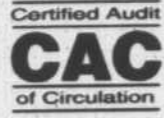
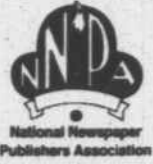


# OPINION

## THE CHRONICLE

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### Seniors should get their flu shots

It's the start of flu season, and I urge all African American senior citizens to get flu and pneumococcal shots. These shots can be lifesavers — especially in the African American community, where use of the flu and pneumococcal vaccines are far below the national averages.

Each winter, a flu epidemic sweeps the country, killing an average of 20,000 Americans and putting more than 100,000 in the hospital. Over 10,000 more people die each year from pneumococcal infections. Adults with diabetes who develop the flu are three times more likely to die. Most are age 65 and older. These numbers represent a staggering preventable human tragedy. Together, influenza and pneumococcal disease are the most common causes of death in the United States from diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. These are needless deaths because they are so easily avoided through vaccination.

Only about 50 percent of African Americans receive flu shots and only about 30 percent are vaccinated against pneumococcal infections, compared to 67 percent of older white persons who receive the flu shot and 47 percent who receive the pneumococcal shot. This is a major health problem because African Americans are two to three times more likely to develop a serious life-threatening pneumococcal infection than the average white American.

But this is a tragedy we can prevent. Every senior citizen needs to know that flu and pneumococcal shots are available and free under Medicare. They don't cost a penny and they are lifesavers. Persons 65 years and older, persons in nursing homes, and anyone with heart, lung or kidney disease, diabetes or other chronic disease who have not received these shots should ask their health care providers for both influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations.

Flu shots must be given every year because the influenza virus changes from year to year. Pneumococcal shots are usually only given once. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that the best time to vaccinate against flu is between October and mid-November. However even after mid-November older adults and people with chronic illnesses may still benefit from the flu vaccine. Pneumococcal shots can be given with the flu shot or at any time of year.

Some people worry that flu shots cause the flu. This is not true. Flu shots can't cause the flu, because the vaccine is made with killed virus. Sometimes people may think they have the flu when they actually have another respiratory infection with similar symptoms.

Don't wait to be told by your doctor that you need the shots. Don't delay. Ask your health care provider for the shots. It's your health and it's your life. Don't take an unnecessary risk.

For more information about receiving flu and pneumococcal shots covered by Medicare, call toll-free 1-800-638-6833 or visit Medicare's Web site at <http://www.medicare.gov>. For more information about influenza disease and CDC's recommendations for influenza vaccination, telephone the CDC National Immunization Information Hotline, (800) 232-2522, English, and (800) 232-0233, Spanish, or visit CDC's Internet page at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>.

— Dr. David Satcher is U.S. surgeon general

### Thank you, Chronicle

**To the Editor:**  
 Thank you so very much for the wonderful job you do reporting the public service announcements which I bring in: We at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church are very appreciative.

Sincerely,  
 Elnora Gore

### Diggs coverage was excellent

**To the Editor:**  
 Thank you for the excellent article on our Community Celebration that appeared in the Sept. 16 edition of The Chronicle. You did a wonderful job of capturing the enthusiasm of the students, parents and staff. The article reflected our excitement and pride in our children's accomplishments on their end-of-grade tests in May. I especially like your statement that a student's poem "captured the essence and spirit of the Diggs family"; we do work hard to join with students and parents to create a family feeling at J.D. Diggs.

I think it worth noting that you were the only media coverage of this event, although I sent the same press release to four television stations and another newspaper. People need to hear the good things that are happening in our schools.

You have covered several events at our school in the past with very positive articles; for those and especially the most recent one, thank you. We really appreciate your help in getting information about our school into the community.

