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CORRECTION

A printing error has disordered the volume numbers of *Land & Liberty*. The Nov./Dec. 1991 issue was 1154, not 1153. The correct number for Jan./Feb. 1992 was 1155, and the March/April 1992 issue was 1156.

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A Homeland for the Souls of Slaves

URBAN RIOTS in the United States were the cries of pain of the souls taken into bondage from Africa. That lesson is yet to be acknowledged.

President Bush adopts a spurious explanation for the disorder in Los Angeles. He blames the welfare system fathered by the liberals of the 1960s who sought to help the children of the men and women who slaved on the cotton fields. Many black men, we are told, fail to support their families. Black women have babies without getting married. All because of "welfare". And that's why their children resort to crime.

The superficial plausibility of this analysis distorts the reality. America's negroes are a people without a cultural identity, locked into a No Man's Land by history and the impoverished philosophy of the 1960s, in which the state resorted to welfare handouts. The poor were not emancipated; on the contrary, their condition of dependency was deepened.

Their ethnic roots, which give people much of their personality, were destroyed by the English sailors who snatched them from the soils of Africa. Emancipation could not restore traditional homelands to the slaves. So they were rootless, cut free to float in space, no cultural anchors to drag them back to earth.

Culture, to exist, needs the nurturing of a territorial context. Wrench people away from their land, and you destroy the lifeblood of their culture. No wonder the blacks have been leapfrogged by waves of immigrants who, though personally landless, were able to bring with them the semblance of a culture nurtured into them "back home".

Emancipation left the blacks shell-shocked, for they could not draw on the strength of ancient roots. Their lethargy and self-destruction are expressions of the post-traumatic stress syndrome. Occasionally they are jerked out of that mind-numbing condition by acts of injustice, to kick back at the society that stole their identities and gave them foodstamps.

There's no going back to Africa, but a practical formula can be articulated to make the land of America as much the homeland of blacks as that of the whites. The core of the appropriate philosophy says that the land belongs to all. This is not pious; sharing the rent of land through the public purse gives everyone an equal stake. It also removes the barriers that deny people the equal opportunity to work for their living.

This is the philosophy of empowerment that black America has yet to appreciate (see page 3). It's a philosophy that's been working for 100 years, in some places (see page 11). Black leaders should arm themselves with the one philosophy that would restore dignity to their people, which would give them that strong sense of place, of belonging, without which they will continue to live in limbo.