

# Ralph Bunche

the odyssey continues...

# 5

MODULE

## The Insider/Activist

### ■ Synopsis



20 minutes

“The Insider/Activist” begins in 1941 as America is gearing up for war in Europe and Asia. Hitler’s armies have overrun much of Europe and the German Luftwaffe has begun daily bombing raids on Great Britain. As the struggle between the European powers for colonies and resources intensifies, Africa is inexorably drawn into the conflict. While some African Americans are reluctant to defend the old colonial powers like Britain and France, Bunche warns that a Nazi victory in Europe would be a disaster for American blacks. Because of his expertise on Africa and colonialism Bunche is offered a job with the newly established Office of the Coordinator of Information (later the Office of Strategic Services). Bunche sees it as an opportunity to help defeat Nazi ideology and Hitler’s bid for world power. He leaves academia and the “outsider/activist” role he has played so effectively at Howard, and becomes an establishment “insider.” The module includes:

- Bunche’s wartime government service as a social science analyst at the Africa and Far East Section the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and his appointment as head of the Africa Section of the Research and Analysis Branch;
- his subsequent move to the State Department postwar planning unit dealing with the future of colonial territories;
- his role as advisor to the United States delegation to the San Francisco conference on the United Nations where he helps draft Chapters 11 and 12 of the Charter, laying the groundwork for the future independence of colonized territories.

## ■ Historical Background

The Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended World War I, imposed harsh peace terms on Germany. The heavy economic burden of these terms created a climate of resentment in which Hitler was able to rise to power. In 1917, the Bolsheviks gained control of the Russian Revolution. Communism was on the rise, but so too was fascism, a highly centralized totalitarian state system whose first proponent was Benito Mussolini in Italy. By the end of the 1930s, Germany, led by Adolf Hitler and under Nazi control, began to build concentration camps for political dissidents, Jews, trade unionists, homosexuals, leftists, and Gypsies. Germany also invaded Bohemia (part of the former Czechoslovakia) and Poland. Italy, under Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia, and Japan invaded China. Russia and Finland were at war.

By 1941, as the U.S. prepared to enter World War II, Ralph Bunche had completed two major studies. The first, a two-year research project that took him to Africa and the Far East, looked at the impact of colonialism from the colonized people's point of view. The second was the Carnegie study of race in America on which he worked with Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal. The latter was published after World War II as *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.

### In This Module (in order of appearance)

#### TERMS TO KNOW

OSS (Office of Strategic Services), stereotype, fascism, Atlantic Charter, State Department, ghetto, concentration camp

#### PEOPLE REFERENCED

Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, Conyers Reed, Cordell Hull, Adolf Hitler, Leo Pasvolsky, Harold Stassen

#### PLACES REFERENCED

England, Europe, North Africa, Africa, Washington, D.C., Pearl Harbor

#### PEOPLE ON SCREEN

Dr. Jonathan Holloway, Dr. Ronald Walters, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Dr. Benjamin Rivlin, Dr. Charles Henry, Sir Brian Urquhart, Dr. Robert Harris, Dr. John A. Davis, Donald McHenry, Harold Stassen, Lawrence S. Finkelstein, Dr. Herschelle Challenor, Robert Edgar

## ■ Relevant Standards

### National Council for the Social Studies Strands

#### Strand V. Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions*, so that the learner can: (f) evaluate the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.

#### Strand VI. Power, Authority, & Governance

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance*, so that the learner can: (f) analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

#### Strand IX. Global Connections

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *global connections and interdependence*, so that the learner can: (g) describe and evaluate the role of international and multinational organizations in the global arena.

### National Center for History in the Schools Standards

#### Standard 3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to

- D. Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

#### Standard 4. Historical Research Capabilities

The student conducts historical research: Therefore the student is able to

- F. Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

## ■ Map Connection

On a map of Europe, locate areas of Nazi aggression (Poland, Bohemia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the French frontier). On a map of colonial Africa, note which European countries control which areas in Africa at the outbreak of World War II.

## ■ Before You Watch

For suggested preview strategies and activities, see page 4 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

If this is the first module screened, ask the students: Have you ever heard of Ralph Bunche? What do you know or think you know about Ralph Bunche? What do you predict you might find out about him in the video you are about to watch?

**OPINION** Would you rather be in charge of a project or critique those who are? What are the benefits and drawbacks of each position? Which do you think is the more powerful position to be in? Why?

**RECALL** What was *An American Dilemma* and how did Ralph Bunche's work on the project shape his views about race, economics, and social justice? How did his study of the impact of colonialism on native peoples further shape his views?

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT** What were the terms of the Treaty of Versailles? How did fascism gain a foothold in Italy and Germany?

## ■ While You Watch (with teacher's answer key)

For suggestions for use of these questions, see pages 4-5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. What warning does Ralph Bunche give to fellow African Americans about Hitler and Nazism? How does his view differ from that of Dr. E. Franklin Frazier?

