

Speaking Truth

Watershed Moments in Global Leadership



Mario Gonzalez

Fund for the
Future of
Our Children



F F C

Mario Gonzalez's career as a human rights attorney has made him a living role model



Mario Gonzalez was born in 1945 in Texas to
a Mexican-American father and a
Native American mother



When Mario was young, his family moved to the tiny town of Kadoka, South Dakota, near the Pine Ridge Indian reservation



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The Pine Ridge Reservation is the home of the Oglala Lakota Native Americans



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Life on the Pine Ridge Reservation is extremely difficult, with short life expectancies and high rates of poverty, alcoholism and suicide



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Mario grew up on and off the Pine Ridge Reservation, and started high school in Kadoka, where he played football



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Mario spent the last two years of high school at the new Douglas High School at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where he excelled



Mario Gonzalez Senior Yearbook Photo, 1964

After attending Black Hills State College, Mario's full-blooded Lakota grandmother encouraged him to apply to law school



Mario Gonzalez received his law degree from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 1972



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While attending law school in North Dakota, Mario began embracing his Native American heritage, and learned of the indignities and injustices his ancestors had suffered

INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

GET A HOME
OF
YOUR OWN
EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE
POSSESSION
WITHIN
THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED IRRIGABLE GRAZING AGRICULTURAL DRY FARMING

IN 1900 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SEALED BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre	Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre
Colorado	5,211.21	\$7.27	Oklahoma	34,664.00	\$19.14
Idaho	17,013.00	24.85	Oregon	1,020.00	15.43
Kansas	1,684.50	33.45	South Dakota	120,445.00	16.53
Montana	11,034.00	9.86	Washington	4,879.00	41.37
Nebraska	5,641.00	36.65	Wisconsin	1,069.00	17.00
North Dakota	22,610.70	9.93	Wyoming	865.00	20.64

FOR THE YEAR 1911 IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 350,000 ACRES WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE

For information as to the character of the land write for booklet, "INDIAN LANDS FOR SALE," to the Superintendent U. S. Indian School at any one of the following places:

CALIFORNIA: San Joaquin Colorado Imperial Idaho Lapeer Klamath Klamath Klamath	MINNESOTA: Superior Montana Crow Agency Nebraska Kearney Kearney Kearney	NORTH DAKOTA: Fort Totten Fort Totten Fort Totten Grand Forks Grand Forks Grand Forks Grand Forks	OKLAHOMA: Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency Cherokee Agency	SOUTH DAKOTA: Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency Cheyenne Agency	WASHINGTON: Fort Stevens Fort Stevens Fort Stevens Fort Stevens Fort Stevens Fort Stevens Fort Stevens
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WALTER L. FISHER,
Secretary of the Interior

ROBERT G. VALENTINE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs



The U.S. government's mistreatment of Native Americans in the Dakotas began decades ago



General William Sherman and leaders of the Lakota, Yanktonai Dakota and Arapaho tribes signing the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868



The U.S. government, which was never able to defeat the Sioux in battle, signed treaties promising no white settlement in the Black Hills, forever



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But by 1874, rumors of gold in the Black Hills caused the government to quickly forget those treaties, and white settlers began pouring in



