Infinite Patience, Indomitable Will

Ralph Bunche

His Struggle for Peace and Justice

Tom Laichas

PREVIEW COPY
INCLUDING THE COMPLETE SECOND LESSON

Prepared for:
America’s History in the Making
Oregon Public Broadcasting

This lesson may not be resold or redistributed.

A Unit of Study for Grades 9–12

National Center for History in the Schools
University of California, Los Angeles
Bunche Hall
University of California, Los Angeles
Photos by Grace Lu
INTRODUCTION

I. APPROACH AND RATIONALE

*Infinite Patience, Indomitable Will: Ralph Bunche—His Struggle for Peace and Justice* is one of over seventy teaching units published by the National Center for History for the Schools that are the fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of United States and World History. They represent specific issues and “dramatic episodes” in history from which you and your students can delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying crucial turning points in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow’s history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, private correspondence, literature, contemporary photographs, and paintings from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of “being there,” a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian’s craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

II. CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: Correlation to the National Standards for History, Lesson Plans with reproducible documents, and suggestions for Further Reading. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for use by grades 9–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The Historical Background sections in each lesson should provide you with a good overview for the lesson. It is assigned to students as reading; however, if your students are not of sufficient grade level to understand the materials on their own, you may consult it for your own use in class lectures.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, handouts and student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.
III. **Correlation to National History Standards**


World History **Standard 1A** of Era 9, “the 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes,” has students explore the major political changes that accompanied post-war recovery including an appraisal of the formation of the United Nations. **Standard 1B**, conflicts in post-colonial Africa (Congo) and **Standard 1C**, the development of the state of Israel, are topics that are included in the teaching unit.

Lessons in the unit also integrate Historical Thinking Standards by having students draw upon skills in five interconnected dimensions of historical thinking: “Chronological Thinking,” “Historical Comprehension,” “Historical Analysis and Interpretation,” “Historical Research,” and “Issues-analysis and Decision-making.”
Lesson Two
Ralph Bunche and Black Political Life
1928–1941

A. Objectives

♦ Analyze major viewpoints and controversies among African-American political activists and intellectuals in the early 1930s.

♦ Evaluate Ralph Bunche’s distinctive contributions to the debate over African-American civil rights during the 1930s.

♦ Evaluate the relationship between civil rights activism in the United States and anticolonial activism in Africa, identifying Bunche’s contribution to both.

B. Lesson Activities

Activity One: African-American Intellectuals and Activists in the 1930s

1. Assign roles and have students present Document II–A, “The Documents Speak: The American Dilemma, 1928–1941.” Have the presenters stand in a line and take a step forward to read their respective parts.

2. Introduce the unit by asking students to read Historical Background Two, “Ralph Bunche and Black Political Life During the 1930s” or present a lecture to students on its themes. Though not essential, it will be useful for students to have some knowledge of: (a) African-American life between 1890 and 1930 (particularly the rise of Jim Crow segregation, the DuBois-Washington debate, Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, and the Harlem Renaissance) and (b) of the European colonization of Africa (particularly the 1885 Berlin Conference, and the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia).

3. Have students complete Worksheet 8, either as an individual assignment or a group activity.

Activity Two: Ralph Bunche and African-American Political Strategies

1. Give all students a copy of Document Set One, a set of Ralph Bunche quotes expressing his views on race and civil rights. Have students read the sources and then respond to the questions in Worksheet 9, either at home or in class.

2. Divide students into groups. Assign each group of students one of the sources in Document Set Two, providing enough copies of the source for each group member. Distribute Worksheet 10 and ask the students to answer the questions posed there once they have read their assigned source. Note that Worksheet 10 asks students to make the comparison by drawing a Venn diagram. These should be as large as possible—presented on butcher paper or poster board. Once complete, these diagrams should be posted around the room.

3. Use one of the following methods to share the findings of each group.

   Alternative 1:

   Ask each group to rise and present its Venn Diagram while other students take notes on these explanations. A “meeting of the minds” or debate/discussion can then follow.
**Alternative 2:** [Note: This activity takes up some space, so if you do not have a large room, move students to such a room, or have them go to another large space such as a cafeteria, theater, or open yard.]

a) Assign one student to be Ralph Bunche. Have this student stand in the middle of the instructional area.

b) Instruct all other groups to position themselves close to or far from “Ralph Bunche,” depending on how much their assigned strategist would have agreed with Bunche. (An example: advocates for a 49th exclusively African-American state would stand relatively far from Bunche, while Norman Thomas’s Democratic Socialists would stand nearby).

c) Have each group present its case for choosing where to stand. Then ask “Ralph Bunche” whether he wants to make any adjustments, and have him explain why he moved nearer to or farther from particular groups.

d) To extend this activity further, have groups talk to each other about their own views, and to choose a distance from one another which reflects the similarity (close) or differences (far) from one another.

4. **Debriefing:** Have students complete **Worksheet 11** and add their work to the surveys they posted around the room for **Lesson One**.

**Activity Three: Ralph Bunche and Anticolonial Activism in Africa**

Before reading these documents, students will benefit from an introduction to Nazi racial ideology and to events leading to World War II. This is not, however, essential.

1. Distribute **Document Set Three** and **Worksheet 12**. Instruct the students to review the questions on the worksheet before reading the sources. Then they should use the worksheet to take notes as they read. Explain that they will use their reading notes during the class discussion.

2. Once students have read the set of documents, engage them in a guided all-class discussion about the documents. The following are talking points for that discussion:

a) Bunche’s perspective in “Race and Imperialism” was, some students may suggest, Communist or Socialist. In fact, Bunche considered himself during the 1930s to be a Socialist. He distrusted Soviet influence in the Communist Party, a distrust which deepened in the 1940s and 1950s.

b) Students should be able to recognize difference between **Source Three** and the two previous sources. They will note that while Bunche was deeply critical of French and British policies in the mid-1930s, he is far less so by 1940. Most students will understand that World War II explains this shift in Bunche’s thinking. What students may not recognize, is a deeper shift from the Socialist economic determinism of Bunche’s 1930s work towards a liberal emphasis on political human rights and political institutions, typical of his thinking in the 1940s through early 1960s.
In 1920 Oscar C. Brown, Sr. was Corresponding Secretary for the Beta Chapter (Howard University) of the African-American fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha of America. He went on to become a real estate developer in Chicago but remained active in civil rights issues. In 1935 he authored “For a 49th (All-Black) State,” a proposal for an all-Black state (Aptheker 1990, 94–90).

In the United States of America, the Negro has been scorned as a social leper, denied reasonable protection under the law, prohibited from earning a decent living for himself, trampled upon because of his economic and numerical weakness, and maltreated in a thousand other ways. . . . We propose, therefore, the ultimate establishment of a new state in the United States wherein colored people in the United States can have an opportunity to work out their own destiny, unbridled and unhampered by artificial barriers; wherein they can have a chance to raise the lot of their masses from exploitation, misery, wretchedness and insecurity; wherein they can become respected, industrious, thrifty citizens. . . .

Paul Robeson was an accomplished actor and singer. He found in his tours around the world that Blacks had an equality he did not experience at home in the United States. While touring in Russia in 1935, he made the following statement (“I Breathe Freely,” Aptheker 1990, 133–137).

In Soviet Russia I breathe freely for the first time in my life. It is clear, whether a Negro is politically a Communist or not, that of all the nations in the world, the modern Russians are our best friends. . . . I came here because the Soviet Union is the only place where . . . the Africans, instead of preserving their own culture, are fighting the idea of “be what you are, and go European as soon as they can.”

Best known for his poetry, James Weldon Johnson also wrote a few books. The following oft-quoted extract is from his book *Negro Americans: What Now?* (Johnson 1938, 103).

The pledge to myself which I have endeavored to keep through the greater part of my life is: I WILL NOT ALLOW ONE PREJUDICED PERSON OR ONE MILLION OR ONE HUNDRED MILLION TO BLIGHT MY LIFE. I WILL NOT LET PREJUDICE OR ANY OF ITS ATTENDANT HUMILIATIONS AND INJUSTICES BEAR ME DOWN TO SPIRITUAL DEFEAT. MY INNER LIFE IS MINE, AND I SHALL DEFEND AND MAINTAIN ITS INTEGRITY AGAINST ALL THE POWERS OF HELL.

The following is an excerpt from a speech that Congressman (R) Oscar De Priest gave to the House of Representatives on May 3, 1933 (Aptheker 1990, 4:11). From Chicago, De Priest was the first black politician outside of the South to be elected to Congress.

I am appealing to the Christian, law-abiding people of America . . . to help maintain law and order in America and abolish this blight on our American jurisprudence known as lynching. . . . The provisions in the Constitution must be safeguarded, so that no man shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; and due process of law means a fair and impartial trial for every citizen of our country. He who stands idly by . . . will be guilty of . . . negligence in not routing this monster of race prejudice. . . .
A sociologist and a professor, W.E.B. DuBois was also a leading African-American activist who advocated Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism. He made the following appeal in June 1934 (Wright 2001, 504–6).

If you have passed your resolution “No segregation, Never and Nowhere,” what are you going to do about it? Let me tell you what you are going to do. You are going back to continue to make your living in a Jim-Crow school; you are going to dwell in a segregated section of the city; you are going to pastor a Jim-Crow Church; you are going to occupy political office because of Jim-Crow political organizations that stand back of you and force you into office. All these things and a thousand others you are going to do because you have got to. If you are going to do this, why not say so? What are you afraid of? . . . If you do believe in the extraordinary accomplishment of the Negro Church and the Negro college, the Negro school and the Negro newspaper, then say so and say so plainly.

