



STUDY GUIDE

for
**50 years of *Cultura y Resistencia* in
San Francisco's Mission District**

**Acción Latina Juan R. Fuentes Gallery
April 5 - May 17, 2019**

For more information on *Los Siete de la Raza*, see:

Strictly Ghetto Property: The Story of Los Siete de la Raza, by
Marjorie Heins, Ramparts Press, 1972.

"With the Soul of a Human Rainbow: Los Siete, Black Panthers, and
Third Worldism in San Francisco," Jason Ferreira, in *Ten Years
that Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978*, Chris Carlsson, ed.

50 years ago, *Los Siete de la Raza* galvanized a movement and helped define a radical politics of self-determination. The exhibit at Acción Latina, *Cultura y Resistencia*, gathers the movement aesthetics and cultural resistance of artist Yolanda Lopez, editor Donna Amador, the *Basta Ya!* newspaper, and the work of the *Los Siete* organization, along with contemporary work reflecting on the ongoing relevance of the issues that *Los Siete* fought for.

Los Siete de la Raza were seven Central American youths, 16-20 years old, from San Francisco's Mission District, accused of killing a police officer on May 1, 1969. Their 18-month trial and eventual acquittal was a key moment in the awakening of consciousness for Latinx community in the Bay Area. The *Los Siete* Defense Committee transformed itself into a radical community organization, animated by principles of self-determination and "Serving the People," starting a free breakfast program, a free Centro de Salud clinic, a workers' restaurant, a legal aid and immigration support storefront, and the *Basta Ya!* newspaper. *Los Siete* developed a revolutionary "Third World Internationalism," embodied in the inclusive term "Raza," linking the struggles of Latinx people with those of other indigenous and working-class communities, including the Alcatraz occupation, the Black Panthers, the Red Guard Party, and the Puerto Rican Young Lords. The issues that *Los Siete* raised – including fighting police repression, gentrification, and sellout leaders, the necessity for people's programs vs. dependence on charity or government, linking community organizing with cultural work, and facing the challenges of being "revolutionary" and staying community-based – continue to be relevant in today's struggles.

REMEMBER LOS SIETE

50 Years of *Cultura y Resistencia* in the Mission

An exhibit at Acción Latina Juan R. Fuentes Gallery
commemorating the 50th Anniversary of *Los Siete de la Raza*
curated by Fernando Martí with Yolanda Lopez



Study Guide by Fernando Martí,
with much appreciation to Yolanda Lopez, Donna Amador,
Jason Ferreira and Judy Drummond

1. The *Los Siete* Poster

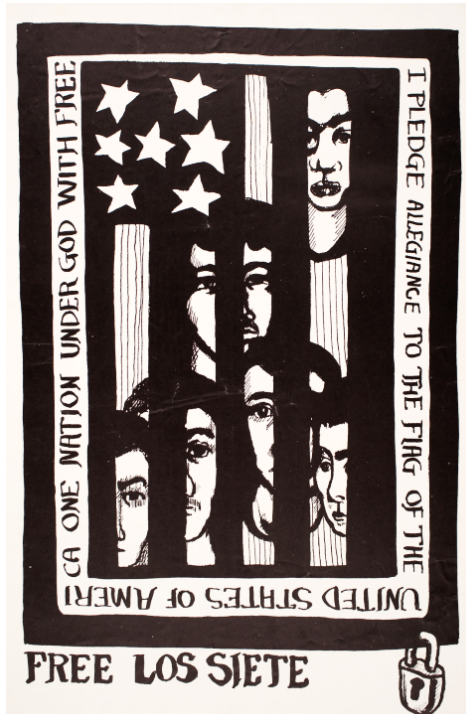
This poster, designed by Yolanda Lopez, became emblematic of *Los Siete*, and was used in rallies throughout the trial of *Los Siete*.

Why did the artist use the stars and stripes of the American Flag for the image? How did she modify the flag to make a statement? What is the significance of the “Pledge of Allegiance,” and why did the artist cut off the pledge where she did?

Are you familiar with other images that have taken well-known symbols, patriotic or other, and repurposed them to make a statement?

How do you think the Mission youths, several of whom were born in Central America, related to the idea of “America” or being “American?” How about the youths who were born here, but whose parents were immigrants?

How do you relate to this idea of “America” or being “American” today?



