

# the MEREDITH **Chronicle**



A HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN (SEE PAGE 2)

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## BEHIND THE SCENES: THE NOBEL PRIZE

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Recently, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize to United States President Barack Obama. According to [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), the committee chose him because of his "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

However, numerous people believe it is premature and unwise to award President Obama the Nobel Peace Prize, considering he has not yet actually carried out his promises of hope, says John Feehery in a commentary on [cnn.com](http://cnn.com). In fact, the deadline for Peace Prize nominations was February—just weeks after he had been sworn in as president. Apparently someone must have really liked his inaugural address, says Feehery.

But whether or not President Obama deserves the prize, he has broken records by winning it. The most obvious one is, since he is the first African-American in the White House, he is also the first African-American president to win a Nobel Prize. He is the fourth United States president to win a Nobel Prize and the third president to sit in office while receiving the award, according to [nobelprizes.com](http://nobelprizes.com). He is also the twelfth African-American to win a Nobel Prize.

While there have not been many Nobel Prizes awarded to African-Americans, women also have not received many prizes compared to men. The first woman Nobel Prize winner was Marie Curie, who received a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903, the third year of the Nobel Prizes. However, no more Nobel Prizes in Physics were given to women until Maria Mayer received one in 1963. Another area short in women Nobel Prize winners is chemistry. Fascinatingly, Marie Curie was also the first woman awarded a prize in chemistry (1911). Three other women, including this year's winner, Ada E. Yonath, have won the Nobel Prize in chemistry. But the Nobel Prize category with the least amount of women is the economics category. This is the first year a woman, Elinor Ostrom, has won in the economics category, according to [nobelprizes.com](http://nobelprizes.com).

But the economics prize has not had nearly as long a life as the other prizes. Technically, it is not actually a Nobel Prize. According to [nobelprize.org](http://nobelprize.org), Alfred Nobel, the



Photo courtesy: <http://fg2bh.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/fg2bh-president-barack-obama-nobel-peace-prize-2009.png?w=468&h=282>

inventor of dynamite, and the person who founded—and funded—the Nobel Prizes, wrote his last will in 1895, the year before his death. In his will, Alfred Nobel designated roughly the amount of two hundred fifty million dollars to be distributed throughout the years to winners in five categories: chemistry, physics, literature, peace, and medicine; economics was not included. But Nobel's great-grandnephew, Peter Nobel, asked the Bank of Sweden to support an award in economics, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, or the Nobel Prize in Economics for short. Since the first economics prize was awarded in 1969, no woman has ever won the prize in economics until 2009, making this year a very interesting year of firsts.

Even though not as many women have won the prize as men, the very fact that Marie Curie won the Nobel Prize as early as 1903 shows the judges' interest in the scientific breakthroughs themselves, not just the gender of the person making the breakthroughs. While occasionally there will be great controversy as to whether or not the Nobel Prize winner deserved the prize—as in President Obama's case—the Nobel Prize Committees have tried to stick to the intentions of Alfred Nobel as stated in his last will and testament. As [nobelprize.org](http://nobelprize.org) says, "In his last will and testament, Alfred Nobel specifically designated the institutions responsible for the prizes he wished to be established: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences for the Nobel Prize in Physics and Chemistry, Karolinska Institute for the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, the Swedish Academy for the Nobel

Prize in Literature, and a Committee of five persons to be elected by the Norwegian Parliament (Storting) for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1968, the Sveriges Riksbank established the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economics in Memory of Alfred Nobel. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences was given the task to select the Economics Prize Laureates starting in 1969." Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Nobel Prizes have been decided by these committees in the way he intended.

Most of the Nobel Prize winners have greatly deserved the prize, which consists of a gold medal, a plaque, and well over one million dollars. They have made groundbreaking discoveries in medicine, DNA, deep literature, technology, today's economy, and numerous other topics that impact regular life. Many of the Nobel Prizewinners are the best in their field worldwide.

How are the winners nominated for this coveted award? First of all, one cannot nominate oneself. Every year, each Nobel committee invites thousands of academic and university professors, members of parliament, Nobel Laureates, and scientists across the globe to nominate someone they deem fit to be a new Nobel Laureate. The committees try to include as many different countries as possible in their quest for the next Nobel Prize winners. Each year, the committees try to expand the range of nominators.

However, this year we did not have to look far for the Nobel Peace Prize winner. President Barack Obama has now been awarded the sought-after prize. Although the reason for his earning the distinguished award is puzzling, he has now joined the ranks of the Nobel Laureates, and we all watch and wait for his plans to be carried out.

## Green Tip for the Week of October 28

Light your drive-way with solar powered night lights. They will recharge for free during the day and automatically brighten your night.

