

UN Day Luncheon Keynote Address by Ambassador Andrew Young
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“. . . And indeed it is an honor because anytime I get a chance to say something about Ralph Bunche I think that it's a small opportunity for me to repay the great debt that I owe to Ralph Bunche, but also to remind all of us of how much this man did to shape the world in which we now live. I have a way of putting it very bluntly, that if Martin Luther King was the most powerful leader of the second half of the twentieth century, Ralph Bunche helped to shape that twentieth century.

I began to know Ralph Bunche in children's literature, and I too admire the athleticism and the sports part. I never could match up on the academic side, but there were a number of things about the way in which Ralph Bunche carried himself that were very influential to all of us. Particularly it was the notion that there is no limit to what you can do if you don't mind not getting credit. In fact, Ralph Bunche worked to make sure that everybody else got credit and even to the point of—according to Brian Urquhart—even at the point of trying to avoid being the recipient of the Nobel Prize. He had the notion that if people realized actually how powerful and influential he was, he would not be able to be effective.

Ralph Bunche was studying Africa. He was in South Africa in 1939. He did the studies that prepared America's intelligence community to deal with Africa during the war. In his journey from Morocco to Egypt on down to South Africa and back up on to Nigeria and Ghana, he laid the foundation for the way that we would view the world at the end of the war. I think that the whole notion of trusteeship, being able to change the world without violence, was really a product of Ralph Bunche's administrative and intellectual genius. We created nations with little or no violence and little or no turmoil, and Martin Luther King saw Ralph Bunche clearly as a pioneer—one who continued to develop the philosophy of Ghandi in resolving conflicts without bloodshed.

And yet Ralph Bunche was not one to shy away from conflict or bloodshed. On the occasions that I had to visit with him—once when he came to Selma to march with us and the second time when Martin and I went to talk to him about our involvement in

Vietnam—he was very, very concerned about Martin’s safety. And he was very concerned that we not push too hard. In fact, I don’t want to say that he really was such an inside operator. He was very uncomfortable with some of the things that we were doing in relationship to the war . . . in Vietnam. I think the reason the UN worked during those years was that not only did he have the confidence of all the member states within the United Nations, including Russia’s, and the Europeans and the people of the developing world, but he also had the confidence of the State Department. He had access to the White House, and he could put together things in such a way that both institutions—both the US foreign policy interest and the multilateral interest—were able to be achieved because quietly behind the scenes he was able to help them understand each other and to make those institutions work.

When I look at the present situation and when they say, “Why is the UN failing?” The UN has not failed. There was no one to go up to the UN before Colin Powell went there. In fact, Ambassador Negroponte had not even been confirmed for a long time before the Iraqi incidents occurred, and then he had some prostate cancer troubles that postponed his involvement. I was sort of adopted by the Bunche protégés. They just sort of took me in when I was there, and they told me what to do, and they told me who I had to go to see. They arranged for me to relate personally, and my experience as a pastor let me know that there is no excuse or substitute for going to make pastoral calls in their own homes, and in their own missions.

They established relationships. It just so happened that the Russian ambassador had been a student at Swarthmore College. My daughter was there, and when I took her to school the President said, “well you have to get to know Troyanovsky. He was my doubles partner and you all play tennis.” So Ambassador Troyanovsky, who met his wife at a tennis court, and who was an English teacher in the Soviet Union—he was interpreter for Khrushchev when Khrushchev came— and my wife and I were able tennis players. And so we played diplomatic doubles every other the week. That is, I played with Mrs Troyanovsky, and he played with Jean, and we always split sets. The joke was, “Were the Americans afraid of the Russians or the Russians afraid of the Americans? No, we were both afraid of our wives.” And there was a kind of a personal relationship that made it possible to talk things over. And it has nothing to do with policy. It really has to do

with personality, and Ralph Bunche created the kind of personal trust that let everybody know that no matter what you thought of America and no matter what America's policies were on any given issue there were always some Americans that you could trust. And there were always some Americans to whom you could relate and honestly express your disagreements, and in that climate of honesty and trust almost any problem might be resolved.

I felt for Colin Powell because he went there alone, and in addition to his being alone there were all of the public statements of American arrogance that were going on in the background that made it virtually impossible for anybody to have a face-saving way to agree with the United States even if they wanted to. Sometimes you have to take the time. One of Ralph Bunche's associates, Rickie Jaipul, ambassador of India, who is perhaps the most senior ambassador who had been there in the Bunche days and who just sort of took me in, would always call me aside and say, "If you want to get the support of the Arab group, you must talk to ambassador so and so. You can listen to what the ambassador of such and such a country says in Africa. They are the most powerful," and "He might be the most blustering, but if you really want the Africa group to cooperate, talk to ambassador so and so." By working behind the scenes as the Ralph Bunche group there was almost nothing we could not accomplish in the United Nations. In fact, the one month short of three years that I was there, we never had a veto. And there was nothing that the United States needed and wanted and that is, the involvement on the Panama Canal, the independence of Zimbabwe, the sanctions on south Africa, strategic arms limitations talks with the Soviet Union, the Camp David accords, the non-proliferation treaties with the whole world.