Opposite, top: “Free *Los Siete*” poster by Yolanda Lopez, 1969

Opposite, bottom: youth with *Los Siete* picket sign, from Marjorie Heins, *Strictly Ghetto Property*, Ramparts Press, 1972



2. Graphics for *Los Siete*

The *Los Siete* organization created their own newspaper in 1969, as a tool for getting the word out to the community about the case, as well as reporting about other issues that impacted the Latinx community in the neighborhood and around the country. Yolanda Lopez created the masthead (the title of the newspaper) and many of the covers. At the time there were few graphic styles or symbols to describe a Latinx movement. The look of the *Basta Ya!* evolved at the same time as the Aztec eagle of the Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers and as the Chicano postermakers of the Bay Area.

How did the artist create a unified style for the *Los Siete* movement? Looking back, how does that look reflect the times?

Given that the seven “brothers” were not Chicano or Mexican, but Central American, what challenges did the artist have in drawing from an identifiably Latinx graphic style?

How did the artwork highlight the “brothers” as a group and as part of the larger community? The names of each of the seven brothers is written on the cover. Many of the articles in the *Basta Ya!* were interviews with the brothers and their families. Yet the newspaper never included bylines for the editors, writers, photographers or artists. Why would the members of the *Los Siete* organization want to remain anonymous?

What are more recent examples of people who have been singled out by the police, who have become representative of larger issues affecting their communities? Has anything changed about the relations between police and community since 1969?

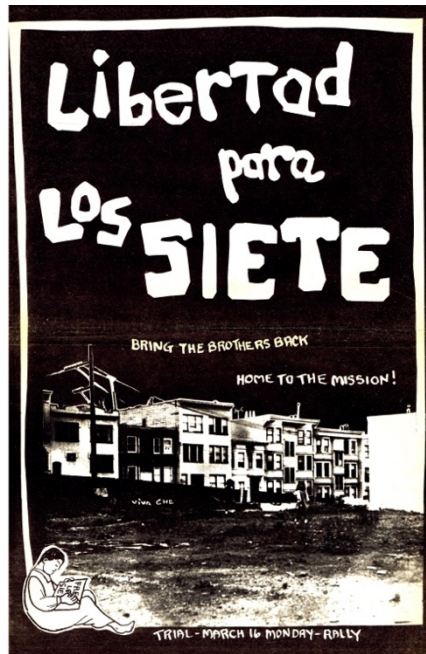
Opposite: artwork by Yolanda Lopez from *Basta Ya!* no. 7, January 1970

3. Visualizing the Community

These are two examples of “photo-collages” created by Yolanda Lopez for the *Basta Ya!*

How do these images of San Francisco’s Mission District from the early 1970s compare to your image of the Mission District today?

What is the image of the community that the artist is attempting to portray with these pictures? Do the images show a powerless community, or a powerful one? What images would you choose to portray your community?



Opposite, top: “Bring the Brothers Back,” Yolanda Lopez, *Basta Ya!* no. 8, 1970
Opposite, bottom: “La Raza Unida,” Yolanda Lopez, *Basta Ya!* no. 9, 1970



4. The Black Panthers and *Los Siete*

The Black Panther Party provided free space for the *Basta Ya!* in the back/reverse of their Black Panther newspaper, and Emory Douglas, the Panther's Minister of Culture, provided advice and support for the *Basta Ya!*'s editor Donna Amador and designer Yolanda Lopez. Some of the Mission community felt that the Panthers were too radical and didn't want to accept their help. The second issue of the newspaper carried a message of solidarity from Panther founder Huey Newton, from inside prison, that ended with the phrase, "Black Power to Black People. Brown Power to Brown People. Power to all the oppressed people of the world."

What was the significance of this solidarity between Black and Brown radical political organizations?

Why would the community be divided about receiving support from the Black Panthers?

What were the commonalities of the struggles of these two communities, who came from very different histories of oppression?

Do you see this same kind of solidarity and understanding today, or do you think conditions are different now?

