

# Editor sees country regressing on racial front

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Pearl Stewart says she never felt more free to intelligently discuss race issues than when she was a student at Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave.

The editor of the *Oakland Tribune* spoke at the Nazareth Academy/Nazareth Hall annual Lumina • Lux Awards Dinner on Tuesday, April 20, at the Hyatt Regency, 125 E. Main St.

The first African-American woman in U.S. history to be named editor of a major metropolitan daily newspaper, Stewart noted that she wrote about her feelings on current race relations in a recent column for the *Tribune*.

Following several conversations with whites angered by her column's call for the removal of racist police officers from law enforcement departments, Stewart reflected on her experience writing for the literary magazine at Nazareth Academy.

"It occurred to me that 25 years ago whites who had little contact with African-Americans weren't as racially ignorant as some who today live and work in ethnically diverse communities," she wrote.

In the column, she recalled that several whites argued with her to stop talking about police racism and start talking about "black crime." Her response was that no one calls crimes committed by white people "white crime," and that racism obviously exists among police — as evidenced by such incidents as the Rodney King beating.

Stewart recalled that she authored an essay on "black power" in 1967 for Nazareth's school magazine. The response she received to that essay was far more "tolerant" than the reaction to her recent column on racist police officers, she asserted.

"In (the high school essay) I stated that many whites 'automatically connect black power with violence and riots. The main reason for this is the word 'power.' Teamed with the word black, it has a frightening effect on (those) who seem to overlook the fact that this country is run by white power, power in government as well as in industry."

In her column, Stewart added that in the tumultuous 1960s, her essay was "strong stuff."



Ruth Adams/Photo intern  
Pearl Stewart, editor of the *Oakland Tribune* and a 1967 graduate of Nazareth Academy, spoke at the Catholic high school's annual Lumina • Lux Dinner at the Hyatt Regency April 20.

"But the all-white faculty and staff at the school wholeheartedly supported my right to free expression — even if it was radical by some standards," she said.

Even at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she was among a predominantly African-American student population and administration, Stewart was suspended for participation in protest

activities.

"Many schools no longer allow freedom of expression," she added, pointing out that she has met high school students bereft of the same press freedom she enjoyed at Nazareth.

In an interview following her speech, Stewart complained that many people today increasingly censor themselves and each other on racial issues.

"I think we've gotten to the point where we tend to shut down on this subject," she said. "The belief is held by some that dialogue itself can be inflammatory."

Stewart's convictions on the need for open dialogue seem rooted in her lifelong journalistic pursuits.

After graduating from Howard University in 1971, she received a master's degree in communications from American University in Washington. She then spent 20 years reporting and editing in the San Francisco/Oakland area, garnering positions at United Press International, the *Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

A member of the Bay Area Black Journalists Association, Stewart was named the *Tribune's* editor in December, 1992.

Prior to Stewart's comments at the Nazareth dinner, E. James Hickey and Margaret Larkin McMahon received Lumina • Lux awards, recognizing graduates from the Hall and the Academy for their community and Christian involvement.

Hickey graduated from Nazareth Hall in 1930. In addition to being a World War II bronze star medalist, he is director and former chairman of the board of directors for the Rochester-Monroe County Chapter of the American Red Cross. Hickey has also served on the boards of Birthright Rochester, Inc., and Rochester General Hospital.

McMahon graduated from Nazareth Academy in 1934. She retired as administrative assistant to Dr. William Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College, in 1992, and has worked for the diocesan Office of the Propagation of the Faith. She currently volunteers at the Pittsford college, a public TV/radio station, and the School of the Holy Childhood, a center for mentally retarded children and adults conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

## Canandaigua convent set to begin major restoration

CANANDAIGUA — Work is scheduled to begin May 1 on the \$320,000 renovation of St. Mary Convent, 16 Gibson St.

McKenna Brothers of Canandaigua will renovate the historic building's exterior as part of the project to restore the convent and ready certain sections for use as a community meeting space. The exterior work is expected to be completed by October.

Several Sisters of St. Joseph who teach at the parish school will continue to live in the convent during and after the project's completion.

A \$160,000 grant from the New York state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and matching funds raised by parishioners and concerned area residents, will pay for the project, noted Father Walter L. Wainwright, pastor.

"The people have been extremely generous," Father Wainwright said.

St. Mary's pastor said work will include repairing the five columns at the front of the building; installing a lift to the lower part of the edifice to make the building handicapped accessible; adding storm windows; and repainting the exterior.

In addition to restoring the lower level's wooden floor, workers will reinforce the building's main staircase.

Additional interior renovations will be done in the future as funds become available, the pastor noted.

Meanwhile, necessary roof repairs have already been completed, Father Wainwright said.

James Rulison, a parishioner who chairs the committee overseeing the

project, noted that some additional modifications will be made to the building before it can be used as a meeting site.

Those modifications will include partitioning the lower level into separate small rooms and adding fire doors.

Rulison noted that once these modifications are completed, the building will provide meeting spaces for parish and school activities, as well as for community groups.

Upon its completion, the renovation project will bring an end to several years of uncertainty over the building's fate. Constructed in 1834, the edifice has served as the parish's convent since 1873.

In 1989, the parish was ready to sell the convent to a developer who wanted to convert it into offices. After public outcry greeted this proposed sale, the developer freed the parish from its contract to sell the building.

The parish then formed the restoration committee, which is chaired by Rulison and Susan Miller. After developing the idea to renovate the building, the committee secured the state grant and organized efforts to raise matching funds.

Rulison said he was impressed that parishioners were able to provide such support for the project, since the effort came right on the heels of another successful campaign to raise \$700,000 for church repairs.

"We put the word out, we did some soliciting, and the parish and community came through," Rulison said.

— Lee Strong



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor  
The historic exterior of Canandaigua's St. Mary Convent will be restored during a \$320,000 project to renovate the convent and ready certain sections for use as a community meeting space.

## National Day of Prayer scheduled for May 6

ROCHESTER — Christians nationwide are being encouraged to participate in the annual celebration marking National Day of Prayer by joining in prayer at noon on Thursday, May 6.

Occurring occasionally since the founding of the United States, National Days of Prayer have been observed for 42 consecutive years, according to a press release announcing the event. In 1988, the U.S. Congress and later President Reagan set the date as the first Thursday in May.

On that day, citizens are asked to acknowledge their dependence on God and give thanks for the blessings they have received. They are also asked to request healing for the wounds the na-

tion has endured, and for divine guidance of the nation's leaders and citizens, the release said.

In particular, citizens are requested to spend five minutes somewhere in prayer with others for the nation.

From New York to Los Angeles, state and local coordinators — along with clergy and lay leaders in hundreds of churches and synagogues — will sponsor special services and gatherings marking the day.

Contact your parish for information regarding any local observances. For information on the National Day of Prayer, write National Day of Prayer Task Force, P.O. Box 15616, Colorado Springs, Colo., 80935-5616.