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U.S. still refuses to spend enough to heal inner cities, report says

Despite a history of urban riots, the United States has never learned how to invest in inner cities and stop the violent cycle, a new study says.

Last spring's riots in Los Angeles underscored the lack of a serious federal effort to erase the same type of racial and economic discrimination blamed for riots as far back as 1919, said the report. It was released Saturday by the private Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation to coincide with the 25th anniversary, of the Kemer Commission report.

In 1968, the Kemer Commission concluded that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white --separate and unequal."

"We can reflect, again, on the same moving picture -- now the April 1992 riots in south-central Los Angeles," the new report said. "Congress and the White House misunderstood the problem. They then constructed a solution that flew in the face of what really did work."

After the Los Angeles riots, Congress passed a \$1.3 billion package including small business loans and 5500 million for summer jobs. A longer-term plan, focusing on urban enterprise zones and drug enforcement efforts, was vetoed by President George Bush.

Lynn Curtis, author of the new report, said the government should focus on high-tech job training, affordable housing and community development banks that can finance inner-city projects.

Federal efforts have been insufficient and too rigid, and didn't allow for "local, neighborhood-based, one-stop shopping for coordinated services," the report said,

The study also argued:

- Focusing on drug treatment and prevention, rather than interdiction.

- Revising the Job Training Partnership Act. aiming it more toward the needs of unemployed inner-city youth.
- Turning responsibility for building low-income housing over to non-profit organizations, rather than for-profit developers.
- Investing \$15 billion more a year in programs for inner-city youth, and an extra \$15 billion in inner-city infrastructure for 10 years.

The Kerner panel, officially the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, was convened by President Lyndon B. Johnson to find out what caused riots in the late 1960s.