Opposite, top: artwork by Emory Douglas from *The Black Panther*, Sept. 1969
Opposite, bottom: "Message from Huey," *Basta Ya!* no. 2, 1969

THIRD WORLD



is: African warriors and Spanish peasants, Indian fisherman and Chinese laborers.

is: a common history of oppression and slavery and centuries of our blood shed in a continuous struggle for our rights as free men.

is: our mother tongue of Spanish and the thousand and one languages and dialects which have made our people.

is: the history of Mexico and Peru, Salvador and Puerto Rico, Spanish Harlem and the Mission.

is: a hungry child whose future is doubtful and whose stomach is often empty.

is: to be taught in your schools that your people are stupid, your native language alien and your history non-existent.

is: a people who have become aware of the source of their misery and are arising to change conditions which they had been taught were hopeless.

is: a recognition that the word "ghetto" which is meant for blacks and the word "barrio" which is meant for latins are in actuality one and the same.

is: a recognition that the enemy is not our brother whatever his shade of skin but a system which attempts to divide and destroy us by pitting brother against brother in a vicious cycle of self hatred.

is: an awareness of the responsibility we bear towards those who are of our same family, blood of our blood.

is: a refusal to allow a fat and exploitive society to destroy our values and way of life.

is: the majority of the earth's population who will never again permit themselves to be treated as naked, hungry strangers in their own land.

is: the recognition of a majority of the human race of the the injustices which have befallen them in order to satisfy a small minority's consuming greed.

is: a recognition of our common humanity in the face of the brutal inhumanity which has oppressed us.

is: a passionate sense of our dignity as a people and the courage which unity provides us.



5. Third World Internationalism

The *Los Siete* organization distinguished itself from some of the other radical Latinx organizations of the time by not being exclusively Chicano "nationalist." Many of the young activists in *Los Siete* were students at San Francisco State College at the time of the "Third World Strike," a student movement in 1968 that demanded the creation of an ethnic studies program. This fight resulted in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State, the first, and still the only, such college in the United States. *Los Siete* saw commonalities with other oppressed peoples, including Blacks, Asian-Americans, Native people, and even poor and working-class whites. This piece, from the second issue of *Basta Ya!*, describes this understanding in poetic words.

At the time, SF State was mostly a commuter school, and most students came from communities in San Francisco. This led to many students wishing to use their education to give back to their own communities. Is there a role today for students and their schools, whether public schools or community colleges, to do similar work?

What were other struggles and issues going on at the same time as *Los Siete* in the United States?

The term Third World was originally used by countries that were neither part of the US block or the Soviet Union block during the cold war, often countries fighting for national liberation against colonial rule. What national liberation struggles were going on at the time of *Los Siete*? What similarities might *Los Siete* have seen between their experience in the Mission District, and the experience of people in countries of the Third World?

Opposite: "Third World," *Basta Ya!* no. 2, 1969

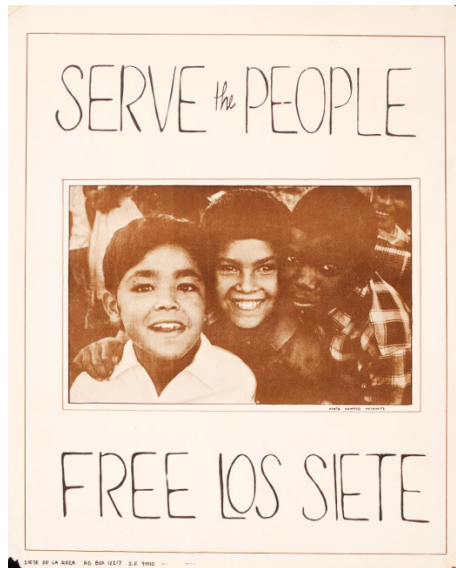
6. Serve the People

An important part of the *Los Siete* organization, like the Black Panther Party, was its Serve the People programs. These included a free breakfast program, a free health clinic, legal defense for immigrants, a workers' restaurant, and the community newspaper *Basta Ya!* While other nonprofits already existed in the Mission District, the Serve the People programs were not simply social services, but rather opportunities for political development, both for the organizers who ran the programs and for the families and children who took part in them.

Why do you think *Los Siete* decided to engage in Serve the People programs, rather than simply limiting themselves to the defense of the seven brothers in jail, or to political education and organizing?

