THINK: Why is understanding race and culture important if we are community builders? It is clear that in order to build communities that are successful at improving conditions and resolving problems, we need to understand racism, establish relationships with people from races and cultures other than our own, and build strong alliances with different race and cultural groups. Additionally, we need to bring non-mainstream groups into the center of civic activity. Why?

* **In order to build communities that are powerful enough to attain significant change, we need large numbers of people working together**.
* **Each race and cultural group has unique strengths and perspectives that the larger community can benefit from.**
* **Understanding racism and diverse cultures will help all of us overcome and prevent racial and ethnic divisions**. Racial and ethnic divisions result in misunderstandings, loss of opportunities, and sometimes violence. Racial and ethnic conflicts drain communities of financial and human resources; they distract cultural groups from resolving the key issues they have in common.
* **People from different races and cultures have to be included in decision-making processes in order for programs or policies to be effective**. The people affected by a decision have to be involved in formulating solutions--it's a basic democratic principle. Without the input and support of *all* the groups involved, decision-making, implementation, and follow through are much less likely to occur.
* **An appreciation of different experiences by race and cultural diversity goes hand-in-hand with a just and equitable society**.
* **If we do not learn about the influences that cultural groups have had on our mainstream history and culture**, **we are all missing out on an accurate view of our society and our communities.**

**From The University of Kansas Community Toolbox http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culture-and-diversity/main**

WORK: Work in small groups to talk about these questions:

1. Why does racism persist in places that are committed to equality and liberty?
2. Are there structural problems in our government or economic system that serve to divide races and cultures? How can they be changed?