

Ralph Johnson Bunche **Diplomat, Nobel Peace Prize**

Ralph Johnson Bunche was born in Detroit Michigan on August 7, 1904. He was the winner of the [1950 Nobel Peace Prize](#) for his work in obtaining a truce in Palestine in 1949 and a key member of the United Nations for over twenty years.

Ralph was orphaned at the age of 13 and his grandmother, *Lucy Johnson* raised Ralph and his two sisters in California. "*Nana*" instilled in the young Ralph her own values of perseverance, self-reliance, and pride. She encouraged him in his studies and insisted that he get a college education. Ralph was chosen valedictorian of his senior high school class.

Ralph graduated [Summa Cum Laude](#) from UCLA in 1927 and earned his graduate degrees in government and international relations in 1928 and 1934. He was the first African American to earn a doctorate in Political Science. Ralph became a member of the faculty at Howard University while still a graduate student in 1928 and he founded and chaired the school's *Department of Political Science*.

From 1938 to 1940, Ralph collaborated with [Gunnar Myrdal](#), the Swedish sociologist on a major study of U.S. race relations. The work was published in 1944 as, *An American Dilemma - The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.

Ralph served in the State Department, the War Department and the [Office of Strategic Services](#) (CIA) during World War II. In 1944 he participated in the [Dumbarton Oaks Conference](#) in San Francisco which laid the foundation for the United Nations charter. Ralph became the director of the *Trusteeship Department* of the United Nations Secretariat in 1947 and in this position he worked tirelessly for the decolonization of Africa and other colonial issues.

Ralph was sent to Jerusalem in 1948 to aide the United Nations chief negotiator, [Count Folke Bernadotte](#). When Count Bernadotte was assassinated, Ralph assumed the position of chief mediator and negotiated the peace treaty between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) for his efforts in 1950.

In 1955 Ralph was appointed to the post of *Undersecretary for Special Political Affairs*. He was the chief troubleshooter for [Dag Hammarskjöld](#) in the middle east and in 1956 he supervised the deployment of a U.N. force to Egypt following it's invasion by Great Britain, France and Israel. Ralph also directed United Nations peace keepers in the Congo in 1960 and on Cyprus in 1964. In 1963 President Kennedy awarded Ralph Bunche the [Medal of Freedom](#).

After 1964, Ralph began to participate more actively in the [Civil Rights](#) movement speaking out against racial discrimination and participating in the *Civil Rights* marches of 1965. Ralph was a

member on the board of the [*National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*](#) for twenty-two years.

Ralph Johnson Bunche died in New York City on December 9, 1971.

Sources:

[*Encyclopedia Britannica*](#)

[*Encyclopedia Africana*](#)

[*Nobel Foundation - Nobel Museum*](#)