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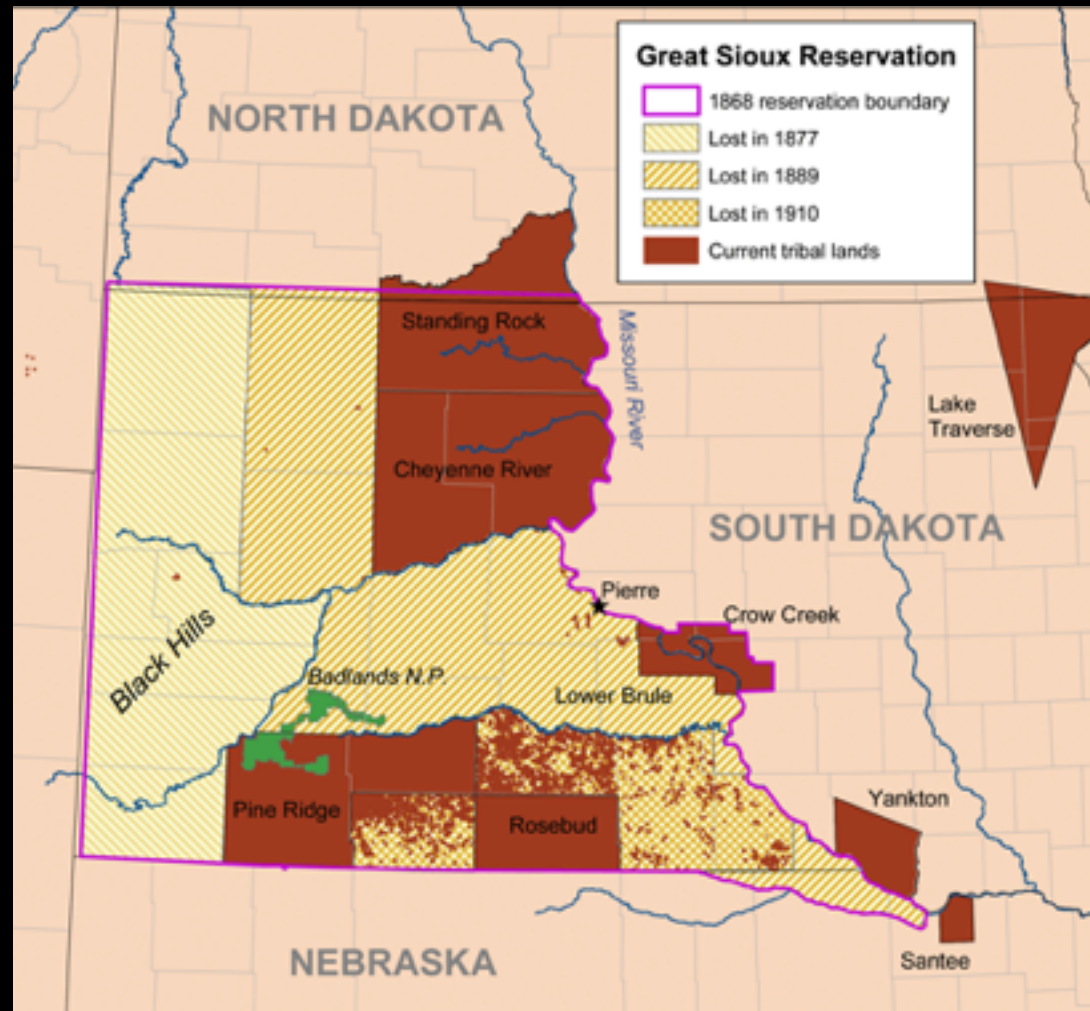
The exploitation of the Black Hills peaked in 1890 with the Wounded Knee Massacre, in which over 200 Sioux men, women and children were killed



Lakota Sioux buried in a mass grave by U.S. soldiers after the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre on the Pine Ridge Reservation



The U.S. government's broken promises have left the Siouxes with only a small portion of their original reservation



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In 1973, about 200 Oglala Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation occupied the town of Wounded Knee to protest the U.S. government's continuing mistreatment of Native Americans



In 1978, a court awarded the Sioux nation
\$105 million for the loss of the Black Hills –
but taking the money would cost the
Sioux their land forever



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In 1980, just as the \$105 million was to be paid, Mario Gonzalez, the first tribal member to become a licensed attorney, filed a lawsuit to stop it



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In 1986, Mario Gonzalez stopped the distribution
of a \$45 million land claims award to the
Oglala Sioux tribe in another land claims case



Mario Gonzalez gave a voice to the Siouxes who refused to accept any amount of money in exchange for land that is rightfully theirs



Mario Gonzalez drafted federal legislation called the 1988 Mni Wiconi Act, which created the largest rural water pipeline in North America

Mni Wiconi water reaching Pine Ridge reservation

GATHERING HERALDS ARRIVAL OF LINES THAT CARRY CLEAN WATER



Workers for S.J. Louis, a construction company out of St. Paul, Minn., dig a trench Wednesday for pipe west of Wanblee. When finished, this pipeline will bring water from the Missouri River to Potato Creek, Kyle and Red Shirt. (Photo by Ryan Soderlin, Journal staff)



