Definitions:

Diversity: "The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual."
(quoted from http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~asuomca/diversityinit/definition.html)

Tolerance: "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace. Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others …. tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs."
(From the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, signed by the Member States of UNESCO [the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] on 16 November 1995).

Pluralism: "Cultural pluralism is the dynamic by which minority groups participate fully in the dominant society, yet maintain their cultural differences. A pluralistic society is one where different groups can interact while showing a certain degree of tolerance for one another, where different cultures can coexist without major conflicts, and where minority cultures are encouraged to uphold their customs."
(quoted from http://www.allaboutreligion.org/cultural-pluralism-faq.htm)

Relativism: "Cultural relativism is the view that moral or ethical systems, which vary from culture to culture, are all equally valid and no one system is really 'better' than any other. This is based on the idea that there is no ultimate standard of good or evil, so every judgment about right and wrong is a product of society. Therefore, any opinion on morality or ethics is subject to the cultural perspective of each person. Ultimately, this means that no moral or ethical system can be considered the 'best', or 'worst', and no particular moral or ethical position can actually be considered 'right' or 'wrong'." (quoted from http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/cultural-relativism.htm)

Discussion: The terms: diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and relativism taken together form the basis that modern society uses to address conflicts and differences based on race, gender, ethnicity, political ideology, religion, etc.

- **Do you agree with the definitions stated above? If not, how would you modify them?**

- **How comfortable are you interacting with people who have a different background or ideology than you?**

- **Has there been a time when you felt like an outsider or when you were judged based on who you are as a person?**

- **Are all four of these terms things society should be working toward, or are there some that you disagree with?**