The following text is from a handbill published by the New Negro Alliance, or NNA (Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University). The NNA, established in Washington in 1933, swelled with Howard University student and faculty members. Since Bunche did not support the organization’s racial exclusivity and also believed that actions against one business at a time were futile and counterproductive, he did not join (Holloway 2002, 57).

TO ALL FAIR-MINDED PEOPLE: JUSTICE IS ESSENTIAL TO AMERICANISM.

For one year (since June 25, 1938) The New Negro Alliance has picketed two of Peoples Drug Stores located in colored neighborhoods because the firm has refused to employ or promote colored persons as clerks in these stores where the preponderance of their trade is colored. They insist on keeping their colored employees in the most menial positions and at the average salary of $15.79 per week, although seeking the colored trade which keeps these stores profitable.

PEOPLES POLICY IS ESSENTIALLY UNFAIR AND UN-AMERICAN.

WHAT YOU CAN AND SHOULD DO: STAY OUT OF ALL PEOPLES DRUG STORES.
RALPH BUNCHE AND BLACK POLITICAL LIFE DURING THE 1930s

Earning a Masters Degree from Harvard University in 1928, Ralph Bunche received an invitation to join the faculty at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Already among the nation's premier all-black colleges, Howard had just embarked on a campaign to strengthen its academic programs. Learning of Bunche’s exceptional work at UCLA and Harvard, Howard President Mordecai Johnson put the 25-year-old at the helm of the university’s Political Science department.

If Bunche brought energy, discipline and intellectual rigor to his new assignment, Washington D.C. gave him much in return. Little known to white Washingtonians, the city’s black residents called theirs the “Secret City.” A metropolis of the segregated South, Washington was also among the most important centers of African-American intellectual and cultural life. His years in Washington gave him the opportunity to join a nationwide debate then raging among African-American activists over the most effective means to challenge the country’s racial caste system.

By the 1930s, economic conditions among African Americans had grown desperate. Blacks who had migrated from the South to Detroit, New York, Chicago and other industrial centers lost their factory jobs to the Depression. In the rural South, collapsing cotton prices further impoverished those who worked the land as tenants and sharecroppers. Meanwhile, the Jim Crow system of racial segregation remained largely undisturbed.

Before the 1930s, a few personalities such as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey had dominated African American responses to such calamity. By the mid-1930s, only Du Bois was still alive. Approaching his seventies, he harbored growing doubts that the United States would ever really extend full civil rights to African Americans. Over this and other issues, he parted ways with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the organization he had helped found.

No one individual took Du Bois’s place. Instead, dozens of activists championing divergent views engaged in a wide-ranging debate over political strategy.

While some African-American leaders remained loyal to the Republican Party’s values of property and propriety, many others found themselves attracted to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and the northern white liberals (particularly the President’s wife Eleanor) who championed civil rights within the Democratic Party.

Many African Americans were deeply skeptical of either party. These skeptics reminded their readers that the Democratic Party had practically invented southern segregation, lynch mobs, and race baiting. Though northern Democrats professed a newfound racial liberalism, those who doubted Democratic Party credentials should wait until the party’s “liberals” openly repudiated their southern colleagues. Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, whose New Deal programs depended upon Southern congressional support, would not do so.

As for Republicans, critics noted that fifty years had elapsed since that party had made any serious effort to deliver on the promise of Reconstruction. While Republicans generally offered a few appointments to prominent black supporters, this tokenism did not compensate for the party’s studied refusal to take on segregation with anything like the moral fervor that had possessed some Republicans after the Civil War.

Those who rejected both major parties offered any number of solutions. Among the most popular in the mid-1930s were Socialism and Communism. Unlike the Republican and Democratic parties, Socialists and Communists actively defended African-American civil liberties, sometimes at considerable risk. Those who rejected the Communist Party for its Soviet ties (and Bunche was among these) welcomed the Party’s assistance on issues ranging from the organization of Alabama sharecroppers to defense of the “Scottsboro Boys”, nine black teenagers falsely accused of rape in 1931. A Socialist Party, led by Norman Thomas, helped organize a bi-racial tenant farmer union in Arkansas and opposed racially exclusive industrial unionism in the North.

Emphasis on greater government control or outright ownership of businesses turned many property-owning African Americans against Socialist or Communist parties. Some, following in the footsteps of Booker Washington or Marcus Garvey, stressed economic self-reliance. Still others put their energies into their churches or fraternal organizations. Some activists called on the United States to create a 49th all-black state, while others called for blacks to take up farming, join labor unions, boycott racist businesses, or seek relief from segregation in the nation’s court system.
The black press proved a welcoming home to much of this debate. In the pages of a single issue of the NAACP’s *Crisis* or the Urban League’s *Opportunity*, columnists advocating Communism, private enterprise, the Democratic Party, and church-based charitable giving all vied for the attention.

Ralph Bunche vigorously participated in these debates. Since his years at UCLA, Bunche had publicly expressed his impatience with what he perceived as the unnecessary caution and deference of an older generation of civil rights leaders. Though deeply skeptical of any racially exclusive civil rights organization, Bunche supported and participated in Washington-area boycotts organized by Howard students against area businesses which refused to hire people of color, organized a defense of Howard against members of Congress skeptical of its reputation for student activism, and built organizations to challenge the economic inequality which, he believed, lay at the root of African-American oppression.

For Bunche, however, racism was not merely an American problem. His research in Africa and among Africans living in London and Paris had persuaded him that the race issue could not be fully resolved in the United States unless it was resolved worldwide.

Like many African Americans, Bunche was deeply troubled by Africa’s recent history. Divided among European powers in 1885, nearly the entire continent had been colonized by 1930. Only Liberia (established to resettle former American slaves) and Ethiopia remained independent.

Then, in 1935, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini began Ethiopia’s conquest. Though Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie organized a stout resistance, his June 1936 appeal to the League of Nations for support against Mussolini won him little support. For many African Americans, the invasion of Ethiopia demonstrated the importance of common political action among Africans dispersed throughout the world.

As a specialist in African affairs, Bunche had written a dissertation comparing the French administration of Dahomey (now Benin) to British governance of Togo. In the late 1930s, Bunche embarked on an even more ambitious trek: a two-year journey which took him through South Africa, eastern Congo, Uganda and Kenya—and from there to Singapore, Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia), and China. Returning home with film footage, photographs, and pages of research notes all running into the thousands, Bunche was prepared to write an extensive account of the impact of European colonization among Africans dispersed throughout the world.

The book Bunche would have written undoubtedly would have stressed the issues he introduced in his shorter essays on African affairs: that all British and French justifications of colonialism were patently false, that independence was essential throughout Africa, and that international law, enforced by an international organization, would be necessary to speed that process effectively.

Before Bunche could write his book, however, the Carnegie Corporation invited Bunche to assist Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal in his proposed study of American race relations. Bunche agreed, becoming Myrdal’s closest collaborator and responsible for much of the report’s original research. The study, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944) was a monumental work of social criticism, among the most important ever published. So important were its findings that it influenced the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision to end racial segregation in the public schools.

Research for *An American Dilemma* ended by 1941. By this time, the United States was preparing for war against Germany, Italy, and Japan. A substantial number of Americans opposed U.S. involvement, and their ranks included many African Americans. As early as 1937, Bunche had rejected arguments that German racism was no worse than the American variety. By 1941, he was urgently telling anyone who would listen that the black community had to put aside its differences with the U.S. government and defend itself against the moral threat posed by Adolf Hitler’s far more brutal racism.

After Pearl Harbor, the new Office of Special Services (OSS, the predecessor of the CIA) contacted Bunche, hoping to draw on his expertise in colonial affairs to combat German influence in Africa and Asia. In 1945, Bunche’s work for the OSS came to the attention of officials in the U.S. State Department, who asked him to help launch the new United Nations Organization (UNO, later the UN).

Bunche never wrote his Africa book. Soon, however, he would join the United Nations and get the opportunity to put his convictions into practice.
Ralph J. Bunche House
1510 Jackson Street N.E.; Washington, D. C.

This house, completed in 1941, is representative of the late 1930s period when some members of Washington's sizeable black professional class began to turn to architects to design custom homes. The property was deeded to Ralph Bunche in 1939, and the family lived there until 1947.
RALPH BUNCHE AND BLACK POLITICAL LIFE DURING THE 1930s

1. After presenting “The Documents Speak,” in class, re-read the quotes and write a paragraph describing African-American life in the 1930s based upon your reading and citing each source (not necessarily in the order they were read).

2. After reading Historical Background Two, “Ralph Bunche and Black Political Life During the 1930s” answer the following questions:
   
a. What do you expect Bunche’s explanation for racism to be?

b. How will he recommend that it be combated? Write your response here, and explain why you have made this prediction.
DOCUMENT SET ONE

Ralph Bunche on Race and Civil Rights

Source 1
Review of Harold F. Gosnell’s Negro Politicians (Bunche 1936A, 21:1)

There is, of course, excellent reason for the Negro to take advantage of every possible opportunity to participate in politics. No other group in the society has greater need of those services such as public education, sanitation, fire and police protection, which only the state can render. No other group must lean upon the state more heavily for relief from every variety of oppression and injustice.

