—40 Acres

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individual pieces of property: properties that were up for sale to resolve delinquent taxes.

All of the 3,000 pieces of property auctioned that day were purchased "around the table." In other words, each of the nineteen bidders sat around a table and it was understood by each of the bidders that there would be no competitive bidding.

Land at tax sales often go for much less than the current market value and heir property is easier to keep once it is bought at a tax sale. A reason given for this is the surviving heirs are often so disorganized and dislocated they are unable to get together, combine resources and redeem the property before the sale becomes final.

Although land acquisition through tax and partition sales are sometimes bought by nearby white farmers and landowners, an important variable to consider is that large corporations, such as paper and pulp companies own over 35 million acres of rural, southern farmland and these companies are acquiring an additional 250,000 acres each year.

It is apparent that the takeover of farmland has existed for some time. The problem of this takeover becomes more critical as land becomes a commodity of greater value due to the industrial growth and population expansion going on in the South today.

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A fourth method for land loss is through foreclosure of a mortgage or a deed of trust. Land can be acquired from the original landowner by a default in the payment of a debt if the land was put up for securing the debt.

Many private lenders acquired their landholdings by loaning monies and having the borrowers sign over their properties as security. As an instance, Horace Neely borrowed money from a private money lender.

Neely needed a $5,000 loan to repair some equipment located on his farm near Henderson, N.C. Neely approached a private money lender who agreed to the loan; but, only if Neely would secure the loan by mortgaging his farm: a farm valued at $90,000.00.

Dorsey agreed and the loan was given for a period of 180 days. The problem with this type of loan is if crops fail, Neely could lose his farm.

Not only do these types of foreclosure conspiracies occur with unscrupulous private lenders; but, there is serious evidence that even whie savings and loan as well as commercial bankers conspired to force blacks into foreclosure proceedings.

Similar allegations have also been levied at some of the federal loan agencies such as the Farmers Home Administration and the Federal Land Bank.

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There are thousands of acres of southern farmland that were vacated by slave owners, confiscated by the Federal government, then redistributed to blacks. Now with the current trend of whites taking land away from blacks, a complete cycle of ownership has occurred over the past 113 years.

Black land loss is a condition that is widely recognized and is being dealt with by many concerned citizens, organizations and governmental agencies.

For instance, the Emergency Land Fund (ELF) is one of several agencies that has been organized to curb this erosion of black landownership.

Based in Atlanta, Ga., ELF has field offices in most southeastern states. ELF's personnel work closely with rural black landowners and provides them with educational programs, legal and financial assistance directed to stem the loss of black - owned land.

At this point, we must conclude that rural land ownership is difficult to maintain, whether the owner is black or white, and especially if the owner is black and poor. Rural landownership is a valuable commodity.

Securing rural acreage requires a knowledge of state laws and a means of benefitting from these laws. Profitable landownership forces the black landowner to acquire skills for arriving at the highest and best use for his land.

Blacks have a right to this knowledge and information. Blacks also have a right to the illusive "American dream" as anyone else. A right to the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of their land.

—Black Music

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"I started out by writing my own songs and teaching myself to play the guitar. I didn't follow anything in terms of instruction or training. I just picked out things. If they sounded good, I kept them. There wasn't any real difficulty."

By the time she left secondary school at age 16, she had become a skilled guitarist and songwriter. She was playing the local clubs around London and performed in the London company of "Hair."

Armatrading was now writing songs during a time when Paul Simon (of Simon and Garfunkel), and Bob Dylan were dominating the British and American popular folk scene, but she wasn't really bitten by the show business bug until the early 1970s.

"It was just before I made the first album (Whatever's For Us in 1973) that I first started to get into it. I didn't think of becoming a singer or anything. I enjoyed writing the songs but I always thought in terms of somebody else singing them. But when I took them to the record companies, they like them so I ended up singing. I wasn't really prepared for it. In fact, it was very nerve-racking to go on stage for the first time."

Armatrading who plays both the six and twelve string acoutic guitars, says it was the challenge of the instrument that attracted her to it instead of the piano. "The guitar is actually my favorite instrument because it is the most difficult. With the piano, the keyboard is laid out. It is very easy to see what is happening. It's very easy to work out something, but the guitar is just all over the place."

Even during her early years in England, Armatrading's musical taste differed from her peer's.

As other teenagers lavished in the rock and roll of the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, Armatrading chose the folk music of Dylan and Simon. When she came to America in 1972, it was no surprise that she was unimpressed with the music of Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding embracing instead the country music of Jim Reeves, the 1940s music of Nat King Cole and soft rock music.

Like most international performers, she noted visible differences between the audiences and record tastes of Europe and those of Europe and those of Americans. "Audiences are different everywhere. An audience in Hamburg (West Germany) is much different from an audience in Munich (also West Germany).

"An audience in Portland, Oregon is different from an audience in Washington, D.C. It's not always a case of America verses Europe. It varies from city to city.

"Generally the American audience is more enthusiastic all during the performance and Europeans are more quiet during a concert and at the end they go absolutely mad but sometimes they just go mad at the beginning," she says with a light British accent.

Very little is known about the motivation and feeling behind her music and even less is known about her personal lifestyle. But songs like "Rosie" and "How Cruel" project strong feminists vibes and feelings of independence and struggle. But she is quick to say that she is not out to make strong political statements with her music.

Armatrading reportedly lives in semi-hermit style in the quiet town of Kingston about 90 miles outside of London. She has been an avid collector of comic books since her youth, reads extensively and loves to go to the films.

About her lifestyle, she says "I just do regular stuff like everybody else." When it comes to her musical taste, she says "It's just me. That's the way I've always been."

Joan Armatrading

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