

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

Be prepared to face 2015 issues into next year

Tomorrow is the beginning of a new year in the 21st century. What could be hard to believe is that we have some of the same problems we had in the 20th century. Voter suppression, police brutality and racism have been carried over into this century and into this year. As we move toward 2016, be aware of what we face.

*The N.C. NAACP and other groups have challenged N.C. government over the 2013 law that restricts voting in the state. The legal case was split so that the voter ID segment is being heard separately after state government did an end run and modified the use of voter IDs to appear kinder and gentler. No part of the legal case has been settled, so we head into 2016 anticipating decisions. Decisions against the plaintiffs will harm voting rights in America.

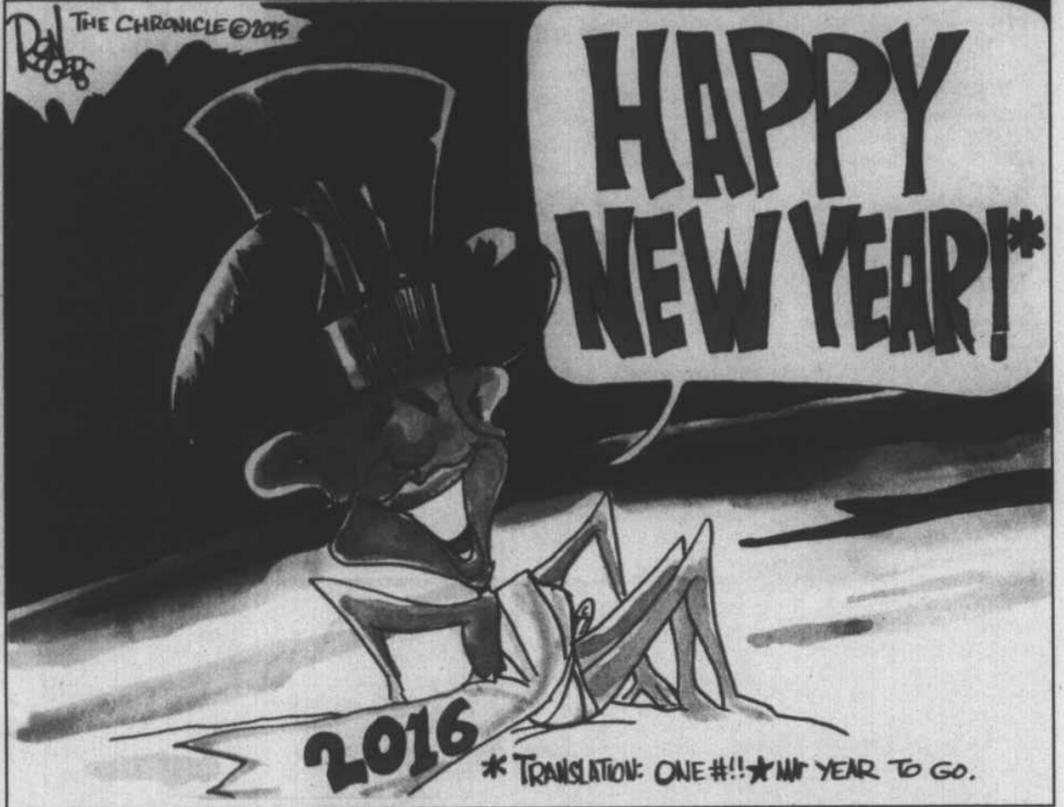
*Meanwhile, in 2016 we prepare to vote in early primaries, which were moved up for political reasons. Republicans, who run the government in North Carolina, decided they want to have more influence over presidential politics. So they moved primary elections from May to March. This means two months of the primary segment of the election cycle has been cut. Democrats complained that the shorter cycle could hamper the party's ability to recruit quality candidates. The filing deadline was Dec. 21. The election move also cuts the time frame to register voters. The deadline to register to vote in the primaries is Feb. 19, two months earlier than in the past.

*N.C. government is also being sued over how it drew lines in 2011 that govern voting districts for the General Assembly and the U.S. Congress. The U.S. Supreme Court this year told the N.C. Supreme Court to revisit its ruling against the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against N.C.'s redistricting. Civil rights groups say the districts illegally concentrate black voters in a handful of districts. The state Supreme Court did revisit its ruling and upheld it on Dec. 18. Look for this fight to continue into 2016.

*Americans have been made more aware of police attacks and killings since 2014, when unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot in Ferguson, Missouri. This year, several more young black men and women have died while in police custody in cities across the United States. The phrases "Black Lives Matter" and "Hands up, Don't Shoot" have gained prominence among African-Americans and other Americans. In 2016, those phrases probably will not die because the cases won't die. In Winston-Salem, the family of Travis Page and the African-American community wait to see the video on Travis Page's arrest and reports that give details on what happened when Page died in police custody in November.