Debby B. Keller

### Disappointed in Ruffin

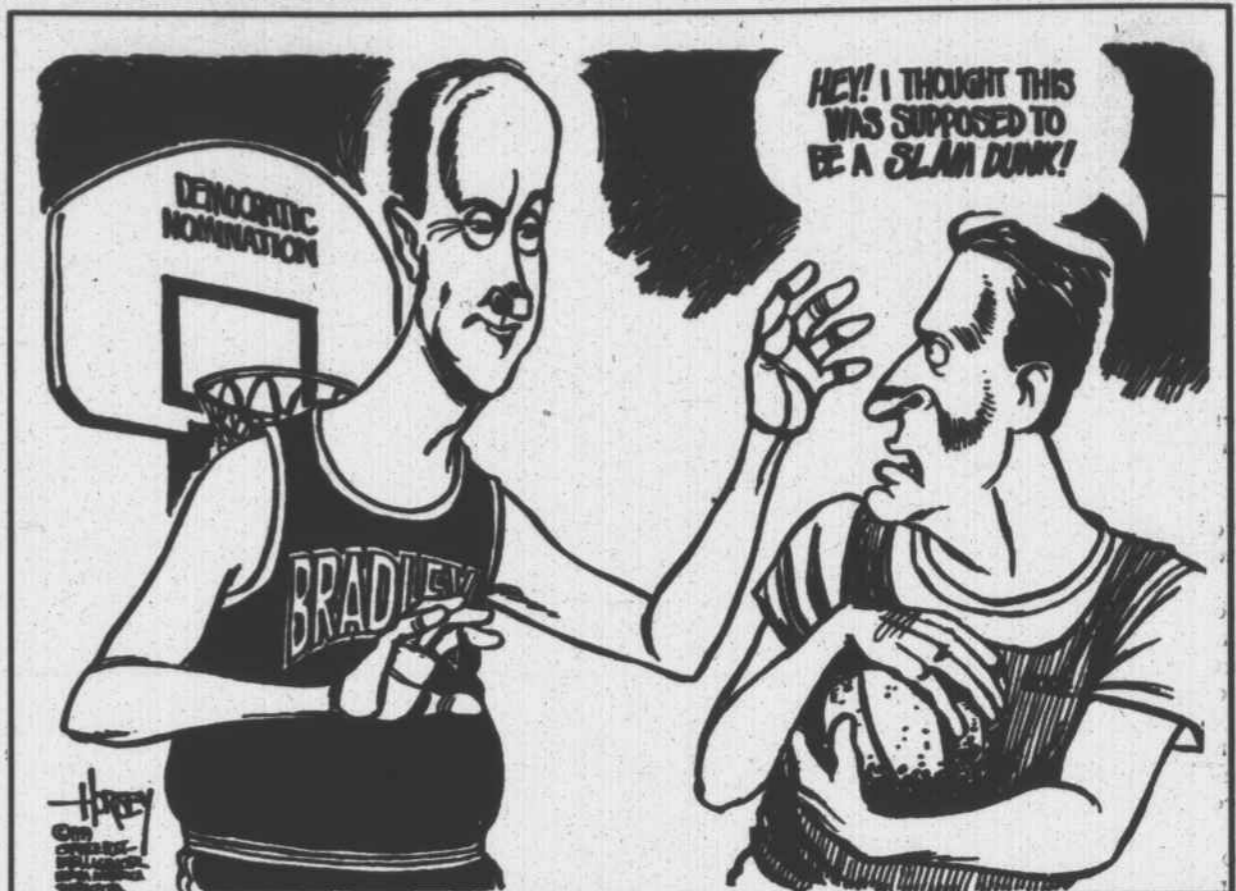
**Dear Editor:**  
 Since the early 1960s I have followed Ben Ruffin's career. I have gone to places all over this state and Winston-Salem to hear him speak.

With the epitome of elegance, I've marveled at him spouting out poems, passages, thoughts, scriptures and sayings from his grandmother. I have admired how he can speak with the power of an academician and in the next moment rattle off Ebonics that spark memories of childhood and thoughts of how safe black family life used to be. I have often thought that Ben Ruffin is the image that our young black men need.

When he became the first black chairman of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, I felt finally all universities would receive their fair share — not just HBCUs, but all of them. With the utterance of a few words by Ben, that image was tainted. The thought that this powerful individual has sold



Ruffin



out to the establishment has left me wondering, "Where are those individuals who will stand for what is right no matter how strong the opposing force?"