... [And yet] it is not startling to learn that the Negro politician merely adopted the existing political patterns; there was no reason to hope that he would do otherwise. Black candidates and black voters fell in line with the patronage system. ... Money can buy Negro votes in Chicago just as it has always been able to buy white votes there and elsewhere in the country. It is significant, however, that in attempting to cash in on his political effort, the Chicago Negro has been severely handicapped by the traditional racial stereotypes. In consequence, the Negro’s cut of the patronage melon has consisted largely in menial jobs, such as the laboring and janitorial. ... There are [n]o Negro contracting firms to receive juicy contracts from the city; no Negro banks doing city-wide business; and no Negroes in the responsible administrative posts. ... 

Source 2
A World View of Race (Bunche 1936B)

The concept of human equality and the doctrine of natural rights were cradled in the modern Western World. These ideals embodied the political promise of the future. ... There was no limit to the promise which such doctrines held forth to peoples and classes which had been abused and oppressed for centuries. ...

In the practical history of our modern world, however, the ideal doctrine of the “equality of man” ... has fallen upon hard times. True, we continue to pay lip service to the “sacred” concept of “the natural rights of man”. ... But the dominant peoples and powerful nations usually discover that such concepts cut sharply across their own economic and political interests.

... One of the rocks on which the noble philosophy of human equality has run afoul takes shape as the frightful bogey, race ... The theory of race, endowed with a false dignity by pseudo-scientific treatment ... serves to justify economic policies, to bolster up political ambitions, to foment class prejudices and many other types of social antagonism among both groups and nations. ... On close inspection these passionate, dogmatic theories of race and human equality, which are employed to support political and economic motives in many parts of the world, are exposed as shameless subterfuges thriving on ignorance and hysteria.

What is Race?

There is great variability among the members of any particular group to which a racial label is given. ... Since there is no homogeneity within any given “race” it follows that there can be no clear line of distinction between one race and another. ... Because of the great overlapping in biological features among groups of peoples, it is clear also that general descriptions of so-called racial groups need have no application to individual members of a group. ... The plain fact is that the selection of any specific physical trait or set of traits as a basis for identifying racial groups is a purely arbitrary process. On the basis of anthropological studies now existent, it would be difficult to say whether there are a few races or several hundred. ... [A] brief survey of the classifications of races will demonstrate convincingly that no satisfactory method of classification has yet been devised, and that in all probability, none can be devised. ... [W]e are forced to conclude that existing racial divisions are arbitrary,
subjective, and devoid of scientific meaning. . . . [The mixing] of *Homo sapiens* frustrates at some point every scheme of racial classification.

. . . [Race] is an increasingly vicious weapon in the hands of fanatical rulers and irresponsible demagogues who wield it ruthlessly to flatter national egos and to carry out sinister political and economic policies.

[Keeping in mind the unusual fertility of even extreme cases of physically differentiated types of man, and man's history of constant migration, it must be concluded that human groups have been cross-breeding for tens of thousands of years. For example, the invasions of Mongolian peoples from the east have left their physical marks upon the peoples of Eastern Europe. . . . As a result, with rare exception, all existing human groups are of definitely mixed origin. In the vast majority of cases it is impossible to refer to the population of any region as belonging to any definite “race,” since every such group inevitably includes a great number of types and their various combinations. . . . It is for this reason that some scientific writers now suggest that we drop the term “race” . . . and substitute some more accurate description such as “ethnic groups” or “peoples.” Such designations are non-committal and realistic. . . ."

It follows, therefore, that such terms as “Jewish,” “Arabic,” “Celtic,” “Indian,” “Irish,” “English” and “American” merely serve to describe peoples who are bound together by cultural or linguistic ties—by language, religion, tradition, political custom or geographic propinquity. Such peoples will generally be found to be greatly diversified in origin and physical traits. Certainly they have no common biological or ancestral unity.

. . . So finally we may conclude that though racial antagonisms constitute a serious world problem, they have no scientific basis in biology, nor can they be accepted as the inevitable result of group differences. Such antagonisms must be analysed and understood in their social and historical setting. *Group antagonisms are social, political and economic conflicts, not racial,* though they are frequently given a racial label and seek a racial justification.

The Device of Race in World Economic and Political Conflict

Racial prejudice is one of the most invariable by-products of the myth of race. . . . The process works in a vicious circle. The prejudice of the dominant group is rationalized on the basis of the “inferiority” or backwardness of the minority or weaker peoples. The resulting racial or “color line” which usually assumes the form of segregation, severely restricts the social opportunities of the “inferior” peoples, makes it impossible for them to attain the fuller life, or to rise above their “inferior” status, and thereby emphasizes and perpetuates the consciousness of difference between the groups. Such attitudes are usually group attitudes. Individuals of different races may be on the most cordial of terms, though bitter racial feeling characterizes the relations of the two groups as a whole. . . . Group antagonisms thus are fed by mythical beliefs with their attitudes of scorn, derision, hate, and discrimination.

Race prejudice has deep economic roots. Hitlerism in Germany, for example, has sponsored a vigorous anti-Jewish policy which is directed at driving Jews out of positions desired by “Aryan” or “pure” Germans, and dispossessing the Jews of any economic power in Germany. . . . The white population of the [American] South, in its determination to protect its racial supremacy against the threat of the Negro, has presented since the Civil War a solid white front which has ignored class and party lines. . . . However . . . the doctrine of “white superiority” has been employed historically to justify the system of slavery, and, still more significantly, to console the poor whites of the South in their impoverished economic condition. . . . So economic forces were basically at work in the formation of American race prejudice.

. . . In fact, during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period, and even later, groups of poor whites in the South gave evidence of a willingness to join hands with the Negro in a fight against the Southern property-owning class. The development of the southern agrarian movement under late nineteenth century Populism made necessary vigorous efforts to prevent this “unholy alliance” which would have doomed the southern plantation owner. It was necessary to impress the poor whites that the interests of all white people in the South, rich and poor alike, were identical. The white South had to fight off the purely fictitious threat of “Negro domination.” By force, fraud and lynch law at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, the Negro was to be “put in his place.”
Race in the United States

Race is the great American shibboleth. Great sins have been committed in its name. It has been used to whitewash some of the blackest pages in American history. In America today it is widely accepted that the “race problem” is one of the fundamental problems of our society. . . . It has been one of the most serious obstructions in the alignment of the population along lines of natural class interests.

. . . Negro leadership, and much of sympathetic white opinion, has traditionally put its stress on the element of race in the Negro problem. The plight of the Negro has been attributed to a peculiar racial condition. Leaders and organizations alike have had but one end in view—the elimination of injurious discrimination against the “race.” For example, Booker T. Washington, in his widely proclaimed policy of conciliation, accepted the Negro race as an economic as well as a racial and social minority group within the nation. He advocated a doctrine of separation of the “races” as a solution of the problem. He pleaded for Negro business enterprise and the development of a separate Negro economy to be erected within the white economy and behind the walls of segregation. . . . Other Negro leaders, such as . . . Marcus Garvey, have long preached similar gospels, though Garvey did embellish Washington’s doctrine somewhat, by urging that ultimately the Negro must spread his black wings and fly away from these oppressive white shores, back to his native Africa. Inherent in these policies is the plea for conciliation with the white moneyed-class and at least a tacit acceptance of group segregation, if not a direct avowal of it.

Dr. Du Bois has differed from these gentlemen chiefly in the militancy of his tone in his insistent demand for fair and constitutional treatment of the Negro as a race. Du Bois attacked Washington vigorously, but not on the basis of the fallacies inherent in Washington’s economic philosophy, nor on his intense and misleading racialism, but on the grounds that he was compromising with the Southern whites and the Northern industrialists in the struggle for political and civil equality. The same attitudes are generally typical of the Negro organizations engaged today in the fight for Negro liberation,—the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, the Negro Business League, and others. They all turn a deaf ear to contentions that the plight of the Negro business man or the Negro worker in this country is inevitably and inextricably tied up with the plight of the white business man or the white worker; that race merely determines the intensity of the problem of the members of the race, not the quality. Negro leaders have willfully donned blinkers to keep them from seeing that so long as basic conflict in the economic interests of the white and black populations in the country persists (and it will persist in our present form of industrial society), neither prayer, nor logic, nor emotional nor legal appeal can make much headway against the stereotyped racial attitudes and beliefs regarding the Negro which are tenaciously clung to by the white masses of the country.

. . . Paper rights and political privileges have not protected millions of the white population from abject wage-slavery, if indeed they can find the chance to sell themselves into it; they have carried the ballot to the bread lines. . . . Certainly these traditionally sacred instruments can offer the lowly Negro no more reason for hope than they have afforded the vast numbers of the white population. Were the Negro to be invested with all of these rights and privileges,—and he is entitled to them by every canon of justice;—and were the Negro to receive in addition the respect and even the love of his fellow whites, the Negro’s fundamental problems, as theirs, would still await solution.

. . . The Depression, ably abetted by the policies of the New Deal, has made the American population, white and black, increasingly class-conscious. . . . Even in the bitter South, in places such as Arkansas and Alabama, white and black sharecroppers and tenant farmers have joined together in large numbers to form unions.

1A practice or a manner of speaking that marks one as an outsider.
Roughly . . . the tactics which [minority groups] ordinarily employ in this struggle [for their economic and political rights] can be summarized as follows:

1. **Violent**
   - (a) Direct rebellion and secession by force.
   - (b) Cooperation with other [dissident] elements toward immediate or ultimate revolution.