*Racism and ethnic and religious hatred have been revealed in high places as Republican candidates for president of the United States have blurred out racist-like policies and derogatory words on the campaign trail. The Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity denounced black GOP candidate Ben Carson when he appeared in Winston-Salem at a church after he said a Muslim should not be president. The Ministers' Conference spoke against rich businessman and GOP candidate Donald Trump over his racist comments against African-Americans and Latinos. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush also said disparaging words about African-Americans. Get ready for more insults as the race for president continues.

We also still have poverty in the 21st century. Winston-Salem has about a 24 percent poverty rate based on income, which is higher than the poverty rate of North Carolina. While there are efforts in place to fight poverty, Mayor Allen Joines, who is up for re-election, has announced a new effort in the fight. This effort will involve a 21-member panel and could take up to five years. We should follow the progress of this effort into 2016.



New Year's resolutions for Black America in 2016



Whenever we begin a new calendar year, it can be useful to make New Year's Resolutions to prioritize and focus for the immediate future. Beyond the traditional litany of making very personal and oftentimes private resolutions at the beginning of a new year, Black America as a whole, I believe, should be vocal and public about our determination to keep pushing forward for freedom, justice, equality and economic empowerment.

What should be our collective goals and strategic objectives over the next 12 months? Recent academic studies by the Dominican University of California on the importance of "goal setting" to overcome individual and social procrastination revealed that writing down your resolutions and sharing your goals with others that you care about will help you work more diligently to achieve those goals.

Every time I pick up and read a Black-owned newspaper in America during this season of annual proclamation, it is always informative to see a written list of New Year's resolutions that challenge Black America to continue to strive for excellence and achievement in all fields of endeavor. I am obviously proud of the trusted impact of the Black Press of America. Check us out at www.NNPA.org and www.BlackPressUSA.com

Resolution #1: Get out and vote

We have another critical election year coming up in 2016 and the Black American vote will have to be mobilized in every primary election and across the nation next November in elections in every precinct in every state, county by county. Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts, therefore, will be a top priority and we must collectively resolve that in 2016 we will ensure the largest voter turnout of black voters in the history of the United States.

Remember, we had a record voter turnout of black voters both in 2008 and in 2012. According to



Photo by AFP/Jim Watson

the U.S. Census Bureau, "66.2 percent of blacks who voted in the 2012 presidential election, higher than the 64.1 percent of non-Hispanic whites who did so ... This marks the first time that blacks have voted at a higher rate than whites since the Census Bureau started publishing statistics on voting by the eligible citizen population in 1996."

We cannot afford to let the black vote be taken for granted in 2016.

Resolution #2: Improve and expand economic development

Politics and economics are inseparable in the United States. Yet, even though Black Americans spend in excess of \$1.2 trillion annually in the nation's economy, that kind of spending volume has not translated into real economic power: increasing the ownership of global businesses and billion-dollar revenue-generating investments. We still have a long way to go to achieve economic equality and parity in America.

We should resolve, therefore, in 2016 to improve and expand the economic development of

Black American families and communities. Although the American economy continues to recover under the Obama Administration, for Black Americans we have not closed the wealth gap. White Americans today have 12 times the wealth of Black Americans. We must without hesitation and without apology, be more determined to end poverty and to generate more wealth for Black America. Therefore, we join in complete solidarity with the resolve of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) in the goal of striving to increase black homeownership in 2016.

Resolution #3: Support Black-owned media companies

We are very encouraged that the 2016 NAACP Image Awards will once again be broadcast on TV One. We all should support Radio One, TV One and Interactive One. We all should also support The Impact Network and other Black-owned media companies as well as the publishers of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA).

Resolution #4: 'Black Lives Matter!'

Ending mass incarceration, reforming the criminal justice system, and stopping police brutality are related urgent matters that demand the resolve and activist involvement of Black America. Yes, in 2016 our national outcry will continue to be "Black Lives Matter!"

Resolution #5: Renew and strengthen our support of education

The highest quality education for our children and our young adults requires our vocal support and energetic involvement from pre-school to post graduate higher education. At every level of the educational process and journey we must be vigilant in our demands and commitments to attain the best education for our families.

Thus let's renew and strengthen our dedication to support the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMC) as well as work to sustain all of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and predominantly Black institutions (PBIs).

Resolution #6: Support and strengthen our religious institutions

Lastly, we are a spiritual people. All African people are spiritual. We resolve lastly to support and strengthen our religious institutions: churches, temples, mosques and synagogues.

I asked the Chairman of the NNPA, Denise Rolark Barnes, who publishes the Washington Informer, for her perspective about 2016 New Year's Resolutions. She emphasized resolutely, "In 2016, our first priority should be to commit our lives and our dollars to those individuals and institutions that represent our best interests. Let's strive to be the ones that will make a difference in our own communities. Be mindful that 'If it is to be, it is up to me.'"

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