*[Bunche warns that Hitler will not stop at Europe; if successful, he'll attempt to invade and dominate the U.S. as well. If Hitler is successful, American blacks may well end up in gutters, ghettos, and concentration camps. Dr. Frazier felt that blacks had always been at the bottom so it wouldn't make much difference who was in charge at the top.]*

2. Why does Franklin D. Roosevelt create the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)?

*[To prepare for the United States' entry into the war by creating an intelligence agency.]*

3. Why is Dr. Bunche invited to join the OSS?

*[His expertise on Africa and colonialization]*

4. What does Ralph Bunche do to help troops who will be deployed to Africa? Why does he propose that documentary films be made about African Americans?

*[He produces a series of booklets describing the day-to-day life, culture and history of African peoples as well as the institutions and colonial administration of the countries where U.S. troops will be deployed. He proposes that documentary films be made to show the contributions that black Americans are making to the war effort.]*

5. What is the purpose of the Institute of Pacific Relations conference that Bunche attends? What is its significance for Bunche?  
*[To plan for the postwar period. It was Bunche's entry into international life, where Bunche would meet others who were also experts on his subject.]*
6. What does Ralph Bunche identify as the main problem in Asia and much of the world?  
*[Poverty]*
7. Why did virtually all Africans coming to study in the United States make it a point to see Ralph Bunche as soon as they were here?  
*[He was their access to the academic world in the United States.]*
8. Why is Ralph Bunche asked to join the State Department?  
*[Answers may include the following: He is the most qualified and knowledgeable of anyone on the subject of colonization and decolonization; Cordell Hull insists on it in spite of protests about his color; his expertise is needed to plan for the post-World War II world.]*
9. Why is the conference in San Francisco such an extraordinary opportunity?  
*[The decisions made in San Francisco will shape issues important to peoples of color for years to come.]*
10. How does Bunche assert influence in shaping what will become the Charter for the newly formed United Nations?  
*[He synthesizes over two hundred documents from interest groups all over the world and writes a draft that all can agree to.]*
11. What is the issue that most concerns Bunche as he weighs the pros and cons of accepting a position in the government—"going inside"—or continuing his teaching career at Howard?  
*[He must decide whether he can be a more effective agent for change by working from the inside or by bringing pressure on the system from the outside.]*
12. How is Ralph Bunche described by some people who worked with him in the government and by some of his former Howard University colleagues?  
*[Answers may include the following: He is the foremost authority in America on Africa; a top expert in the field; he is irreplaceable; the best man for the job; some former colleagues at Howard feel he has betrayed the cause he had been working for; they think he has sold out.]*

## ■ After You Watch

### Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

For suggestions on how to structure post-viewing discussions or activities, see page 5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. Ralph Bunche contended that the situation for people of color in the United States would be considerably worse under Hitler and that the Nazis should be stopped in Europe before they tried to invade the U.S. E. Franklin Frazier on the other hand, argued that it didn't matter who was in control as far as the people at the bottom of the economic and social ladder were concerned. Their situation would not be any worse. Does it matter to those who have the least in a society who controls it at the top? Will it matter to black Americans who the next president of the United States is? Why or why not? Will it matter to women? To recent immigrants? To any other interest or ethnic groups? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that Americans might have had stereotypical notions of Africa and Africans in 1941? If so, why? Do we have stereotypical ideas about Africans or other groups today? How might the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq be different if our troops had been provided with the kind of information that Bunche put together for our troops who were headed to Africa in 1941?
3. Dr. Bunche said "the real objective must be the good life for all people," which he defined as having peace, bread, housing, clothing, education, good health, and dignity. Are we, as individuals or as a nation, responsible for assuring the good life for all people on the globe? If so, how can that be accomplished? If not, why not? What should our objectives be?
4. Dr. Bunche became an insider to try to effect change from within the system. Ralph Nader, on the other hand, has said he would rather be a "hair shirt" than a "linen handkerchief" to those in power, agitating from the outside. Which approach do you think is more effective? Cite evidence for your opinion.

## ■ Digging Deeper—Activities and Research Projects

1. Ask students to create a chart with the key principles of the Atlantic Charter as headings. For each heading, ask them to note world events since World War II that are related to the principle or concern being addressed. (See template for student worksheet at end of this section.)
2. Have students trace the evolution of the OSS to the CIA. Two places to begin on the web are

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/oss/>

<http://www.cia.gov/>

Search terms to use include “OSS,” “CIA,” and “Intelligence.”

Ask students to create a timeline and to share their findings in an essay or a panel discussion.

3. Have students read *The Atlantic Charter and Africa from an American Standpoint*. Ask them to write a letter to the editor about a region of Africa that is undergoing political, social, or economic upheaval, referencing the ideas put forth by Ralph Bunche and his associates in this report.
4. Set up a Model U.N. project in your classroom. You can find information at:
  - <http://www.nmun.org/> (colleges)
  - <http://www.nhsmun.org/> (high schools)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Atlantic Charter

The Atlantic Charter Key Points	Issues in the News
<p><b>First</b>, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;</p>	
<p><b>Second</b>, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;</p>	
<p><b>Third</b>, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;</p>	



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Atlantic Charter Key Points	Issues in the News
<p><b>Fourth</b>, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;</p>	
<p><b>Fifth</b>, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;</p>	
<p><b>Sixth</b>, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;</p>	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Atlantic Charter Key Points	Issues in the News
<p><b>Seventh</b>, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;</p>	
<p><b>Eighth</b>, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.</p>	