2. **Non-Violent**
   - (a) Zionism and Garveyism, involving migration to new and foreign soil.
   - (b) Economic, including passive resistance (the Gandhi movement) and economic separatism
   - (c) Conciliation, including interracial organizations
   - (d) Political, including a determined fight for the ballot and justice through laws, lobbying, picketing, mass demonstrations, and the courts.

While each of these methods has been employed at one time or another by some minority group, those listed under the non-violent heading have been the tactics most seriously advocated by American Negro leadership. . . . The Communist Party has seriously recruited among the Negro group but with only indifferent success.

**Racial Separatism.** Because of the seeming hopelessness of the fight to win equal rights for many minority racial groups, some of the leadership of such groups has often espoused a “defeatist” philosophy, which takes the form of racial separatism. . . . Thousands of American Negroes came to believe that the racial barriers to equality in this country could never be surmounted, and they flocked to the support of the Garvey “back to Africa” movement which flourished after the last war [World War I]. Like all programs of this character, Garveyism offered . . . an emotional escape from oppressive conditions. Also like other such programs it was impractical, for attractive land for such venture[s] was no longer available, due to the consuming greed and inexorable demands of the imperialist nations.

**Economic Passive Resistance.** Supporters of economic passive resistance usually look to [Mohandas K. “Mahatma”] Gandhi for their guidance. They see powerful weapons available to the oppressed group in the employment of the economic boycott and in fearless self-sacrifice. Through such tactics they propose to wring economic and political justice from the dominant group by striking at its most sensitive spot, its markets, and by shaming its Christian conscience. [However] . . . as soon as such a movement assumed threatening proportions, it would be obliged to withstand severe counter-boycotts which would deprive the members of the group of many necessary commodities which they could not produce themselves. Moreover, they would be denied essential credit and capital. The legal and police forces of the state would inevitably be aligned against them, and, in addition, they would be subjected to the characteristic gangster attacks which have recently proved so helpful to employers in labor disputes.

A mild version of this form of economic passive resistance has been from time to time advocated. . . . Particularly during the Depression has this doctrine gained circulation in the guise of the “don’t-buy-where-you-can’t-work” movement. The fallacy of this method is obviously discovered in its assumption that it can offer any real relief to the great masses of Negroes. Its outlook is narrowly racial, and it fails to realize that it can create no new jobs but that it can only gain jobs for Negroes by displacement of whites. Since there is already a woefully inadequate number of jobs, whenever a Negro is thus forced into a job in a Negro community a white man is forced out and must seek employment elsewhere. And, since the Negro communities do not offer sufficient economic activity to absorb even the number of Negroes now employed, this can only mean that Negroes employed in white communities are endangered of losing their jobs in proportion to the success of the movement. At best, it would create only a vicious cycle of job displacement.

**Economic Separatism.** As a result of the highly segregated life which racial minority groups are often compelled to live, there is a strong tendency for the doctrine of economic separatism to take root as a promising palliative.
for both political and economic oppression. This has been a particularly virulent creed among American Negroes, chiefly due to the impetus given the movement by Booker T. Washington. . . . The promise of this hope of constructing an independent and segregated black economy within the walls of the white capitalist economy is excellently discussed by Spero and Harris in the following words: “If such an economy is to rise it . . . will have to live upon white sufferance. If the great white banks and insurance companies decided that they want Negro business it is hard to see how the little black institutions can compete successfully against them. The same holds true for the chain stores and various retail establishments. They will be able to undersell their Negro competitors if they want to, and the Negro world will not continue indefinitely to pay higher prices for its goods merely out of pride of race” (Sterling 1931, 466).

**Political Tactics: Civil Libertarianism.** Perhaps the favorite method of struggle for rights employed by minority groups is political. Through the use of the ballot and the courts strenuous efforts are put forth to gain social justice for the group. Extreme faith is placed in the ability of these instruments of democratic government to free the minority from social proscription and civic inequality. The inherent fallacy of this belief rests in the failure to appreciate the fact that the instruments of the state are merely the reflections of the political and economic ideology of the dominant group, that the political arm of the state cannot be divorced from its prevailing economic structure, whose servant it must inevitably be.

Leaders of the American Negro like Dr. Du Bois, and organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which he helped to found in 1909, have conducted a militant fight under this illusory banner. They have demanded full equality for the Negro, involving the eradication of all social, legal, and political restrictions tending to draw a line of distinction between the black citizen and the white.

. . . The confidence of the proponents of the political method . . . is based on the protection which they feel is offered all groups in the society by that sacred document the Constitution. Particularly do they swear by the Bill of Rights and its three supplements, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments . . . the Constitution is thus detached from the political and economic realities of American life and becomes a sort of protective angel hovering above us and keeping a constant vigil over the rights of all America's children, black and white, rich and poor, employer and employee, and like impartial justice, blinded to their differences. [However], the Constitution . . . can never be more than our legislatures and, in the final analysis, our courts, wish it to be. And, what these worthy institutions wish it to be can never be more than what American public opinion wishes it to be. Unfortunately, so much of American public opinion is seldom enlightened, sympathetic, tolerant, or humanitarian. Too often it resembles mob violence.

**Interracial Conciliation.** It follows, therefore, that the policy of civil libertarianism is [limited] by the dominant [opinions] of society. It success, in the final analysis, must depend upon its ability to create a sympathetic response to its appeals among influential elements in the controlling population. In the long run its militancy must be softened and the inevitable tendency is for it to conform to the general pattern of the genteel programs of interracial conciliation, which attempt to cultivate the good will of the white upper class. [Civil rights organizations] can be militant, but only politely so; they can attack, but not too harshly; they must entreat, bargain, compromise and capitulate in order to win even petty gains. They must politely play the game according to the rules even though they have no stakes.

**The Courts** . . . The ability of the courts to hand down what appear to be legally sound opinions and still permit popular abuses of the Negro's rights to persist is largely due to the adroitness of the white legislators in the art of drawing up and administering their laws. These abuses generally occur under the protection of laws which are “fair on their face,” and unless the court is disposed to look behind the face of the law to its administration the Negro can receive no relief. This is admirably illustrated by . . . Plessy v. Ferguson.

**Conclusion** No minority group should relent in the most determined fight for its right, but . . . the only realistic program for any minority group in modern America is one which is . . . the hope that can be held out for the betterment of [most whites]. Their basic interests are identical and so must be their programs and tactics.
CIVIL RIGHTS SOLUTIONS
Ralph Bunche and A World View of Race

Name ____________________________ Date ____________________

1. According to Ralph Bunche, what is “race?”

2. In Bunche’s view, why had racial difference become politically important by the 1930s?

3. Which political, social, and/or economic strategies does Ralph Bunche believe most likely to improve the conditions of African Americans in the 1930s?

4. Consider your answer to question 3. Why does Bunche believe that this solution will, in fact, work? What evidence do you find in the quotes presented in Document Set One?
**Document Set Two**

**African American Policy Options in the 1930s**

**Source 1**

**No to Communism**

Kelly Miller, veteran political activist, authored the weekly column “Kelly Miller Says” for various African-American journals. These excerpts from his November 1932 journal article, “Should Black Turn Red?” (Miller 1932, 328–32) express his anti-communist views.

There is much wild talk in the air concerning the drift of the American Negro towards communism. . . .

Radical emissaries have been busy in this field, not wholly without results. They come to the Negro under the influence and inspiration of Moscow, and assure him that a communist state would not only cure the economic ills of mankind, but at the same time solve the otherwise insoluble race problem. . . . The Promised Land is always alluring to those who wander in the wilderness. . . .

. . . The fact that communism is not native to the American soil nor indigenous to American Spirit and genius render it all the more dangerous for the Negro to become entangled in the meshes of its intrigue. . . .

. . . [Communists] do not shrink from whatever contact may be necessary to demonstrate the concrete embodiment of their faith. . . . They give the Negro the second highest place on their ticket in the [1932 U.S.] presidential campaign. They openly face and defy the South’s most passionate dogma as to race relations. They vie with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in defending the race against injustice and legal discrimination. They won in the contest for the privilege of defending the Scottsboro Boys which they did with a legal acumen and reckless courage which challenges the admiration of the whole nation. They have opened the jury box to Negro [jurors] in the South which had been effectively closed to them since the overthrow of Reconstruction. Such demonstration of genuineness, sincerity, and altruistic friendship is hard to resist. If the rulers of church and state, politics and business, who so bitterly deplore communism . . . would but concentrate their concern in behalf of justice and fair play for the Negro, there would be no need of combating this vicious propaganda.

. . . It is an easy step from the dictatorship of the Czar who claimed his authority from above to that of Lenin and Stalin who assume power in behalf of the proletariat, without its . . . consent. The reformers . . . under a despotism have no recourse except in violence and revolt. Whereas in America, the tradition of self-government is rooted and grounded in the genius of . . . the Constitution. . . .