At the Winston-Salem State University Founder's Day Convocation, Ben rose to his feet walked to the podium and stated, "I'd like to thank Alvin Schexnider for all of the great things that he has done for this university."

Ben Ruffin, as well as Molly Broad, knows that our alma mater has done nothing but retrogress in the past four years. How do you sing the praises of an individual who has made an entire community angry with him? How do you sing the praises of an individual who has lost the confidence of students, parents, faculty and alumni? How do you give accolades to an individual who deliberately makes derogatory remarks about students, faculty and citizens of this university and community? How do you sing the praises of an individual who has cast such embarrassment on a great institution like WSSU?

After seeing Ruffin in such a vulnerable, weak position, I have decided that there is no winning for the "underdog." I believe that Winston-Salem State University has been slated as a university that will be eliminated from this system. The method is to continue the decline that has occurred over the past four years.

To my dismay, I have discovered that this individual never meant what he has told the black race. He knew then and he has always known that the establishment is more important to him than the black race. If this is not true, why is he helping to destroy the last bit of African American culture that young blacks in this city will experience?

James Banner

### Chacour visit a success

**To the editor:**  
 Thank you for including news of the visit of Father Elias Chacour in the Chronicle.

He was warmly received by members of the community who met him. He is one of those rare individuals who has the ability with his words to reach out and touch your heart. I regret you were unable to attend his presentations.

I was pleased to meet Pastor and Mrs. James Sloan from the Goler Metropolitan Church at the Saturday evening reception which followed Father Chacour's presentation. Pastor Sloan had visited with Father Chacour at his school in Ibillin, Galilee and remembered him with warmth and respect.

Again, thank you for your willingness to bring the visit of Father Chacour to the Chronicle's readers.

Jean B. Hopson

### Robinson is right on

**Dear editor:**  
 I am responding to Jeri Young's (Oct. 21) column on the recent hijinks in the Board of Aldermen meetings. While some observers don't like Robinson's methods, he is trying to do more than "get a rise" out of other aldermen.

A well-known proverb says that whoever holds the purse strings has the power. Robinson is fighting an uphill battle to give the purse strings back to individual citizens. He is doing what voters in the South Ward elected him to do. Can other aldermen make this claim?



Robinson

The city does not have to spend its money wisely or efficiently because it has a constant supply from property taxes and new bonds. When government takes our money through taxation and spends it for us, we lose the power of the purse string. Every tax dollar collected is a dollar we can no longer spend, save, or give as we choose.

As a Libertarian, I do not necessarily oppose the projects or organizations which receive city money. I do, however, believe that individuals should have the freedom to support the businesses, organizations, and entertainment venues of their own, not the board's choice.

America was created by free speech, noisy debate, and colonists who didn't follow the rules. By continuing this tradition, Robinson is trying to make the board use the power of the purse strings responsibly. Other aldermen appear to feel threatened by him, and that should worry all of us who value freedom.

Elizabeth Vance

### Let Us Know What You Think

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to the Editor, The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636, Winston-Salem, NC 27102

## VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY...

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education will soon decide whether middle and high school athletes will need to maintain a "C" average in order to participate in athletic programs. The issue has already caused great debate among coaches and principals. We asked locals what they thought.



Adrian Boyd

"I think high school athletes should be required to have a 2.0 average. I participated in sports when I was in high school. They really need to set the example for other students."



Chelle Thorn

"That's just a 'C' average. I don't think that is much to ask. That should not be too hard. They should want to show their coaches that they are able to keep their grades up and be successful on the field at the same time."



Cherika Boyd

"I feel they should have a 2.0, if not higher. Academics should come first. If you go through high school breezing through just because you are an athlete, what happens when you get to college? You should have a very high GPA if you want to excel in athletics."



Laura Sanders

"You are in school for academics, first of all, so if your academics are low, you need to be spending your time in that area. Sports take a lot of time, so if your grades are not up to par, you need to be focusing your energy on your academics."



Tianya McMillian

"Yes, I think they should have a 'C' average because it gets you in the mode of keeping your grades up so that when you get to the collegiate level you will be better able to handle the work load."