We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society.

*Angela Davis*
“I always felt that if I raised my hand to voice my opinion about something, or even responded to a question about the material I would say something wrong, and the White students would say ‘Oh, it’s the Mexican girl.’ Although I was aware that I was in an honors course because I was academically advanced, I still assumed that just because I was Mexican and lived on the poor side of town I was not as smart as them...There was always a feeling of inferiority when I was around White students during my schooling experience” (Kohli 185, 2008).
“Conversational Architecture” (Blackwell)

“If we pay attention, it’s not hard to recognize the hidden architecture of any gathered group: Who leads the conversation? Whose opinions incite head nods and agreement and whose seem to go unnoticed? Who speaks first? Who speaks last?

When the designers of the conversation are white, often white men, we may forget to examine the architecture of the discussion because these are the architects we’re all most familiar with. We’re socially conditioned to accept and attune to the ‘white is right’ channel” (Blackwell 6, 2017).
The Dark Ages

The Enlightenment
The Great Chain

- God (Perfect)
- Angels (Immortal)
- Man (Existence, Growth, Passion, Reason)
- Animals (Existence, Growth, Passion)
- Plants (Existence, Growth)
- Minerals (Existence)

- The most heavenly beings placed at the top of the chain (seated at the Foot of God)
- The basest creatures are at the bottom, furthest away from God

Enlightenment

- Secularization
- Capitalism
- Democracy
- Scientism

- Colonization
- Slavery
- Patriarchal White Supremacy

- Rationality
- Objectivity
- Mind/Body Split
- Nature/Nurture Split
- Superior/Inferior
“But, before his death in 1831, Hegel failed to free himself and Europe from the Enlightenment era’s racist ideas. ‘It is...the concrete universal, self-determining thought, which constitutes the principle and character of Europeans,’ Hegel once wrote. ‘God becomes man, revealing himself.’ In contrast, African people, he said, were ‘a nation of children’ in the ‘first stage’ of human development. ‘The negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness’” (Kendi 147).
The “Enlightened, Rational” Classroom

- Be hard
- Expert at front of room
- Expert sets the tone
- Discouragement of overt emotional displays
- Verbal participation
- Encouragement of multitasking
- Encouragement of instant gratification
- Credentialing

I think that one of the unspoken discomforts surrounding the way a discourse of race and gender, class and sexual practice has disrupted the academy is precisely the challenge to that mind/body split. Once we start rationalized space. The person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body. I remember as an assistant to a Jewish white male professors who wore the
The “Enlightened, Rational” Classroom

but it does. I remember in my early teaching days that when I first tried to move out beyond the desk, I felt really nervous. I remember thinking, “This really is about power. I really do feel more ‘in control’ when I’m behind the podium or behind the desk than when I’m walking towards my students, standing close to them, maybe even touching them.” Acknowledging that we are bodies in the classroom has been important for me, especially in my efforts to disrupt the notion of professor as omnipotent, all-knowing mind.

~Bell Hooks, Teaching to Transgress
The “Hijacked” Body

When we perceive a threat, the amygdala sounds an alarm, releasing a cascade of chemicals in the body. Stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol flood our system, immediately preparing us for fight or flight. When this deeply instinctive function takes over, we call it what Daniel Goleman coined in *Emotional Intelligence* as “amygdala hijack.” In common psychological parlance we say, “We’ve been triggered.” We notice immediate changes like an increased heart rate or sweaty palms. Our breathing becomes more shallow and rapid as we take in more oxygen, preparing to bolt if we have to.

The flood of stress hormones create other sensations like a quivering in our solar plexus, limbs, or our voice. We may notice heat flush our face, our throat constrict, or the back of our neck tighten and jaw set. We are in the grip of a highly efficient, but prehistoric set of physiological responses. These sensations are not exactly pleasant — they’re not meant for relaxation. They’re designed to move us to action.
“Quiet” Teaching in Context

- Social Sciences--Sociology (Monica Edwards, Harper College)
  - Large lectures
- STEM--Chemistry (Becca Ciancanelli, University of Colorado, Boulder)
What is critical thinking? How do you practice critical thinking?