. . . Communism as the term is currently understood involves the dictatorship of the proletariat as an outgrowth of the class struggle. [But the Negro] would undoubtedly be the chief victim of the conflict. . . . Race prejudice upsets every calculation of logic and common sense. . . . Should the Negro, in a primary conflict, unite with white labor to overthrow capitalism, then the issue between white and black labor would assume primitive ruthlessness. . . . Where the Negro holds the job that the white workman covets he will scruple at nothing to eject the black competitor. . . . Labor organizations either exclude, segregate, or proscribe the Negro workman. . . . [W]ithout the restraints and inhibition of discipline and culture, [white workers] serve as the repository of custodian of received animosities, hatreds, passions and prejudices.
Loren Miller, communist activist, was a civil rights attorney and is best known as the lead attorney in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the 1948 decision striking down restrictive covenants. The following are excerpts from his July 1934 article (Miller 1934, 214–17).

Countless orators have thrilled their audiences with the prediction that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands some day and take her place among the great nations of the earth. Marcus Garvey clothed the dream in a semblance of realism and built a mass movement around it. Last month a group of Chicago Negroes met to lay plans for the “forty-ninth” [African-American] state. The widely discussed Du Bois plan is an expression of the same ideal. At the bottom of this clamor for a Negro state lies the desire of Negroes to get control of their own affairs and a realization that they are not to be permitted to share American economic and political power. First as a slave and then as a free man the Negro has been denied these things.

. . . [By the 20th century] segregation was operating to drive Negroes into ever greater unity. . . . The Tuskegee doctrine, the N.A.A.C.P., the founding the National Negro Business League, the strengthening of Negro churches, fraternal organizations, and a hundred other Negro groups gave the Negro people a more and more complete group feeling. Negro art, Negro music, Negro dances expressed this feeling. A Negro national anthem was composed.

This growing nationalism was perverted into an intense racialism. “Race price,” “race consciousness,” were exaggerated beyond all proportion. Neglecting sociological truths, differences in outlook between Americans and Negroes were laid to race. Blues, spirituals, dances, and high death rates were claimed to be products of a mystical “racial” inheritance.

America’s [capitalist] rulers found this doctrine of racialism to their liking. It meant that the Negro accepted “his place” and was content to stay within it without bothering too much about the growth of monopoly of Supreme Court anti-labor decisions. More than that, it meant that employers were assured of a reservoir of cheap labor and strike breakers. If there was trouble at times why, white gentlemen and colored gentlemen would settle those matters in the quiet chambers of justice. . . .

And then one fine day in 1929 the stock market broke. The bogey of over-production reared itself. The crisis in agriculture deepened. Black workers were laid off. Saturday night pay checks got smaller or vanished. . . .

The crisis shows no signs of abatement after five years. The government admits that the number on relief rolls has increased over that of a year ago. A wave of bloody strike clashes demonstrate that the Roosevelt reform program has failed to solve the worker’s problem. Class struggle impends in America. The Communists gain strength everywhere. . . . Negro workers and farmers will find ready made allies in the battle. White workers and farmers are driven to the same extremity. Alliance would benefit both.

[T]he realization of a Negro nation requires a [Communist] America and . . . with that achieved there would be no place for group exploitation. . . . The common Socialist culture of a Soviet America would . . . facilitate the final merger of Negroes and [white] Americans. Nor does the Communist plan call for herding Negroes off into any given area. It simply takes account of the fact that the South is still the Negro homeland and that there is an area, the Black Belt, in which Negroes are in the majority. The plan then is that this district “be organized as a distinct political unit regardless of class lines.” In that region where Negroes are now virtual serfs they would become owners of the soil and masters of their own destiny. . . .

Let’s quit kidding ourselves. The good old days are gone. There is no security for the Negro intellectual. . . . He must make a choice. . . . He can throw in his lot with the working class and aid in the battle for a new order in which the Negro people can control their own economic, and hence, political destiny.
Duly alarmed over the widespread revolt of Negro voters against President Hoover and the drift toward Governor Roosevelt, Republican chieftains calculated on playing a trump card and winning over the party’s most dependable asset [i.e., African-American votes] by staging a spectacular political drama at the White House. Printed invitations were sent to some 200 men and women of the race to gather in Washington . . . at the expense of the Republican National Committee. . . . After the delegation had been ushered into the presence of Mr. Hoover, [the President] solemnly promised that “the Republican Party would not abandon its traditional duty to the American Negro, given in the first instance by the immortal Lincoln and transmitted to those who followed as a sacred trust.”

After the speech-making the President posed with Negroes for a picture for the first time since [President Hoover’s inauguration three and a half years before]. Then each visitor in turn grasped the hand of the Nation’s Chief Executive and bade him an affectionate goodbye.

At this assemblage of race leaders from every section of the country, not a note of protest was uttered . . . against Mr. Hoover’s three years of apathy and unfriendliness. And yet, one only has to consult the files of the Negro Press less than six months back to read adverse comment on the President’s attitude toward the race. Evidently being Republican first and Negroes after, these erstwhile critics of the administration have forgiven and forgotten.

. . . Here we have an amazing spectacle of race leaders displaying enthusiasm and apparent satisfaction over generalizations about Abraham Lincoln who has been dead sixty-seven years! . . . [And] any student of politics knows that the Republican Party in 1860 went on record as being against the abolition of slavery; that the abolition of slavery was essentially a war measure; that the [vote] was primarily granted the Negro to keep the Republican Party in power, and that as soon as the Western states assured the Republican Party of allegiance at the polls, the Federal troops were withdrawn from the South and the Negro was thrown upon his own resources.

Contrary to the observations of G.O.P. speakers, the treatment of the Negro is not a party measure. It is sectional. Tennessee, which is more often Republican than Democratic, has every Jim-crow institution that can be found anywhere in the South. . . .

If Mr. Hoover’s record as President has been acceptable to Negroes, it would not have been necessary for “loyal Republicans” to respectfully ask that he speak out. But when he did speak out, he failed to explain . . . why he has sponsored the Lily White movement [of Southern Republicans] to eliminate the Negro from party councils in the South; why he insisted on the appointment of Judge Parker to the Supreme Court, a judge who had previously expressed himself in favor of nullification of the Fourteenth Amendment; why he permitted the continuance of discrimination against Negro applicants for Civil Service . . . and why he has steadily refused to appoint Negroes to positions requiring Senatorial conformation. . . .
Source 4

Support Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal

The great-grandson of a slave, Robert C. Weaver was adviser on Negro Affairs for the Department of the Interior when he wrote the article excerpted here (Weaver 1935, 200–202). He continued serving in various government posts and in 1966 Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him head of the new Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). As such, he was the first black to hold a cabinet level position. On July 11, 2000, the HUD headquarters in Washington DC was renamed the “Robert C. Weaver Federal Building” in his honor.

Robert Weaver and Ralph Bunche became friends when they attended Harvard at the same time—Bunche as a graduate student and Weaver in the law school.

It is impossible to discuss intelligently the New Deal and the Negro without considering the status of the Negro prior to the advent of [Franklin Roosevelt’s] Recovery Program. The present economic position of the colored citizen was not created by recent legislation alone. Rather, it is the result of the impact of a new program upon an economic and social situation.

... Over a half of the gainfully employed colored Americans are concentrated in domestic service and farming. ... In [American] cities, 43.4 per cent of the Negroses on relief May 1, 1934, were usually employed as domestics. ... Local relief monies were shrinking; and need and starvation were facing those unable to find an opportunity to work. A Federal relief program was the only possible aid in this situation. Insofar as the Negro was greatly victimized by [the Depression], he was in a position to benefit from a program which provided adequate funds for relief. It is admitted that there were many abuses under the relief set-up. Such situations should be brought to light and fought.

... The recent depression has been extremely severe in its effects upon the South. The rural Negro—poor before the period of trade decline—was rendered even more needy after 1929. Many tenants found it impossible to obtain a contract for a crop, and scores of Negro farm owners lost their properties. The displacement of Negro tenants (as was the case for whites) began before, and grew throughout the depression. Thus, at the time of the announcement of the New Deal, there were many families without arrangements for a crop—an appreciable number without shelter.

... The new program for land utilization, rural re-habitation, and spreading land ownership may be able to effect ... a change.

... The Housing Division of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works has planned 60 Federal housing projects to be under construction by December 31, 1935. Of these, 28 are to be developed in Negro slum areas and will be tenanted predominantly or wholly by Negroses. Eight additional projects will provide for an appreciable degree of Negro occupancy. ... Projects in Negro areas have been announced in seven cities [and] ... will contain about 20,000 rooms.
Source 5
“Ballad of Roosevelt”
(Hughes 1934, 9)

[James] Langston Hughes began writing poetry in junior high. His grandfather, who with his grandmother raised him for a time, was a prominent African American politician in Kansas during the Reconstruction era and a factor in his ideas about race. In addition to poetry, he also wrote essays, including a weekly column for the Chicago Defender. He is best known, however, as a poet and has often been informally considered the “Poet Laureate of the Negro Race.”

The pot was empty,
The cupboard was bare.
I said, Papa,
What’s the matter here?
  I’m waitin’ on Roosevelt, son,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
  Waitin’ on Roosevelt, son.

The rent was due,
And the lights was out.
I said, Tell me, Mama,
What’s it all about?
  We’re waitin’ on Roosevelt, son,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
  Just waitin’ on Roosevelt.

Sister got sick
And the doctor wouldn’t come
Cause we couldn’t pay him
The proper sum—
  A-waitin’ on Roosevelt,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
  A-waitin’ on Roosevelt.

Then one day
They put us out o’ the house.
Ma and Pa was Meek as a mouse
Still waitin’ on Roosevelt,
Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

But when they felt those
Cold winds blow
And didn’t have no
Place to go
Pa said, I’m tired
  A-waitin’ on Roosevelt,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt.
  Damn tired o’ waitin’ on Roosevelt.