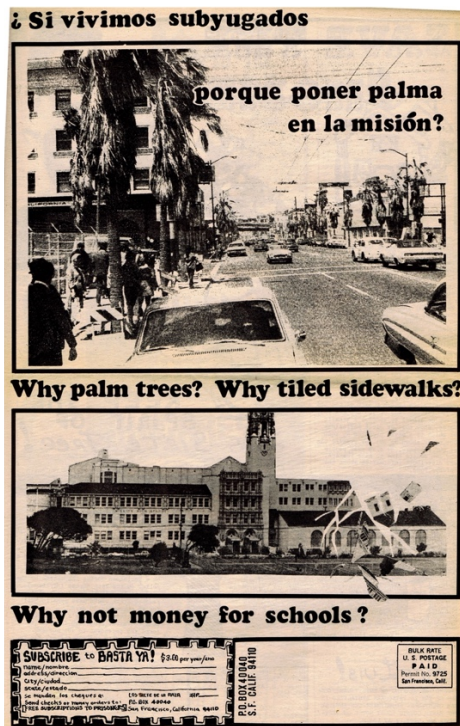
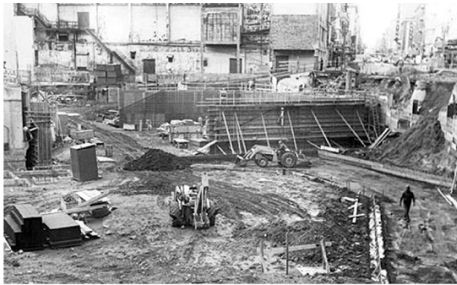
Where do you think the ideas for these particular programs (free breakfast, health clinic, legal defense) came from?

Today, the Mission District has many nonprofits doing many kinds of organizing, education, and social services to benefit the community. Most of these depend on a combination of government funding and grants from “philanthropic” foundations created by wealthy people and corporations. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of “Serve the People” programs run by unpaid organizers and funded by small individual donations? Could there be a role for these kinds of programs today?



Opposite, top: Poster (photo Howard Halawitz), courtesy Lincoln Cushing / Docs Populi Archives

Opposite, bottom: Serve the People programs, *Basta Ya!* no. 5, October 1969



7. BART and Gentrification

Much of the writing in the *Basta Ya!* newspaper had to do with conditions in the Mission District at the time that *Los Siete* were arrested. In 1970 BART was under construction, and the entire length of Mission Street was torn up for construction, causing the closure of many local businesses. Many people in the community saw the construction of the BART line as part of a plan to gentrify the Mission District, by creating quick access to downtown jobs, most of which were held by white people. They also connected the targeting of brown youth by the police as part of this program of “cleaning up the Mission” and making it “safe” for wealthier newcomers.

The middle photo shows a mural at the 24th Street BART Station, by artist Michael Rios, showing BART being carried on the backs of the people. The lower graphic, from a 1971 issue of *Basta Ya!*, calls attention to the “beautification” of Mission Street with palm trees and tiled sidewalks in the area around the BART stations.

Why would *Los Siete* be critical of plans to make the street more beautiful?

What does this page say about the city’s spending priorities? Are these still issues relevant in San Francisco? In California? In the United States?

Opposite, top: BART construction, ca. 1970.

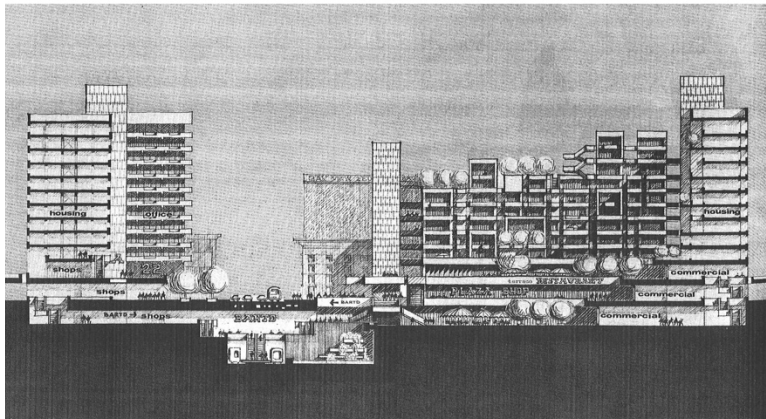
Opposite, middle: mural at 24th Street BART plaza, 1974, Michael Rios, Anthony Machado, Richard Montez, photo by Tim Drescher.

Opposite, bottom: “*Si Vivimos Subyugados*,” *Basta Ya!* no. 17, 1970.

