriously beaten to death in early 1968. Later that year, Tijerina was put on trial for kidnapping and assault during the 1967 shoot-out. While admitting to being present at the courthouse, he denied having anything to do with the violence. A forceful and charismatic speaker, Tijerina handled his own defense and, in a stunning turn of events, succeeded in winning acquittal.

Rey Tigre (King Tiger), as his admirers now called him, was soon in trouble with the law again, and this time his luck ran out. Tried on charges stemming from the Amphitheater episode and for destruction of federal property at a second incident at Kit Carson National Forest, he was found guilty in June 1969 and sentenced to prison. Jailed for two years, he was released on parole from federal prison in Springfield, Missouri, in July 1971, and placed on probation for five years. One of the conditions of his parole was that he sever all ties to the Alianza. He returned to public life, but the old fire was gone. Counseling moderation, he was no longer in the forefront of the Brown Power movement. Soon, even his supporters in New Mexico fell away. Accused of being an Elmer Gantry, a religious charlatan, Tijerina remains an enigmatic figure today. His most meaningful contribution was to dramatize the plight of the impoverished Hispano communities in New Mexico.

Unlike Chávez and Tijerina, Rodolfo ("Corky") Gonzales (1929–2005) realized that the future of the Mexicano community would be in urban areas and that the focus should be on young people.²⁵ Raised in the barrios of Denver, Gonzales first achieved national prominence as a prize fighter in the early fifties. When he left the ring, he turned to Democratic politics in his hometown. In 1960, he acted as Colorado coordinator of the Viva Kennedy clubs. He then served in a variety of War on Poverty programs. "In no time," according to Stan Steiner, "he was a one-man directory of poverty agencies."²⁶ Like many other barrio leaders, Gonzales gradually became disillusioned with conventional party politics, and in April 1966, he founded an organization that would permit him to better serve Mexicanos in Denver, *La Crusada Para la Justicia* (the Crusade for Justice).²⁷

An organization to mobilize the ethnic community, the Crusade focused on young people and their problems. It established a whole host of services—school, nursery, gym, art gallery, and community center—as well as its own newspaper, *El Gallo*. During the course of the late sixties, as the political climate became more radical, the Crusade embraced a more militant posture. Gonzales, an ex-G.I. Forum member, began to emphasize cultural nationalism. Before too long, he came to espouse a form of separatism. Adopting a widely held view of the time among nationalists, Corky Gonzales became the foremost champion of the idea that Aztlán, the mythical homeland of the México, was to be found in the Southwest, which he and others called "occupied America." The Crusade, going beyond Tijerina, called for the restoration of their ancestral land to Chicanos. In the meantime, Gonzales