I can’t git a job
And I can’t git no grub.
Backbone and navel’s
Doin’ the belly-rub—
  A-waitin’ on Roosevelt,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

And a lot o’ other folks
What’s hungry and cold
Done stopped believin’
What they been told
  By Roosevelt,
  Roosevelt, Roosevelt—

Cause the pot’s still empty,
And the cupboard’s still bare,
And you can’t build a
Bungalow
  Out o’ air—
  Mr. Roosevelt, listen!
  What’s the matter here?
The Republican Party, since the days of the administration of President Taft, has been most negligent of the Negro... There seems to be no special effort being made at this time by Republicans to win back the allegiance and loyalty of the Negro group. On the other hand, the Democratic Party in the North, through its leaders, is making an active bid for this support. The largest number of colored men holding worthwhile political positions is now assembled in Washington... Also, large sums of money are being spent for relief and practically all of the various New Deal agencies have included the Negro to some extent in their administration....

It is not to be overlooked, however, that while the Democratic administration has provided this large number of representative positions for Negroes, it has stood by and permitted the most outrageous discriminations. Under its Bankhead Cotton Control Bill, the AAA, and in the dispensation of relief, colored people, that is the masses, have been held to the lowest levels and have been treated in many communities as groups entitled to but scant consideration.

Serious minded colored people are nevertheless wondering whether the appointment of even thirty or forty colored men to worthwhile positions at Washington compensates for the unjust and unfair discriminations which have been practiced in the administration of the New Deal policies. All of this presents serious questions to the Negro:

Can he be bought with relief money and with thirty or forty positions?

Should he seriously think of going back to the Republican Party as long as it indicates no especial desire for his return?

My answer would be “No” in both instances... In the North where the Negro vote counts he should, just like other minority groups, have clear cut understanding with Republican and Democratic senators and representatives, and with the management of the present administration as to whether they plan to play fair with the masses of the race in the future... While the Negro no longer wishes to be regarded either as the ward of the Republican or the Democratic Party, or as the ward of the nation, he still feels that he should not be left by the party of his choice to the ways and devices of those who hold strong, discriminatory feelings against him mainly and solely because he is a Negro...
Since 1856, when the Republican Party was organized and its first declaration of principles was announced, there has been a strong appeal made for the support of the people to continue in power those who believe in and pledge themselves to carry out these principles.

. . . The outstanding issue between [Democrats and Republicans] was that of Slavery. The Democrats in their Platforms declaring in favor of the perpetuation of Slavery and the Republicans in their Platforms declaring against Slavery. This was so pronounced that it brought on the Civil War which put an end to Slavery but still left the Negro without the full enjoyment of all the rights, privileges and duties guaranteed to him in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Federal Constitution.

The Republican Party has repeatedly put itself on record as favorable to the principle of this declaration, while the Democratic Party has stubbornly opposed it and stood in the way of the exercising of these privileges and rights by Negro Citizens.

It cannot be denied that even to this day the National Democratic Party, dominated as it is by Southern [white] sentiment, not only denies the Negro the right and privilege of voting but actually puts itself on record as opposed to allowing him to vote even when he declares himself as willing to vote the Democratic ticket. . . . The party that is guilty of such a crime ought to be condemned and not supported.
During the past two years, this country, as the rest of the world, has been passing through a period of physical and psychological depression caused primarily because of our disregard of economic laws, and the loss of faith in ourselves. The President of the United States has found the cause of this fall and is now applying the remedy. Let us have faith and fall in line.

God has endorsed and given to men three fundamental instrumentalities to ensure the perpetuity of the human family: Home, the Schoolhouse, and the Church. Any people who do not subscribe one hundred per cent to the sustenance of the three facilities can not help to form the perfect Union outlined by the founders of the government. Home-ownership is the first essential...this acquisition is only possible through industry, economy, and frugality. Knowing this to be the foundation of society, the Republican Party has gone on record encouraging every American citizen to own a home. For this timely legislation, the President and the Republican Party should receive the appreciation of every American citizen... 

During this depression many of our banking institutions have been unable to weather the storm... By legislation recommended by the President, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation will be able to revive these institutions and thereby save thousands of homes of the people.
Six times the presidential candidate for the Socialist Party, Norman Thomas reached out to black voters. He wrote “The Socialist’s Way Out for the Negro” (Thomas 1936, 100–104) when the *Journal of Negro Education* invited him to participate in a forum on the future of Blacks in America.

Socialism offers to the Negro all the hope there is of a decent world. The Socialist Party . . . is the way of social salvation for the Negro . . . basically and primarily because Socialism is the hope for all mankind . . . . Secondarily, Socialism is the hope for the Negro because of its insistence on the ending of those denials of human right, justice, and economic opportunity, which should be the portion of every man within our national borders regardless of race, creed, or color . . . .

The logic of the cooperative commonwealth, with planned production for use based on social ownership, is irrefutable, but the power and self-interest of the owning class . . . stand in the way of our doing that which is logically for our advantage . . . .

In light of this truth there is something pathetic as well as dangerous about the hope of some Negroes that at this late stage in capitalist development . . . they can find racial salvation by setting up a bourgeois [i.e., middle class] world of their own. It is a tragedy that this idea should still have force . . . [when] the Negro in overwhelming mass is a worker and his salvation is bound up with the triumph of the working class . . . . Hope for colored men lies in uniting with Socialist and enlightened labor unionists who are fighting for equal treatment of white and colored workers in labor organizations. I know nothing more immediately encouraging than the way in which in a region recently cursed by the Ku Klux Klan, white and colored sharecroppers and cotton field workers have come together in the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union, an independent, self-governing organization organized on the initiative of Socialists . . . .

The trade union movement in America has weakened itself by continually yielding to the concept of “practical” politics under which it has been forever selling its birthright to one or another of the old parties [i.e., Democrats and Republicans] in exchange for this or that mess of pottage . . . . By practical politics it may be possible nowadays to get a colored Democratic congressman here or a colored Republican congressman there. By playing along with Mrs. Roosevelt, if not with Mr. Roosevelt, it looked for awhile as if it might be possible to get a degree of support for a federal anti-lynching bill which in the hour when Democratic Senators from the South killed it was emphatically not in evidence.

In our fundamental position we affirm that Socialists are far more loyal to the dictates of brotherhood, racial solidarity, [and] common sense . . . than [are] the Communists. I refer to the Communist plank calling for self-determination in the black belt1. . . . In a Socialist society, racial self-determination in counties and states in America will be meaningless . . . . We want a world where human beings are chosen for political and economic leadership irrespective of race, creed, or sex . . . .

---

1 The Communist Party promised that the “black belt”—the swath of counties from Georgia through Arkansas in which African-Americans comprised a majority—would become independent and self-governing if the Communists came to power.
Race prejudice, in its industrial feature, is rather on the increase than decline. Where there is not regular work enough for all, the Negro will be made the marginal or left-out man. In cities he loiters around the outer edge of industry, picking up only such hand to mouth positions as may here and there arise which in the main the white man does not care for. The pressure of necessity is forcing the white man to all lines of available work however humble; the Negro will be pressed down to the bottom or pressed out at the sides.

... The white race has all but monopolized the process of manufacture, trade, and transportation. The ascendancy of manufacture over agriculture is shown by the fact that the urban population has far outstripped the rural during the past half century. The white worker leaves the farm for the city in quest of more remunerative and attractive employment. On the other hand, when the Negro workman quits the farm, he has no such assurance. The farm is still his best chance. On the farm the races are essentially on a parity, mother earth yields as readily and abundantly to the persuasion of the black as of the white tiller. The markets are wholly without race prejudice. ... But when the two leave the farm and go to the city the white man gains a tremendous advantage. ...

The fact that the whites are abandoning the farms gives the Negro his chief opportunity. ... What others resign, he should value. He should take up the farm where the white man leaves it off. His lot will be a relatively hard one, but the Negro might expect to do hard things.

Segregation, which is repugnant in many of its features, yields the Negro certain compensatory advantages. There is a certain limited sphere of racial business within segregated areas which operate in his behalf. In such purely racial undertakings as the barber shop, beauty parlors, mortuary establishments, where the whites do not care to undertake the immediate handling of colored customers, the Negro proprietor finds his chief opportunity. ... Slender as his opportunities are, the Negro must make the most of them. As Booker T. Washington used to say, “he must take advantage of his disadvantages.”

... I anticipate that this suggestion will raise the cry of segregation. But I do not allow myself to be frightened by a phrase or an epithet. I am reminded of the retort of Admiral Farragut when he sought to cut the Confederacy in twain by opening the Mississippi River. ... When admonished that there were torpedoes in the way, the doughty Admiral retorted: “Damn the torpedoes; go ahead.”
T

T

T

T

T

T

Twenty-two international and national [labor] unions . . . flatly and frankly exclude Negro workers by constitutional provision. Other trade unions limit Negro workers to certain types of work, certain shops, in which to work and to certain locals. . . .

The encouragement of Negro workers to join certain unions is . . . unusual, although some unions, while not making any direct effort to organize Negro workers, will accept them. Separate locals are generally provided for Negro workers by the International Hotel and Restaurant Employees’ Alliance and the International Bartenders’ League, the Journeyman Barbers, the Laundry Workers and the United Textile Workers. . . .

