

# College tour evokes pride in black heritage

By Teresa A. Parsons  
Associate editor

Growing up in suburban Rochester, Janetta Scales sometimes felt like "a lone chocolate drop in the midst of vanilla ice cream."

Nevertheless, when she considered the possibility of joining a weeklong, diocesan-sponsored tour of predominantly black Eastern colleges, Scales was nervous.

Overcoming her jitters long enough to board the tour bus March 27, the Greece-Arcadia junior found she wasn't alone. "Ironically, many of us had been afraid that we would not fit in, because we assumed that everyone else in the group was in an all-black environment every day," she wrote afterward in an essay describing her experience. "While we were afraid of being different, we were all very much alike."

Aside from growing up black in a white, suburban world, Scales and many of the 38 other black high school students who attended the seventh-annual Black College Tour offered by the diocesan Office of Black Ministries, March 27-31, found they shared a common hunger for pride in their African-American heritage. "It took me 17 years to find out that my forefathers' forefathers came from kings and queens," wrote Jhuneia Hawkins, a senior at Gates-Chili High School. "To me, it brought on such a sense of pride and peace that can't



Thirty-nine area high school students traveled via chartered bus to nine predominantly black East Coast colleges. be compared with anything else I have ever felt."

Since 1982, the diocesan Office of Black Ministries has granted similar revelations to several hundred black high school students, helping them to dismiss negative self-images and equally negative stereotypes of institutions founded for their predecessors with what tour organizer Jacquelyn Dobson termed "blood, sweat and tears."

The exclusively black focus of the tour is not meant as anti-white, Dobson explained. Rather, it aims to compensate for an experience black teenagers — particularly those

raised in predominantly white suburbs — may have missed. "The kids here do not see black leadership in their schools, in their (local) government, in their neighborhoods," she said. "So many kids begin to paint a negative picture of what black life is about."

A lack of support from black peers tends to reinforce that negative image. "A lot of times, (black youths) who are active and involved in high school are branded as "Oreos" — black on the outside, but white inside — by their black peers," Dobson explained.

Attitudes among students at predominantly black campuses tend to be different. "There's a lot of obvious pride in being a young, black person pursuing higher education, pursuing dreams of achievement," Dobson said. "There are still a good number of these kids who are the first generation of their families to go on to college."

An atmosphere offering such support and cultural identity is beginning to offset the allure of prestigious white colleges and universities, which attracted many top

black students during the 1970s. "White institutions get a lot of students because (the institutions) are able to afford scholarships, but they don't always keep them because of a lack of support and the apparent growth of racism (on many predominantly white campuses)," Dobson said.

Adrienne Allen was among those students attracted to a black university, but afraid of risking her dreams. "I was favorably impressed (by the black schools') closeness and family-like atmosphere. There was just something about them," she recalled of her experience on the diocesan tour. "But I had definite goals, and I wanted to come out of a school that had a name and a research background ... I thought for me a predominantly white school had a few more options."

Given another chance, Allen, who is now a first-year medical student at the University of Rochester, would choose a black institution for her undergraduate degree. "It's important for students coming out of a place like Rochester to go to a school that gives them a sense of identity," she said.

Continued on page 16

## DeSales High School

### Should women become priests?

NICOLE ACQUILANO, junior:

Up until now, women have only been nuns or lay people in the Catholic Church. I feel that women should be able to have the option of becoming priests, but I would rather see more women become sisters or lay people. This is because I have grown up in the church with only men as priests. However, women are gaining more respect and power in the Catholic Church and are receiving the recognition they deserve.



### AS TEENS SEE IT

DIANE HAVER, junior:

I feel that women should definitely be able to become priests. My reason is that back in the time of Christ men were rabbis, but the women were left to ensure their children's religious upbringing. Women should have the choice.



BILL MORGAN, sophomore:

Women should be able to hold the same positions as men in the church, from altar servers to pope. The church preaches equal rights but is actually stuck in its conservative past.



CHRIS LAMSON, freshman:

I think women should be allowed in the Catholic Church because women have just as many rights as men do and are equal to men. I also think it would be a lot different if women said Mass or served Mass.



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