Twitter Thread by Josh Chafetz

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1/ So, there's a lot to say about this @BenSasse piece, including a contestable and contentious conception of the realm of political life. But ...

2/ I want instead to focus on this passage.



3/ I notice that he never defines this mythical past. It's just "the past." It partakes of Phoebe Buffay's division of the past into the "colonial era" and "yore."

4/ The problem here is that any attempt to specify this "past" more clearly would have to surrender Sasse's claims to universality.

5/ To the extent that "the whole town" turned out and rooted for the same team, Sasse is figuring authentic Americanness as involving small, racially and otherwise homogeneous communities.

6/ Because in heterogeneous communities, we have never all rooted for the same team. That's partly because, in racially heterogeneous communities, schools have always been racially segregated--first de jure, then de facto as a holdover of de jure segregation.

7/ And, of course, even plenty of white Americans didn't turn out (or did so only under pressure) on Friday nights to support the team. Some just don't care for football. Others found the performance and celebration of combative masculinity off-putting.

8/ Of course, in saying this, Sasse and his fans might reply that, there I go, "bringing politics into" what ought to be an "apolitical" realm.

9/ This goes back to my initial point about Sasse's stunted conception of the political. For him, football in small towns with boys on the field, girls as cheerleaders, and "the whole town" in the stands is apolitical.

10/ Noting the way that this constructs and reifies race, gender, sexuality, and a whole host of other social constructs is "politicizing."

11/ Thus, the call to preserve this "apolitical" realm is a call to avoid challenges to the dominant ways of thinking about these things. The way they are is naturalized, and challenges to them are thereby implicitly figured as (improper political) challenges to the natural order

12/ But of course the status quo isn't apolitical. It's both a consequence of and a condition for politics.

13/ Figuring the status quo as natural is simply a political move made for and by people who disproportionately benefit from the status quo (i.e., people with unearned privilege).

14/14 It would be a mistake to take this politically motivated (which is not to say consciously so--there's a lot of room for good-faith motivated reasoning here) naturalization at face value. /Fin/

15/14 Oh, and by the way: all politics is identity politics, but Sasse's stuff is an *especially* transparent example of conservative identity politics.

16/14 If you happen to want to read more of what I have to say about the structuring of the American political order ... https://t.co/V5Kc521q5d