These [existing] forms of discrimination against Negro workers are not denied, but sometimes excused by trade union officials on the tenuous grounds that Negroes are only happy when they are to themselves, or that Negro and white people don’t get along so well together. . . .

Discrimination against Negro workers by the trade union movement is doubtless the greatest challenge to its profession of democracy and its claim of representing a progressive force in American society. . . .

The only remedy for the problem . . . is the organization of the Negro workers into the trade unions that will accept them and into independent unions of Negro workers to fight for admission into unions that exclude them.

The cause of [organizing] Negro workers into the trade union movement has suffered greatly and been inaculably hindered by Negro leadership. The old guard conservative group are simply opposed to organized labor for the same reason that [financier Andrew W.] Mellon or [banker J. P.] Morgan is opposed to it. . . . As a matter of fact, they would oppose a group of Negro workers organizing to fight for more wages and better working conditions, just as they oppose white workers fighting for more wages and better working conditions.

The Negro intellectual too, has rendered doubtful service to the cause . . . since they have been content merely to proclaim their opposition to the [American Federation of Labor] because of the existence of [race] prejudice in various unions affiliated with it which, of course, nobody denies. . . . Certainly no one will contend that attacking the A. F. of L. because of its short-sighted stand on Negro labor, is not advisable or necessary. Discrimination, segregation, and Jim Crowism should be systematically exposed and fought wherever found, whether in church, government, school system, trade union, or what not. . . .

But along with a policy of destruction with respect to discrimination, segregation, and Jim Crowism in the trade unions, should also be developed a program of construction Obviously, the only sound constructive program in dealing with the problem of Negro workers is [union] organization. This is the task of the Negroes themselves. Nobody else will organize Negro workers.
CIVIL RIGHTS SOLUTIONS
Other National Leaders

Name ___________________________ Date ____________________

Author and “Source” assigned to our group:

Questions
1. Which political, social, and/or economic strategies does your assigned author believe most likely to improve the conditions of African Americans in the 1930s?

2. Why does your assigned author believe that this solution will, in fact, work? What is this author’s evidence and argument?

3. Using the model below, on a large sheet of butcher paper or a poster board prepare a Venn diagram comparing Bunche’s view with those of your group’s assigned source. In each category, list everything you can find from your two readings. When you are finished, post your diagram on the wall.
DEBRIEFING

Name ____________________________  Date ____________________

You have discussed Ralph Bunche's strategies for challenging racial prejudice in the United States, compared those strategies with those of other African-American leaders, and assessed the relationship between Bunche's approach to race in the United States with his approach to race in world affairs.

1. Based on your work in this lesson, list the three most important pieces of information about Ralph Bunche’s views on civil rights and foreign affairs in the 1930s. Copy this list on a large sheet of paper and post it below the surveys you posted during Lesson One.

2. Write a paragraph response to one of the following questions:
   a. To what extent might Bunche’s writings on Africa and on U.S. civil rights reflect the way he was raised or the circumstances of his upbringing? Provide specific examples of how his youth might have influenced his early career.

   b. In the next lesson, Bunche joins the United Nations and negotiates an end to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Will diplomacy require different strengths than the scholarship and political activism? Or will the strengths Bunche brought to his first career be useful in his second? Explain your response.
BUNCHE AND AFRICA

Name ___________________________ Date __________________

Read Document Set Three, sources based on Bunche's research in Africa. As you read, take notes on each document. Consider the following questions:

1. In Source 1, how do French and British colonial policies differ? In what way(s) are French and British colonial policies similar?

2. In Source 2, what is the “land equation” Bunche refers to in the title of his article? What ideas discussed in Document 1 does Chief Koinange’s statement support?

3. In Source 3, how does Bunche believe that World War II will impact Africa if Hitler and Mussolini win? How would Nazi-controlled colonies differ, in Bunche’s view, from British and French colonies? What accounts for this difference?

4. Bunche's 1936 book *A World View of Race* includes materials on both the United States and Africa. What similarities are there between the two situations? What are the differences?
Race has been a convenient device for the imperialist. . . . Imperialist propaganda has taught the world to regard certain peoples as helplessly backward and incapable of keeping step with the modern industrial world. . . . Powerful industrial nations have raped Africa under the false pretense of shouldering “the white man’s burden.” It has been held to be the particular mission of the dominant peoples to bring civilization to the backward peoples of the earth; to convert them to the Christian religion and to expose them to the benefits of an advanced European culture. . . . But since the “backward” peoples have often been reluctant to receive these blessings they have been forced to accept them at the point of the bayonet. In this way Italy is bestowing the “blessings of civilization” upon the hapless Ethiopians today. After the conquest has been completed, the backward peoples bitterly learn that the “blessings” consist of brutal suppression, greedy economic exploitation of the natural and human resources of a country which is no longer their own, forced labor . . . previously unknown diseases, vice, and social degeneration. . . .

Powerful nations such as England, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States, have been guilty of many acts of imperialist aggression. Even small countries like Belgium, Holland and Portugal exploit great colonial areas with large native populations. . . .

In considering the impact of Western imperialism upon the African it must be borne in mind that the partition [of Africa] is an affair of only the past half-century. . . . Back of this partition of Africa were . . . the need of industrial countries for expanded markets, for raw materials found in the tropics and sub-tropics. . . .

The European administrator in Africa is generally quite indifferent to the conditions of native life. . . . To the European colonizer [the African] is the “happy beast,” the docile primitive, with the mind of a child.

The characterization of the African by the celebrated South African administrator General Smuts, is that . . . the native has “largely remained a child type, with a child psychology and outlook.” . . . A high official in Togoland will relate that the native, though trained in the schools of Togo and Dakar, can rarely be trusted to work without white supervision because he “does not have the brain-power.” . . . Like the typical white American from the South, these men . . . are benevolent toward [the African], unless he becomes “impudent” and protests against injustice. . . . [Then] he is “dangerous,” a menace, and must be “put in his place.” . . .

In general, particularly insofar as West Africa is concerned, it may be said that there are two policies of native administration among the colonial powers. One of these is commonly identified as the “French system,” and the other as the “British system.”

The French Native Policy

In the early period of her colonial activity in Africa, France, like all other colonizing powers at the time, pursued a ruthless policy of subjection and exploitation. The colonies were regarded only as a “privileged” market for French goods and a source of raw materials for French manufacturers. . . . Gradually the French policy of assimilation of native subject races developed. This policy gave expression to the words of Napoleon: “wherever the [French] flag is, there is France.” Economically and politically the colony and its population was to be absorbed as rapidly as possible in the Greater France. Native customs were to be disregarded as quickly as possible.

The French in recent years have found it expedient to abandon their pretensions at the wholesale assimilation of native populations in favor of the less ambitious, utilitarian, and somewhat more liberal policy of “association.” From this point of view native customs and native society come to be regarded as something slightly more than a mere obstacle to progress which should be wiped out in due haste. The new policy recognizes rather timidly that it is dealing with peoples who have some right, at least, to live their own lives.
Intimately related with this racial attitude of the French is the formation of a privileged or elite class of natives, who become definite allies of the French administration in keeping the native masses in check. Special concessions exist for the members of this elite groups under the provisions of which they may acquire citizenship and other civil and political privileges. . . . This concept . . . is not peculiar to the French practice. Every colonizing power has found it helpful to foster a small class of privileged natives who can be depended upon to defend and aid in the execution of the policies of the nation which has so favored them. It has often been a subtle and very effective form of bribery. The native chief who receives handsome subventions from the government . . . the wealthy merchant who has been knighted, are not likely to become overly critical of government policy. . . .

The elite native truly becomes a black Frenchman. . . . Representatives of the elite have held many high positions in the French government and military service . . . even as high as Governor of a colony; they are judges, lawyers, doctors. But above all they are Frenchmen, regard themselves so, and are so regarded. . . .

But unfortunately, only a few natives are ever able to attain this privileged status. The French policy of association has an entirely different meaning for the native African masses. The native masses are given no such privileged status. Racial equality is not for them; nor is the right to vote, to hold office or to become French citizens. . . . They are given enough education to make them more efficient workers for the French. . . . The trained and alert members of the race having been drawn into the privileged class by subtle bribery, by the attraction of attaining superior status and racial equality, the native masses are left without effective leadership through which they can voice their protests against harsh and unjust policies effected by the French. The emotions involved in the concept of race and its implications in respect to social status are thus employed by the French, rather deliberately, it seems, to keep down racial conflict while the whole population is subjected to severe economic exploitation.

The British Policy

Where the French have always labored under the influence of the doctrine of ultimate assimilation . . . the British never have done so. . . . The English policy toward the government of their African subjects seems largely subject to the dictates of administrative expediency. The number of British colonial administrators can never be more than a mere handful in proportion to the area and population which they must control. Therefore it is much simpler to administer the territory through the native chiefs and to help [chiefs] maintain the [obedience] of their subjects. . . . The English seem content to let native customs and institutions follow their own course of development, so long as they do not greatly interfere with British administrative policy. . . .

The British policy of maintaining hereditary native chiefs in power, even though they may be incompetent and illiterate, has often proved irksome to the educated African commoner. The members of the educated native group . . . thus find themselves frozen out of the select circle. . . . In a large town like Lagos, Nigeria . . . the native population is already dividing into very distinct groups and classes. There is an upper stratum of rich traders and of professional men who live in substantial houses, sending their sons and daughters to England to be educated. In addition there is developing a small middle class of clerks, retailers and skilled technicians, together with the typical working class masses of any city with a population of one hundred and fifty thousand. . . .

