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## **Déjà vu on urban riots and reports**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kerner Commission's famous prophecy that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal," a new, massive report concludes that the vision of two unequal Americas is "more relevant today than in 1968."

Yet the future is not without hope. The 300-page missive, by the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, is a road map to a better America that should be required reading for every public-policy thinker and elected official in the state. Better yet, "Investing in Children and Youth. Reconstructing Our Cities" should be shared in churches and schools - as well as by the nearly two dozen men and women seeking the office of mayor in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The report rejects urban enterprise zones; economics that make the rich richer and the poor and middle-class poorer; the federal Job Training Partnership Act; and the "War on Drugs" with its attendant prison-building, which the foundation terms "our national housing policy for minorities and the poor." It persuasively argues for community-based strategies that are already working in urban America.

The Washington-based foundation proposes a nonprofit Corporation for Youth Investment, to be funded by both private sources and federal government, and a National Community Development Bank, to be modeled after Chicago's South Shore Bank, which has had much success in stemming urban decay. It wisely suggests shifting the \$12 billion anti-drug budget's emphasis from interdiction to prevention and education.

Financing means a gradual rise in federal spending to \$30 billion a year for 10 years. The report challenges Americans to fund programs on a "scale equal to the dimension of the problems," which the Kerner Commission long ago emphasized.

If America can find hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out the savings and loan industry, it should be able to find the money for a long-term strategy of youth investment and community reconstruction. First, Americans must come to believe in the investment's potential for return.

What has been missing is a commitment to change. If the nation's inequities are to be corrected before the Kerner Commission's golden anniversary, Americans must collectively open the way to renewal through a deeper sense of personal and national responsibility.