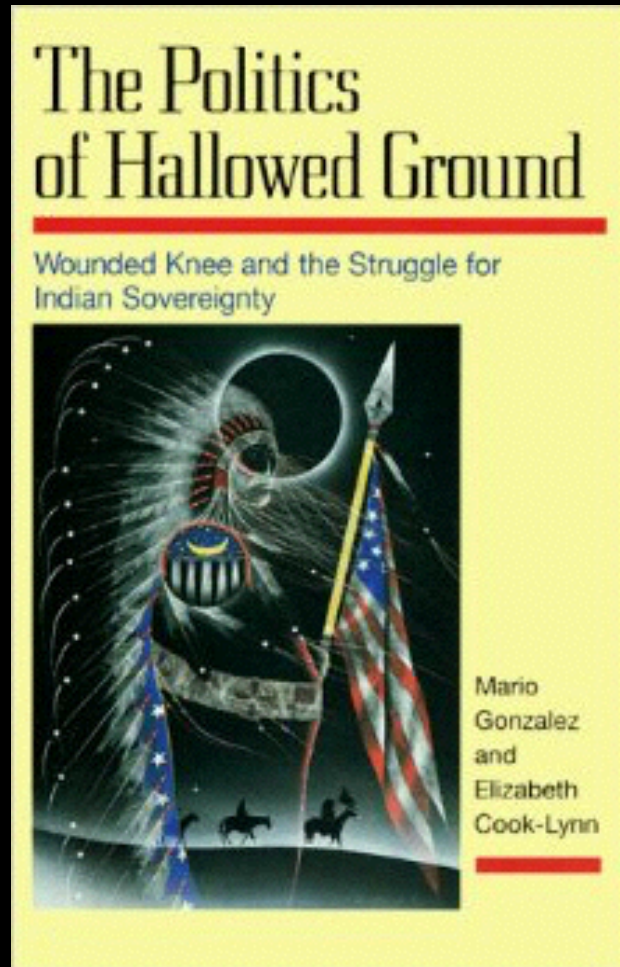
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In 1989, Mario began representing the Wounded Knee Survivors Association, in their quest to have Wounded Knee named a national historic site

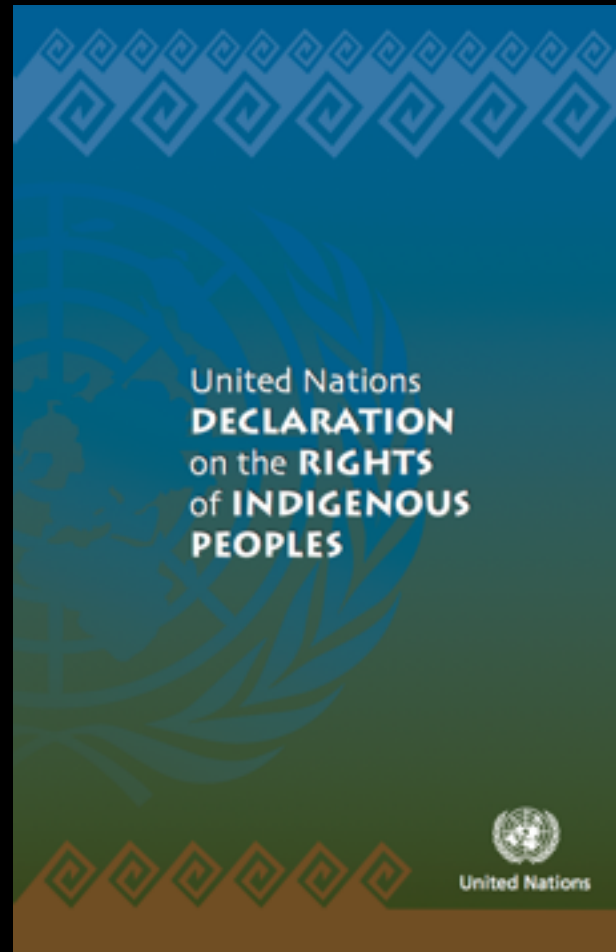


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While negotiating the complex struggle between the U.S. government and competing Indian tribes, Mario kept a journal that is now the basis of a book



Mario Gonzalez's campaign for the Black Hills helped bring about the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007



The \$105 million refused by the Sioux has been earning interest in the U.S. Treasury since 1978, and is now worth over \$1 billion



“The Sioux tribes have always maintained that that confiscation is illegal and that the tribes must have some of their ancestral lands returned to them. That ... money is gone in a year or two, and then the tribes still end up with nothing to show for their ancestral lands.”

– Mario Gonzalez



Now in his 70s, Mario Gonzalez continues to dedicate his life to restoring the property and dignity of the Sioux Nation



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References:

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The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty, Mario Gonzalez and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1999

“Breakup of the Great Sioux Reservation” – <http://ndstudies.gov/content/breakup-great-sioux-reservation>

“Mni Wiconi water reaching Pine Ridge reservation,”
Rapid City Journal, August 19, 2008



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