Anti-Racism

**What Makes An American**
**Benefits and Facilitation Options**

**Benefits:** This exercise helps participants understand how American values permeate our language, traditions, and assumptions, and how that may have an impact on the way people from the dominant culture treat those who are not part of that culture.

**Time Required:** 15 minutes

**Ideal Group Size:** Any

**Support Materials:** Handout “What is An American?”

**Instructions:**

You can facilitate this exercise as a dyad or small group, with a large group debriefing.

1. Pass out copies of the handout.
2. In dyads or small groups, have groups choose one or two of the proverbs to discuss.
3. Ask participants to consider the following about the proverbs they have chosen:
   a. What American cultural value do these proverbs represent?
   b. What lessons do these proverbs try to impart?
   c. What kinds of negative things can happen to people who don’t share these values, particularly in the institutions that they interact with?

**Key Points:**

- American values permeate our language, rituals, and attitudes in ways that we may not even recognize.
- People from other cultures do not necessarily share or learn these values automatically or at all.
- There can be serious negative consequences for people with different cultural values than the dominant culture.
Session 3: Anti-Racism

What Makes An American?

**Proverb**

- Cleanliness is next to godliness
- A penny saved is a penny earned
- Time is money
- Don’t cry over spilt milk
- Waste not; want not
- Early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy wealthy and wise
- God helps those who help themselves
- It’s not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game
- A man’s home is his castle

- You’ve made your bed, now lie in it
- No rest for the wicked (weary)
- Don’t count your chickens before they hatch
- A bird in hand is worth two in the bush
- The squeaky wheel gets the grease
- Might makes right
- There’s more than one way to skin a cat
- A stitch in time saves nine
- All that glitters is not gold
- Clothes make the man
- If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again
- Take care of today and tomorrow will take care of itself
- Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone

What cultural value does this proverb represent?