You know, it's a shame that people look on the Carter period as a period in which American diplomacy or American government was weak. When we had a conflict in Lebanon we took the time, and we agreed to have a UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon that was made up of Italians, Fijians, Norwegians, Senegalese and very few people died. There were some people killed, but there were no Americans involved. A couple of years later, Reagan was very impatient and sent in the marines, and more than 300 young people were killed. It seems to me that we have to make a distinction not between being

strong and being weak, but frankly between being smart and being dumb. It's smarter to send wise old men to negotiate a country's agreements and resolve their disagreements than it is to send young men and women to die for those same problems. Sol Linowitz was in his late 60s and Ellsworth Bunker was 84 and went to Panama and resolved the issues. Strauss and Cy Vance were both very much either on the verge of their seventies or well in their seventies. We had a body of experience and a body of relationships that were wisely used. I think that I was the only one under fifty in those days, and I was just barely under fifty, and yet we advanced America's interests and secured our relationship with the rest of the world very much in the Ralph Bunche tradition. And it's most unfortunate that we did so well and nobody realized what we were doing. And so, very much in the Ralph Bunche tradition, we got no credit for it. But perhaps the starkest conflict was a young lady by the name of Sally Shelton who was our ambassador to Barbados, who was about 95 pounds. She went to Grenada by herself, whereas Reagan had to send in a big military force. Both accomplishments were about equivalent. And there is no reason why, ehm, why diplomacy cannot work.

Now even as I say that, I sort of defend and have to say that—and I don't know that I can blame Dr. Bunche for this—there were times when you reached the end of the rope when military presence was necessary. I was one of those that felt that something had to be done about Saddam Hussein. I was convinced that it could have been done through the United Nations, and I tried to discuss it with Kofi Annan. You could engage the French and the Chinese. The Chinese built all of the urban dams and waterways in Iraq. When I was at the UN there were 30,000 Chinese workers in Iraq. We needed to get those Chinese workers back involved in Iraq. The only thing the Russians needed or wanted was the natural gas, and natural gas was being flared off and wasted. Natural gas piped through the Soviet Union or through Russia and into Europe to destabilize the cost of natural gas, and it didn't take anything away from America or the global need to provide additional resources of natural gas to Europe. In fact it might have helped prices in the U.S.

With the money from those efforts, we could have allowed the French to be involved in helping the children through UNICEF. There clearly were some problems of hunger and disease that were brought on as a result of the generation of sanctions. And

instead of just focusing on Saddam Hussein, if we had focused on the problem, and if we had involved the resources of this institution, as Ralph Bunche might have, to quietly work behind the scenes to get a job done, we might well have avoided the conflict that we now find raging in the Middle East. Indeed it could not have been any worse. But once you're there, as Dr. Bunche found in the Middle East, as he found also in the Congo, there really is no easy way out. You have to take your time, and you have to make a commitment to move as systemically as possible to stabilize the situation and then find ways to move on.

[In Atlanta we] were able to and allowed to raise \$2 ½ billion for the Olympic games, and we did it all privately, and we now have a \$5 billion airport expansion going on by Mayor Shirley Franklin, and we're not raising anybody's taxes. All the people who are going to use the airport and make money on it are on the bond issue. And the city is the guarantor of last resort, but before anybody else can make any money the debt service has to be paid, and I would wish that we could do the same thing with Halliburton and Bechtel and J. E. Jones. Let them go and develop Iraq with Iraqi parliaments and let them finance it privately and let's take these \$20 billion and not let them spend it but use it as a guarantor, that against which other private institutions might rebuild the airport, might rebuild the ports, might rebuilt the power generation facilities and re-establish the telecommunications—those kinds of things to support the people themselves. What we're doing right now, our little company Good Works International, is trying to find ways to use private capital and private technology to meet some of the basic human needs of the planet on which we live.

I don't know whether you can be pessimistic about the world in which we live. I know Martin Luther King and Ralph Bunche as being two of the most visionary and positive people that I have ever been privileged to meet. But if I had said to the two of them on the road from Selma Montgomery: "You know after this is over, I wanna go to Congress; and after I go to Congress I wanna be a UN ambassador; and then Mayor of Atlanta and make them bring the Olympics to Atlanta since I could never make it to the Olympics," I think both of them would have said to me, "Son it's a little hot, you need a cool drink of water, sit under a tree and relax. It ain't going to be that easy. Maybe our grand-children will see these kinds of things happen." I say that I am forever optimistic.

Maybe that's not the right word, because I know how terrible the world is and I know how serious the problems are, but I am confident that the same God who has created all we have, all of the chaos that we have inherited, is capable of leading us through this crisis in which we now live. And institutions like the United Nations, and support like the United Nations Association, and an understanding that globalization is a reality, and that there is an interdependence from which we can never escape, and that as we continue to put our shoulders to the wheel and live up to the courageous, quiet, behind the scenes, effective but powerful workings of the likings of Dr. Ralph Bunche then we too will see better days ahead. God Bless you.'