

## **VOICES: What have you learned about yourself since participating in recent diversity discussion groups?**

*Members from Philadelphia Joint Territory respond:*

Although nothing profound is going on in our group, this experience has profoundly affected my life. I've realized that I viewed African Americans as a monolithic group. But this activity has enabled me to look at African Americans as individuals. I've been freed from my preconceptions and can now ask myself, "How can I help other human beings?" As a group we haven't tried to tackle the larger issues. But I feel we are building bridges to one another as individuals, based on faith in the Gohonzon. Through this training and dialogue I feel we will have an impact on society.

— JIM WALLERSTEIN, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

As an African American, it has occurred to me that I have altered my behavior and speech depending on the kinds of people I am with. Despite my intellect...I find myself choosing my words carefully while talking to European Americans. I don't feel as comfortable due to the fact that I feel I am being judged with more scrutiny by European Americans.

— THOM WILKINS, Philadelphia

By participating in our group, I've learned how to be even more vigilant about how I stereotype and make assumptions about people. It's something I did before, too, but now I'm even more aware.

— KITTY WATTS, Glenside, Pa.

I've come to realize that it takes a tremendous amount of effort to have an open and honest dialogue that's void of emotionalism, blame or anger. Participating has opened my perspective that my view isn't the only view — that there are many other views out there as well.

— DIANE MOORE DAVIS, Cherry Hill, N.J.

What I've seen more clearly is that human beings are human beings. If you get past features, you realize that we all have the same basic nature. Everyone experiences pain, joy and suffering. I've gained a better understanding of the need to develop more compassion for other human beings and overcome the feeling of victimization. And that I can't wait for someone else to change but must change first.

— WANDA FLOWERS, Philadelphia

Our group has been talking about how each nationality has its own idiosyncrasies and how hard it is to hear oneself. Only by hearing oneself can you correct the way you behave. Lately I've been trying to listen to myself, and I am often surprised with what I hear. Now that I've discovered this, I'm trying harder to grab hold of this devilish function and purify it.

— QUINTINE DRAPER, Philadelphia

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