9. Urban Renewal Then and Now



2017 Proposal



1966 Proposal

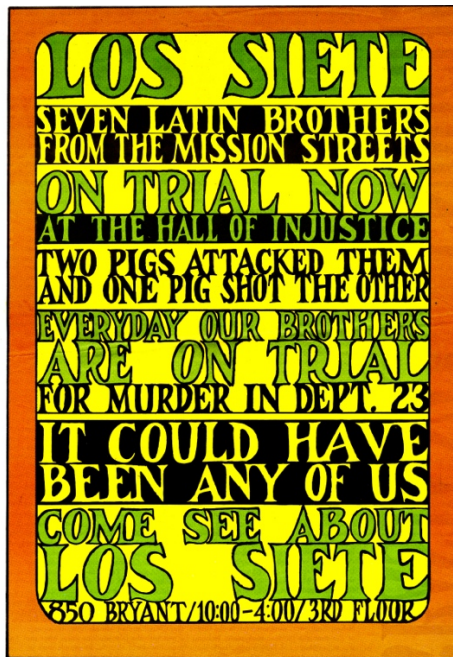
At the time of *Los Siete*, San Francisco was engaged in “urban renewal,” a kind of urban development where the city would declare an area “blighted,” buy up the properties in that area, and bulldoze entire neighborhoods in order to attract new investors, businesses, and housing. San Francisco was already in the process of tearing down the Fillmore, Japantown, and the South of Market areas, but Mission District residents organized a broad alliance of tenants, homeowners, businesses, churches, and radicals, called the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO), to fight urban renewal. At first the *Basta Ya!* urged readers to join the MCO efforts, but later voiced disappointment in what they saw as collusion with the city in order to get funding. The image at bottom shows a rendering of the city’s original (never built) plans for the BART station areas in 1966, while the image at top shows a recent rendering by Maximus Real Estate for the controversial “Monster in the Mission” project at the 16th Street BART Station, part of a “Clean up the Plaza” effort.

What commonalities do you see between the neighborhoods targeted for urban renewal: the Fillmore, the South of Market, and the Mission? What differences do you see today between the areas around Fillmore and Geary, for example, or the Metreon/Moscone Center (two “successful” urban renewal areas), compared to the Mission?

Why are the areas around the BART stations targeted for large-scale development? Why do you think in 1970 and again today large sectors of the community are fighting against such development? What kind of development do you think would be appropriate in those areas?

Opposite, top: Top: 1979 Mission Street (aka, “The Monster in the Mission”), SOM Architects for Maximus Real Estate Partners, 2017

Opposite, bottom: *Mission Urban Design Plan*, Rai Okamoto for SF Planning Commission, 1966



9. The Culture of the Movement

The case of *Los Siete de la Raza* reached far beyond the Mission community. Like the Panthers, *Los Siete* became a cause that many people related to, and many artists responded by creating art for the movement. The top image (anonymous) attempts to tell the story of *Los Siete* in as few words as possible in a visually arresting way. The bottom image, by famous illustrator and comix artist Spain Rodriguez, advertises one of many fundraisers for the cause.

How would you try to bring attention to an important issue? What methods would you use depending on your audience – your friends, your parents, the local community, or the news media?

The many images relating to *Los Siete*, as well as the new “Latin Rock” music coming out of the Mission, helped to create a sense of cultural awakening around *Los Siete*’s radical politics. What is an example today, from social media, graphics, music, or other arts, that has helped you understand a political issue or has helped make an issue something you believe in or feel you are a part of?

Opposite, top: “Come See About Los Siete,” broadside, People’s Press, 1970, Acción Latina archives

Opposite, bottom: “Viva Los Siete,” poster, Spain Rodriguez, courtesy Lincoln Cushing / Docs Populi Archives

