

2020 was a historic year to say the least. In the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, discussions of the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality, and racism in America came to a head after the murder of George Floyd by law enforcement in Minnesota. It seemed like every American, and every American institution, played a role in these discussions. Those in our DPT program did, faculty and students alike. One student in my cohort suggested reading and discussing the book *Taking on Diversity: How We Can Move from Anxiety to Respect* by NC State professor Rupert W. Nacoste to better structure our conversations and personal activism about race and racism in America. Although group discussions about this book have been limited thus far, reading the book certainly caused me to generate some reflections of my own. Nacoste structured the book as a series of examples, either directly quoted or paraphrased, that students had provided him about encounters between diverse individuals. Many of these stories dealt with ethnic or racial diversity, although others also covered gender, religious, and other differences. In these encounters, students and Nacoste emphasize the tension that diversity can cause. Some of this tension can be attributed to outright bigotry and prejudice, where one individual hates another because they are different. I know this tension exists, as I can reflect on several instances in my life in which those around me have expressed such bigotry and prejudice. However, much of the tension described in this book is driven by hyperawareness of differences between individuals and a fear of interacting with someone different than oneself. I can personally relate to the later types of tension. I know from earlier experiences and discussions in my life and in this program that we all have implicit biases and must actively work to acknowledge them and prevent them from affecting our interactions or actions. When interacting with diverse individuals, I can find myself tense, acknowledging that I may have implicit bias towards those different than me than me. I am equally tense trying to prevent those biases from affecting our interaction. I am afraid to offend someone by unwittingly or out of awkwardness saying something insensitive or inappropriate. Nacoste appreciates that this type of tension and anxiety is common. Most people want to be respectful of those different from themselves, but are unsure of how to convey this during social situations. The lack of clear guidance of how to approach these diverse interactions breeds anxiety, and occasionally awkward or inappropriate behavior. Nacoste goes on to provide some type of guidance for how to approach diversity in our lives. Nacoste suggests that different types of relationships merit different levels of attention to diversity. Interactions with diverse strangers should not be centered around the diversity, as the interaction is superficial and does not require attention to the profound nature of differences. Exaggerating diversity in these instances is out of proportion to the nature of the interactions and can lead to inappropriate behavior. However, as relationships become more profound, diversity begins to play an equally profound role. Nacoste hopes that at this point in the relationship, mutual respect will help mitigate tensions surrounding diversity and guide interactions. Although this guidance was not as earth shattering or life altering as I imagined, it is certainly practical and something I can easily implement in my everyday life. I plan to use Nacoste's advice in everyday, diverse social interactions by deemphasizing tensions related to diversity, rather focusing on the complete individual in front of me and what the goal of the interaction is. This method will be particularly useful as I encounter diverse patients during clinical rotations and my career. By putting professionalism at the forefront of my interactions with diverse patients, I can mitigate my anxieties about saying or doing the wrong thing and instead focus on what I've been trained to do as a PT. I look forward to future discussions in my program surrounding this book in particular, as well as other pertinent material or world events. More to come on that in future reflections.