

# Ralph Bunche *speaks*

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Ralph Bunche was catapulted into public prominence as a result of his brilliant work as Acting Mediator for the U. N. in Palestine in 1948. But before that he was well known to many persons as a warm and understanding friend; a scholar in political science, race relations, and colonial peoples; an able administrator; an international diplomat; and an authority on the U. N. and world affairs.

Ralph J. Bunche was born on August 7, 1904 in Detroit, Michigan. After a short period in Albuquerque, he moved with his sister and grandmother to Los Angeles in 1916, both parents having died that year. He graduated from the University of California, at Los Angeles, in 1927 and received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard in 1928 and 1934, making a field trip to Africa as a part of his work for the Ph.D.

From 1936 until 1950 he was Professor and Chairman of the Political Science Department at Howard University. Several years he was on leave of absence for such posts as Chief of the Africa Section of the O.S.S., Associate Chief of the State Department's Division of Dependent Area Affairs, and U. S. Commissioner on the Caribbean Commission. In 1946 he joined the Secretariat of U. N. where he is now Director of the Department of Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories. In 1950 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Out of these and other experiences he speaks to a chaotic world striving for peace and justice in larger freedom:

## ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD . . .

"The crisis now confronting mankind is a world-wide crisis in human relations. It is the dangerous culmination of centuries of human greed and callousness. The biggest guns and the most powerful bombs can never solve it."

"What is basically at issue is the right of all people to be free and to live at the least, on those minimum material standards which all humans should enjoy. Relatively few of the world's peoples enjoy more than a meager measure of freedom,—and many, none at all. It has been hoarded too long as the more or less exclusive boon of Western, Atlantic-community peoples."

## ON THE ROAD TO A PEACEFUL WORLD . . .

"In the final analysis there is but one road to peace and that is the road of human understanding and fellow-feeling,—of inflexible determination to achieve peaceful relations among men. That, clearly, is a long, hard road and today it is too little travelled."

"It must be very clear that what the world needs most desperately today is a crusade for peace and understanding of unparalleled dimensions,—a universal mobilization of the strong but diffused forces of peace and justice. The collective voice of the free peoples of the world could be so irresistible as to dwarf into insignificance both A and H bombs and to disperse and discourage the war-like and the war-minded."

"I have enough faith in the potentiality of mankind for good to believe that he can save himself. May it be fervently hoped that he will muster the determined will to do so."

## ON THE UNITED NATIONS . . .

"The U. N. is not a government. It is not a superstate. It is an international service organization dedicated to the cause of a world at peace. It reflects the universal longing of war-weary people of all races, creeds, and nationalities for a feeling of security against future war. Its sanction is in the hearts and minds of the peoples of the world."

"I am confident that the United Nations, with all its imperfections and weaknesses, is the sole force in the world today which can issue reliable peace and freedom insurance. The United Nations, by dint of ever-persistent effort, is slowly moulding the kind of peaceful and free world that you and I wish to live in and wish to hand down to our children and grandchildren. It is the only bridge over which nations can come together to settle their differences. This U. N. bridge will be no weaker and no stronger than we, the people, make it."

"We look at the record and believe that despite all the cynicism and hysteria and the turmoil of post-war international affairs, the U. N. affords us a sound basis for reasonable optimism as regards the future."

"I think it is no exaggeration to say that it has been largely due to the persistent efforts of the United Nations that the world since 1945 has not been consumed by atomic war."

"There is, or there should be, no conflict between the United Nations and nationalism, except with regard to the most narrowly jealous manifestations of national sovereignty."

## ON COLONIAL PEOPLES . . .

"The conflict between East and West is nurtured and sharpened by the stark fact that substantially more than half of the world's people still live under miserable conditions. In varying degree, poverty, hunger, squalor, disease, ignorance, and oppression comprise their typical way of life and they have never enjoyed any other. But they are now awakened and aroused and clamorously demand a much better way of life. In Asia, the Middle East, and much of Africa there is a vigorous ferment, not over ideologies, not over the relative merits of free versus authoritarian systems of government and economy, but simply over intolerable conditions of life. Much of the world is undergoing a vast social revolution, which, in its ultimate implications, overshadows in importance the East-West conflict. It is the outstanding phenomenon of our time."

"Restiveness and instability will characterize the international community, and peace will remain insecure, until the aspirations of long suffering peoples for a better life are realized."