WHAT WE WANT	WHAT WE BELIEVE
LOS SIETE DE LA RAZA 7 POINT PROGRAM DECEMBER 1970	
1. WE WANT SELF DETERMINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE OF LA RAZA. WE WANT THE FREEDOM TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR COMMUNITY.	we believe self determination is the right of all oppressed people in the community to participate in the analysis of their problems, to educate themselves to those problems and to have the power to implement changes that they see fit.
2. WE SUPPORT ALL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AT HOME, IN LATIN AMERICA, AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.	We believe that for over 500 years Spain, then the United States have colonized our countries! Billions of dollars in profits leave our countries for the United States every year. In every way we are slaves of U.S. Imperialism. Third World people (Blacks, Browns, Indians, Asians) both at home and abroad have slaved to build the wealth of this country. We La RAZA people have helped to build this nation, particularly the Southwest, and therefore we demand the right to control our lives and our lands. Latin America, Asia, Africa continue to fight against U.S. domination and its puppet governments. We stand for the unity with all Revolutionary Movements in the struggle against U.S. Imperialism.
3. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF LA RAZA PEOPLE.	we believe that by organizing community groups that will investigate, educate and inform our communities as to the Racism and Oppression which exists in our daily lives, the people will better be able to learn how to form correct methods to stop this oppression once and for all.
4. WE WANT AN END TO EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN, MALE CHAUVINISM, MALE SUPREMACY. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR WOMEN.	We believe that all women must recognize their need for liberation. Under capitalism La Raza women have been oppressed both by society and by men. La Raza machismo has been used by society to divide men and women and prevent them from realizing their full potential. Our men must join women in their struggle, and fight against machismo in themselves, recognizing that our women are equals in every way within the Revolutionary ranks.
5. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL LA RAZA MEN AND WOMEN OF ALL AGES HELD IN FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY PRISON AND YOUTH DETENTION CENTERS.	We believe that all our people in prisons are political prisoners, unjustly accused, tried and punished. We believe that this system does not have the right to judge or condemn our people because the courts are part of that same system which oppresses us in our communities, destroys our culture, and places profits before the needs of the people. We believe that the courts should be controlled by the people and not by the judicial system which continues to overlook the root of the problem, namely hunger & unemployment, racism, drug abuse, police brutality & oppression. We want all people when brought to trial to be tried in a court by a jury of their peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. We support all political prisoners.
6. WE WANT ALL LA RAZA MEN TO BE EXEMPT FROM MILITARY SERVICE.	We believe that the military is used to oppress people in other lands as well as here at home. La Raza people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a Racist-Capitalist government that does not protect us. Anyone who resists injustice is called a Communist by the government and condemned. Our people are brainwashed by radio, newspapers, schools, and books to oppose people in other countries fighting for their freedom. No longer will we La Raza people believe attacks and slanders because we have learned who our real friends are and who the real enemy is. We will defend our brothers and sisters around the world who fight for justice against the rich rulers of this country.
7. WE DEMAND A FREE SOCIETY WHERE THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE COME FIRST: FREE HEALTH CARE, FREE EDUCATION, FULL EMPLOYMENT, DECENT HOUSING.	We are opposed to violence, the violence of hungry children of illiterate adults, the violence of profit or poverty. We believe that health is a right that belongs to the people and not a profit making business. The health facilities should be placed in the hands of the communities so that the people can organize, direct and distribute such services. We need and demand education for our people that exposes the true nature of this Capitalist, Racist society. We need and demand education that teaches us our true history and gives our people the tools to make the necessary changes in this present society. We believe people who do the work must get the profits of their labor. The people of the community can organize and employ all of its people in meaningful work. The housing and land must be controlled by the people so that the people can build decent housing. We believe that decent housing is a right and not a profit making business.

10. The Political Program of *Los Siete de la Raza*

Like the Black Panthers, the *Los Siete* organization developed its own political program, outlining "What we want / What we believe." The seven-point program of *Los Siete* included "self-determination for all people of La Raza," "an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Raza people," "an end to exploitation of women, male chauvinism and male supremacy," "freedom for all La Raza men and women held in prison and youth detention centers," and "a free society where the needs of the people come first: free health care, free education, full employment, decent housing."

There are many organizations working to achieve very particular goals, such as more funding for schools. Do you know of any organization today with such a broad set of demands as the seven-point program of *Los Siete*?

Have any of the *Los Siete* demands been achieved? Do you think the *Los Siete* believed those demands could be achieved in their lifetimes? If not, was it still worthwhile to make those demands?

Which of these points of the political program resonate most with you? If you were to be working with others to develop your own political program, what other points would you add (or take out)? Given the situation you see around you, in your school, your neighborhood, or the world, what would you highlight as the most important points in a political program?

Opposite: "What We Want, What We Believe: *Los Siete de la Raza* 7-Point Program," December 1970, Yolanda Lopez personal collection