Yet these classes exert a minimum of influence in the control of the government and administrative policy. . . . Disillusioned and resentful, the educated English Africans, frequently attribute their position to [British racism].

What Hope for the Native?

Thus the concepts of race and race difference play a significant role in the control of subject African peoples by the French and British. The French have so far been able to use the emotional appeal of race brotherhood as a very helpful device in keeping down unrest in their African dominions. The British find race a sore problem. . . . [Yet] both France and England will sooner or later have to face a day of reckoning with their Negro populations. . . .
The plain fact is that the contemporary international order, characterized by its capitalist-imperialist organization, has no possibility of effectively controlling the peoples and areas. For the international order cannot override the existing vested capitalistic interests which muster the forces of the state for their protection. As the world is now organized, these interests cannot be overcome. It is only when this supremacy and privilege are dissolved and when it is no longer within the power of the privileged property-holding class to determine the institutional life of the modern state, that there can be hope for the development of an international order and community which will promise the subject peoples of the world genuine relief from the heavy colonial burdens of imperialist domination. At the present their outlook is not bright.


Source 2

Ralph Bunche, “The Land Equation in Kenya Colony (As Seen by a Kikuyu Chief)”

The imperialistic computations of Downing Street [the British Prime Minister's residence] are made in terms of raw materials, markets, capital investments, millions of pounds, mineral and military resources, the prestige of empire, and the factitious “white man's burden.” But, for the native, imperialism means a way of life—the way of life—new, confusing, contradictory and often relentlessly brutal. The native encounters imperialism through its manifestation in colonial policy. Native computations are in terms of taxation, political and economic disabilities, alienated land, forced labor, inadequate education, social inferiority, tribal disintegration, and general repression.

Land rights in Kenya had their historic origin in the days when the Imperial British East Africa Company began to extend its influence over the mainland under the terms of the grant obtained from the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1887. By the time the East African Protectorate was declared in 1895 white settlers had already appeared, acquiring lands from chiefs and the East African Company. In 1901 the railroad to Uganda was completed, and the necessity for the economic development of the country in order to support this expensive venture, along with the growing realization that the Highlands of Kenya were well suited to white settlement, induced the British Government to lend support to the policy of colonization. The Government thenceforward pursued a policy of securing the Highland area for European settlement by delimiting, from time to time, in the form of native reserves, the areas to which natives would be restricted. It is needless to add that these native reserve areas never included ancestral lands on which the sacred graves of their ancestors remain. There was a justifiable feeling of insecurity among the natives regarding their land rights even in the reserves and there were, in fact, numerous cases of alienation of land to Europeans even from the proclaimed or native reserve areas.

Ralph Bunche's Nigerian Immigration Pass, 1932

The text reads “Permission is hereby granted to the person (or persons) described below to enter Nigeria for the purpose of proceeding direct to [ ] and thence leaving Nigeria without delay.”
The Kikuyu [a Kenyan ethnic group] . . . must hold some sort of record for petitions to the government . . . regarding the land disputes . . . some of their leaders, such as Harry Thuku, were deported. . . . In presentation of the grievances . . . Senior Chief Koinange of Kiambu district has played a prominent part. . . . Last February 8th, I was Chief Koinange's guest at Kyambaa. [He says]:

When I moved to Kyambaa [after being forced of my family land] I thought I would [plant] coffee and make more money. So I went to the District Commissioner and asked him for permission . . . and he gave it to me. . . . I went to European farms at Kiambu and I bought coffee plants and planted them, and I bought coffee seed and put them in the nursery down near the river—and I had many coffee trees. . . . Later [the District Commissioner] came and told me that they were discussing my coffee in Nairobi and all the Europeans were cursing him because he had given natives coffee trees to plant . . . and he wanted to advise me to agree to pull down my coffee trees, and that I would be compensated for my trouble and expense by the Government.

I questioned him: 'What is wrong with my coffee trees?' Then he told me plainly that if I planted coffee all the Kikuyu would follow my example, and the price of coffee will be reduced and the white farmers will lose money. . . . He said we are not allowed to plant coffee. He said that if I did not agree ‘they will report the matter to the King in England and get an order from him to pull down your coffee trees, in which case you will get nothing.’ . . . I could not resist an order from the King, as I was not powerful enough, so I pulled down my coffee trees.

Source: Bunche 1939, 33–43

Source 3

Ralph Bunche, “Africa and the Current World Conflict”

The picture of the plight of the African under European imperialism is not a happy one. Despite such conditions, however, the African has been making steady progress. . . . A new leadership, especially among the educated African youth, has begun to emerge, a new group and racial consciousness is developing, and strong organizations are formed with the object of uniting Africans in protest against and resistance to European abuses. There are now strong youth organizations in West Africa, particularly in such colonies as the Gold Coast [Ghana], Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. In South Africa there are national organizations among the Bantu People, such as the All African Congress, which holds annual conventions just as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People does on our behalf here. In East Africa are found such organizations as the Kikuyu Central Association, which has for years maintained a competent African lobbyist in London. African schools on the Western model have steadily improved; advanced educational institutions have been established in many places. There is a growing racial consciousness especially among educated Africans. Numerous publications owned and edited by Africans—newspapers and periodicals—are published and tend to impress upon the consciousness of their African readers an awareness of their problems. . . . The protest and civic organizations sponsor meetings, often of a mass character, in which the grievances of the people are aired. . . . Recourse is often had to the courts to uphold rights. . . .

The ability of the African to make this sort of slow but steady progress under the harsh rule of European imperialism has been in large measure due to the fact that the imperialistic governments represented in Africa from the end of World War I until the present, excepting only Italy in North Africa and Ethiopia, have been democratic governments. These imperialistic democracies have not, of course, extended the privileges and benefits of democratic government to their possessions in Africa. Yet . . . they have striven . . . to maintain the appearance of regard for the form if not the substance of democracy in their colonies; they have had to extend some of the elemental attributes of democracy, such as freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, of speech and of religion,
the right to protest, and the basic concept of the right of the individual against the state. . . . The democratic imperialisms, and of these England and France have been most important in Africa, have not permitted such liberties out of any high regard or sympathy with the African, but only because they have had to. As democracies they have had liberal-minded groups in their own countries which have protested vigorously against abuses in the control of the African peoples. . . .

The African in Africa, therefore, is much like the Negro in this country with regard to democracy. We are not permitted to share in the full fruits of democracy, but we are given some of the peelings from the fruit; and the nation is often self-conscious and apologetic for this defect in its democratic process. We are permitted freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion. We can organize, protest, and appeal to the courts for the protection of our rights. We can let the American and world public know of the abuses we suffer. It is through the exercise of such rights that we have progressed in the past, and they form the foundation upon which our hopes for the future are erected. So is it with the African. His future, as ours, depends upon the preservation and extension of the democratic concepts throughout the world.

Thus the future of the African, his hope for continued progress . . . is inseparably tied to the outcome of the current war . . . . Fascism, especially the brand peddled by Herr Hitler, embraces boldly and fundamentally a racial theory more severe and more brazen than any the modern world has known—more formal, more deliberate even than that to be found in our own Deep South . . . . Peoples who are not accepted by [Nazis] as Aryans are held to be something less than humans . . . . [Nazis] refer to Negroes as “animal-like.” Africans, under fascist domination, therefore, would have no rights that any German or Italian would be expected to respect. Fascism completely disavows the concepts of democracy, which it considers a weak and outworn system of government. . . .

Now that the Germans have conquered France, French Negroes, who formerly were able to walk as men in France, who knew nothing of Jim Crow in Paris or elsewhere in the French nation, who were extended full social equality in France, even to the extent of intermarriage . . . find Nazi-dictated signs barring them from cafes, hotels, and even prohibiting them from buying railroad tickets . . . .

There can be no doubt that, if Hitler and Mussolini win this war, the future of the African will be one of abject, hopeless slavery . . . where no individual dares even to whisper a word of criticism of the government, for fear a dreaded agent will overhear and doom him to a concentration camp . . . . There are some naïve opportunists who claim to foresee African liberation as a result of this war, due to the weakening of all white imperialist nations. This is merely wishful thinking.

Source: Bunche 1940, 1430–38
Bunche’s Research Field Trips to Africa

First Research Trip
In June 1932 Ralph Bunche left New York City by ship, traveled to Paris, and from there made his way to West Africa. In West Africa he visited Togo, Dahomey, Accra, Monrovia, and Freetown. He returned to New York via Paris in January, 1933.

Second Research Trip
In October 1937 Bunche returned to Africa. He visited South Africa, studying Cape Town, Lesotho, Alice, Thaba’Nchu, Bloemfontein, Mafeking, Johannesburg, Benoni, Pretoria, and Durban. From January to February 1938 he made his way to Mombasa and Nairobi (Kenya). Bunche then drove a Ford station wagon up Rift Valley to the camp of Louis Leakey, who put him up for the night in Nakuru, Kisumu (on Lake Victoria). He proceeded to Kampala (Uganda), into Belgian Congo, and then around Lake Victoria back to Nairobi. He returned to the U.S. via the Indian Ocean, stopping in Singapore, Batavia (now Jakarta), Hong Kong, Shanghai, and finally reaching San Francisco in July 1938.