Who Are Los Siete de la Raza?

anon.

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Los Siete de la Raza, which means "The Seven of the Race" in Spanish, are seven Latin American brothers who come from the poor Mission district of San Francisco. They are now on trial, charged with the murder of a San Francisco pig last spring. These brothers are innocent of the charges, and were only jammed up because they were revolutionaries and were getting it together with their people.

The Seven—Jose Rios, Mario Martinez, Tony Martinez, Jose Melendez, Gary Lescallet, Nelson Rodriguez, and Gio Lopez—are all 17 to 21 years old and grew up on the streets, having all the troubles that hip Latin kids without much money do.

A local community paper described what life was like for Mario and Tony: "Mario and Tony went through what most of us have gone through: they were 'stylin' hard,' being 'had,' dressing 'bad.' It was much more important to wear out-of-sight than to do well in school. School was just a prison. The students were divided against each other. White kids didn't like brown and black kids. About the only thing Mario and Tony learned in school was racism against black people.

"The brothers had a car and went 'low-riding' in the Mission. Or they'd stand out in front of the Doggie Diner on Mission and 18th, feeling mellow. But Latin brothers standing on the street are only a target for the cops, and so they had to pretend they were waiting for a bus. The cop car would come around the block again and tell them to get moving or else...

"Being kicked off your own streets, washing dishes at the Hilton, sweeping floors at the Olympic Club, as the brothers did—with things like that, even sharp clothes and cool cars couldn't make you feel like a man. Even hating black people didn't give you dignity. You just couldn't win at this game."

Mario and Tony decided to get into a new game—they became revolutionaries. A College Readiness program for Mexican-American youth had started, and they became actively involved in it. They recruited brothers and sisters off the streets, like Nelson and Gio. Gary and Jose were going to enter the program in the fall but the bust came before then.

A College Readiness program may not seem like the heaviest thing to be involved in, but its content was totally revolutionary. First, it prepared Mexican-American youth for college where they could pick up the skills needed in their community (like medicine, dentistry, law, etc.).

Secondly, they read about Che Guevara, Mao Tse-tung and other revolutionaries, and discussed how to make the revolution here.

But now the Seven are political prisoners. A few of them were being hassled by two pigs, Brodnick and McGoran, who were well known in the Latin community to be vicious dogs. McGoran pulled out a pistol and shot it, missing the brothers on the street and killing his partner.

In the biggest manhunt the state of California has ever seen, six of the seven were captured; Gio got away. They picked the seven to stand trial because they were revolutionaries, not because there was any evidence against them (Tony and Nelson were not even in the city when the shooting took place!).

The trial just started a few weeks ago. Charles Garry, the Black Panther's lawyer is defending the seven and a reasonably fair jury has been selected (not the usual bunch of Geritol honks). So their innocence may be established in court—but if not, it will be established in the streets!

For more information about Los Siete de la Raza or for sending contributions, write La Raza Legal Defense Committee, 3176 24th St., San Francisco, Calif.



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