"The Charter of the United Nations in its general principles and in its particular provisions, holds forth the promise of a better life, of ultimate freedom and equality for some hundreds of millions of non-self-governing peoples in the colonial areas of the world. No foundation for peace can be really secure and enduring unless and until the colonial peoples are afforded full opportunities to determine their own destinies."



## **ON ASIA AND AFRICA . . .**

"The preponderance of the world's population is to be found in the vast millions of Asia and Africa. These are peoples who have never been accorded their fair share of human dignity. These are people who have had more than their fair share of colonialism, of suppression, and of foreign exploitation;—of hunger, misery, and despair. These are long suffering peoples. . . . They cannot be won by slogans. Their trust and friendship can be won by our understanding, fully-friendly approach, backed by a generous willingness to provide them with effective assistance."

"The African is no longer to be considered a barbarian, nor even a child, but only an adult retarded in terms of western civilization."

## **ON CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL NATIONS TO WORLD . . .**

"All societies, irrespective of their size, wealth, military or productive power, racial composition, or religious belief, have important contributions to make to the world's wisdom, culture, greatness, and knowledge of how to live the good life."

## **ON THE ROLE OF SMALL NATIONS IN THE U. N. . . .**

"The small nations, which constitute the overwhelming majority in its membership, are a great source of strength to the U. N. Their desire for peace is deep-seated and constant. . . . On many of them, now as before, the impact of war would be even more severe than upon the great powers. They, in particular, therefore, support and often initiate measures designed to make the U. N. increasingly effective as a practical instrumentality for peace."

## ON DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES . . .

"The United States is in the forefront of international affairs today. The eyes of the world are focused upon us as never before in our history. A great part of the work looks to us for a convincing demonstration of the validity and the virility of the democratic way of life as America exalts it. It would be catastrophic if we should fail to give that demonstration. We cannot afford to fail."

"To enjoy our maximum strength we need more *applied* democracy. We need to live up to the principles which we believe in and for which we are hailed by the world."

"I am proud to be an American and I am proud of my origin. I believe in the American way of life and believing in it, I deplore its imperfections. I wish to see my country strong in every way—strong in the nature and practice of its democratic way of life, strong in its world leadership, strong in the hearts and minds of all its peoples—whatever their race, color, or religion—and in their unshakeable devotion to it. I wish to see an America in which both the fruits and the obligations of democracy are shared by *all* its citizens on a basis of full equality and without qualification of race or creed."

"The vitality of this great country derives from the unity of purpose and the devotion to its democratic ideals of the diversified peoples—by race, religion, and national origin—who make up its population. Disunity and group conflict constantly sap that vitality."

"The greatest resource of a nation is its people."

## ON RACE RELATIONS . . .

"Race relations is our number one social problem—perhaps our number one problem. It is no sectional problem. It is a national,—indeed an international—problem."

"That race relations are gradually improving both in the South and elsewhere in the nation cannot be doubted. But neither can it be doubted that these relations remain in a dangerous state, that they are a heavy liability to the nation, and that they constitute a grave weakness in our national democratic armour."

"We cannot eradicate prejudices and bigotries overnight. I seek no miracles. But neither is there anything sacrosanct about the present rate of advance. The pace of progress can be greatly accelerated if a great many of our organizations and institutions—schools, churches, labor unions, industries and civic organizations—would put a stronger shoulder to the wheel."

"If I may speak for my group, all that the American Negro asks is that he be treated like every other citizen,—that he be accepted or rejected not collectively on the basis of his color, but individually, on the basis of whatever merit he may command."

"American society should cease requiring its Negro citizens to run the race of life over a special obstacle course while other citizens compete on the flat. . . ."

"We need to demonstrate that democracy is color blind."

"We must exert an extraordinary effort to put our interracial house in order."

## ON THE FUTURE . . .

"The minds and hearts of men will be the principal determinant of the course of the future. The chain reaction has pertinence to human relations as well as to nuclear physics. . . . In good human relations will be found the only solid foundation for peace on earth."

"The future may well belong to those who first realign their international sights."

"The time will come, if it has not arrived, when thoughtful men must ponder whether peace can ever be made secure without greater sacrifice of national sovereignty; whether national sovereignty is always to be more deeply cherished than collective peace. If national self-interest is to take invariable precedence over the international common good, the future may well be bleak for mankind."

"The U. N. ideal is a world in which peoples would 'practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors!' . . . Every individual today has it in his power—in his daily living, in his attitudes and practices—to contribute greatly to the realization of that ideal. We must be strong in our adherence to ideals."

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