Discussion Questions
“The Physicist’s War:” Dr. Herman Branson and Scientific Training of African Americans during World War II

J.A. Crowther, “Physicists and the War”

1. Where is J.A. Crowther from?

2. Why does Crowther believe that physics and physicist are crucial to winning World War II?

3. How does Crowther compare physics students during wartime and the future to the physics student of the past?
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Harold W. Woodson, “The Present Status of Physics in Negro Colleges”

1. How many colleges did Woodson include in his study? Why did he select the colleges that he did?

2. According to Woodson, what problems do schools face in including physics in their general curriculums?

3. What are the main challenges facing physics departments at HBCUs?

4. How many schools offer graduate degrees in physics? What schools are they?
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Herman Branson, “The Role of the Negro College in the Preparation of Technical Personnel for the War Effort”

1. How has World War II changed the economic opportunities for African Americans?

2. According to Branson, what fields do HBCUs traditionally specialize in?

3. What is the status of physical sciences at HBCUs?

4. What are examples of some courses and special training programs that have been introduced at Howard University to address training for World War II?

5. What is the Engineering, Science, and Management Defense Training program and the National Defense Research Committee?
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Herman Branson, “The Training of Negroes for War Industries in World War II”

1. What are the two major programs initiated by the U.S. Office of Education to address the need to train personnel for World War II?

2. What are the numbers of African Americans and HBCUs participating in these programs?

3. In the various fields of training offered by the VTWPW program (see p. 377), where are African Americans most represented? Where are they least represented?

4. What is the geographic distribution of African American trainees?

5. How does the ESMWT work?

6. How are African American women faring in these training programs?

7. What is Branson’s overall assessment of the training of African Americans for war industries?