Using your best judgement to come up with an idea

Not believing everything you hear

Analyzing things without bias; How they are instead of how you expect it to be.

Thoroughly analyzing the situation or context at hand.

Thinking about different perspectives

Critical thinking is analyzing deeply, not just what appears on the surface

Critical thinking is the ability to go beyond surface leveled responses in order to convey

It is the way of one’s mind translating data into the brain. practices by questioning ideas

It is a way to take a step back and view an idea from many
There's actual science behind this: MRI scans have revealed that writing by hand increases neural activity in certain sections of the brain. See, there's a reason why your schoolteachers told you to write things out again and again. It probably felt like a never-ending punishment, but the process helped you learn. When it comes to productivity, writing on paper cuts out all of the noise. There are no notifications blinking on a screen, no 67 other tabs fighting for your attention. Author Patrick McLean writes in his defense of longhand: "As much as I love technology, it drives us to distraction. A pen and paper has but one functionality. It captures the marks I make so that they can be referred to at a later time."
Writing Reflection: What might your "unbecoming" look like?

No one would think “because you’re a male” or “because you’re a female”. You would be looked at as the individual yourself.

"Unbecoming" for me has always been to focus on personal values and mores first and to detach them from any notion of gender or sexuality.

Caring less about physical attributes that project my gender, and focusing on what makes me feel comfortable and happy.

what I am doing now, especially with how I present myself in my attire, sometimes it screams feminine or sometimes it screams masculine.

Wear less girly clothes and colors (dresses and skirts)

Focusing more on the internal feelings rather than the physical aspects and the gender that others have put me into.
In any class, do you feel comfortable answering questions--verbally, when called on--during class?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38% (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes/depends</td>
<td>48% (45)</td>
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When you don’t feel comfortable participating in any class, what are the reasons?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introverted/shy personality</td>
<td>60% (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety/depression/other mental health needs</td>
<td>31% (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not (yet) comfortable with the material</td>
<td>45% (43)</td>
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Do you feel like the ability to participate using the menti program is helpful?

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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92% (87)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I don't want to make a mistake in front of a lot of people and I don't want to seem stupid when I ask simple questions. I guess I just lack the confidence to mess up.

I was afraid I'd sound stupid...

When I don't know the answer & I don't feel comfortable because I'm afraid of what my classmates think of me

Sometimes I need to take more time to understand the material

Themes: class to large, scared, don't want to be laughed at, shy, judged, intimidating, don't know material, mood, unprepared, need more time, don't want to look stupid, afraid to be criticized by professor
“Yes, it provides a ‘safer’ option when sharing thoughts/opinions.”

“Definitely helpful in a case where you think that if you would ask the question out loud someone would laugh at you.”

“Definitely helpful in a case where you think that if you would ask the question out loud someone would laugh at you.”

It’s very engaging. You can ask questions without people knowing who you are.

Themes: more comfortable being wrong, avoid anxiety, engaging, anonymous, not judged, efficient, apply knowledge, get answers, stay on track

“Yes, menti is super helpful because you can ask ‘dumb’ (simple) questions without anyone knowing you’re struggling.”

“Yes, because it’s anonymous so I feel comfortable knowing the class isn’t judging me to my face.”
Effect of How Many Reflections 2017 Chem 1113 Upperclassmen (n=148) vs. First Year Students (n=128) Completed on Final Grade in Class

Data from: Rebecca Ciancanelli, PhD, University of Colorado, Boulder
One final note...

posed the question “Where do we go from here.” To live in an anti-racist society we must collectively renew our commitment to a democratic vision of racial justice and equality. Pursuing that vision we create a culture where beloved community flourishes and is sustained. Those of us who know the joy of being with folks from all walks of life, all races,
“When we speak, we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak.”

—Audre Lorde

“When everyone is silent, no one is silenced” (Edwards forthcoming)
References