

By Harriet Muhammad

**DEAR HARRIETT:** About a year ago when I first moved to this city, I met a friend who started doing things for me to help me get settled in a new and strange city. I appreciated this (and still do), and as soon as I was settled, I did things for her, too. We had a pretty good relationship (so I thought).

My friend took me into her confidence and began to tell me all about a woman she disliked intensely, along with a few other people she "could not stand." I listened to her, keeping in mind that I was new to everything and was hearing only one side of the story.

As time went on, I noticed that my friend kept talking about these people. The image she was building up in my mind concerning them was pretty bad. I started to check myself so that I would not find myself disliking these people purely on hearsay based on old things from the past.

Others talked to me about these people, especially this woman, and they had both good and bad things to say. None of them, however, depicted the people in question in as bad a light as did my friend.

Not too long ago, I learned that my friend had told a few untruths. They did not concern me, so I did not give them much thought. Then I had the occasion to have a conversation with this "most hated" woman in the church the three of us attended—not once, but twice. She never mentioned this woman friend of mine and neither did I. We were discussing something far removed from "who hates who and why." I found her to be very pleasant.

Two of my friend's friends (who are my friends, too) called me on the phone and told me that my dear friend had come to them, telling how I had been seen talking

to the "enemy" and that I am "two-faced" and must have been "using her" all this time. I was stunned. I did not think my friend would stoop to spreading stories about me without first talking to me.

Now I recall the many things she said about others, the untruths (polite words for lies) she told, and the things she has said against me! Needless to say, my thoughts about her are pretty bad now. Am I, in order to be considered a good friend, supposed to ignore or run from everyone my friend dislikes regardless of the way they treat me? Am I two-faced for having the nerve to talk to my friend's "enemy?"—A VICTIM.

**DEAR VICTIM:** Your friend seems to have the "gossip" disease. I believe that most people gossip and this is to be expected. It's normal, but only up to the point where lies are mixed with truths and people aren't capable of distinguishing between them. When a person gets to this point, he's dangerously on the verge of developing a neurosis.

It appears your friend was trying to BUY your loyalty instead of earning it. Of course, you can't have two friends who are "enemies," but you most certainly aren't two-faced for merely carrying on a conversation with your friend's "enemy."

Your friend must be very unsure of herself and your feelings toward her if she

was so quick to jump to the defensive over a small incident. If she didn't have some sort of personality complex, she wouldn't have assumed — with no knowledge of the conversation—that you were now against her.

You've already been knocked once by your friend

— don't ask for more. You have other friends. Give them more of your time and let the other one go. Don't let what she has done wrap you.

**P.S. ATTENTION:** "Lady in Waiting", Newark, N.J., please send me your name

and address and I will mail you the information you requested on how to "walk forth on Orange Avenue."

**ATTENTION:** "Very Concerned," Atwater, Calif. Yes I will send you an answer directly to your address. I will keep your problem confidential.