Answer Key: Discussion Questions
“The Black Scientific Renaissance of the 1970s-90s:”
African American Scientists at Bell Laboratories

1. When was the Cooperative Research Fellowship Program started at Bell Labs, and what was its purpose?
The CRFP was started in 1972, with the purpose of assisting aspiring minority scientists (financially and through professional associations) in attaining graduate degrees in physics and allied fields, as well as earn job positions (often at Bell) after they graduate.

2. In addition to helping pay for students’ classes, how did Bell Laboratories assist aspiring African American scientists?
Bell Labs (through the CRFP and similar programs) provided students with stipends, research space and opportunities at the Bell facilities, and a professional scientist who would serve as a mentor throughout the student’s research and academic career, which was highly unique in the 1970s. This also allowed students to develop professional relationships throughout their education and research.

3. What was the work environment like at Bell Labs?
Many of the scientists describe a high level of freedom in research and work relative to their past experience or other opportunities. While (as in any workplace) there were some difficulties among personnel and managers, there seems to have been a positive, relatively communal or familial atmosphere at Bell Labs for African American scientists.

4. List some of the research and work that these scientists completed at Bell Labs.
The work the interviewees describe doing at Bell Labs includes researching digital cellular technology, radiation and telecommunications, improving power converters and cables, solar storm research, and much more.