



# HELIOS GÓMEZ

(Seville, Spain, May 27, 1905 - Barcelona, Spain, September 19, 1956)



Germany, 1931  
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Helios Gómez was a trade unionist, anti-Francoist, painter, poster artist, poet and avant-garde artist of the early twentieth century. Gómez is **known internationally for his avant-garde black and white graphics.**

In the 1930s, Gómez **fought against fascism** and for an ideal of social justice through his political drawings. He is also the author of an interesting corpus of literary material, of which only his poetic works have been published. His essay on Romani art, "Historia de los Gitanos", remains unpublished.

During the Spanish Civil War, Gómez fought on various fronts, was wounded during battle, and also acted as political commissar. He continued to fight after the war and, after spending three years in the concentration camps of France and Algeria, **he painted and wrote in solitude and seclusion in rebellion against Franco's dictatorship.**

He also participated in the **creation of a clandestine resistance organisation**, Liberación Nacional Republicana (Republican National Liberation)<sup>1</sup>, a fact that led to his last imprisonment.

Gómez's life is one marked by a record number of persecutions: he has been arrested by the authorities of several different countries, seventy-one times, and has been subjected to forty-two court proceedings. An extraordinary life, full of events and risks in the service of revolutionary causes, Gómez once stated, "I am a product of my time. Inflamed by the flame of modern ideas."

For this great artist, **combating the stereotypical cliché of lazy and irresponsible Roma was an obsession.** His objective was to achieve the absolution of the Roma, their full incorporation into social life and the **recognition of their cultural values.**

Gómez was always proud of being Roma having been born in Triana, one of the oldest and largest Romani neighbourhoods (gitanería/mahàla) in Spain. He was very clear about the ideological basis of anti-Gypsyism: "Roma are victims in Spain of a traditional injustice.

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<sup>1</sup> Clandestine political party that acted in Catalonia between 1944 and 1946



Romantic stereotypes persist, the Roma appearing in folklore as musicians – playing tambourines, guitars and dancing. [...] There is resistance to recognising that Roma are a nation like any other; like the Jew or the Arab, as capable as any other of work, art and ideological conceptions.”

In prison, Gómez painted the *Capilla Gitana* (Romani Chapel), **wrote more than a hundred poems**, a novel, his essay “Historia de los Gitanos”, and all kinds of papers he could despite the conditions of censorship.

Gómez died as a result of a liver disease contracted in prison.

#### Sources and further information:

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2. J. F. “Un gran artista revolucionario: Helios Gómez. Los gitanos en la Guerra Civil” *Crónica* 362 (1936): 4
3. Motos, Isaac “Helios Gómez, inquieto rebelde de infinito” *Cuadernos Gitanos* 1 (2007): 48-51
4. Solsona, Braulio “El arte nuevo, joven y rebelde de Helios Gómez” *Crónica* 25 (1930): 12

This biography has been written by Nicolás Jiménez González