Helpful Definitions of Diversity-Related Terms (Diversity & Inclusion Module)

Prejudice
A preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information. It contributes to the development of stereotypes, omissions, and distortions.

Ethnic Group
A socially defined group based on cultural criteria, such as language, customs and shared history.

“Minorities”
A misnomer since so-called minorities represent the majority of the world’s population.

Cultural Racism
The cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of a certain group and the assumed inferiority of another group.

Institutional Discrimination
“Not only a personal ideology based on prejudice, but a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals.” (Tatum, 1997, p.7)

1 Provided by International Student and Scholar Services at Vanderbilt University.