Twitter Thread by Teni T. ■



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Today I'm thinking about culture - A long time ago I was cooking with a French friend and we made fried yams. While we were cleaning up, I noticed him begin to empty the pan of oil into the sink and I almost had a heart attack. I grabbed it from him and said "We don't do that!"

Now I wonder, who was "we"? I grew up in a home where used oil was always saved for another day. But it's possible that this was because I was from a lower middle income home. It's what I knew and I couldn't imagine it another way. Why do we do the things we do?

Went to a restaurant to a friend recently and she told me to try their crêpes. I told her I didn't understand crêpes and preferred pancakes. That I thought crêpes were inferior to pancakes. Then she pointed out to me that this might have something to do with colonial history.

The British eat pancakes and the French eat crêpes. Nigerians eat pancakes, Senegalese eat crêpes. This was a revelation for me. My perceived personal choice transformed into colonial legacy. I started to look out for other stuff and came up with some questions.

Do we like bread with beans because it is a version of the British beans on toast that we may have been introduced to? How about fish and chips? You can't compare both versions but it's the same idea. How many things do we think are ours but were actually introduced recently?



During a recent talk I was about culture and whether I was worried about the Americanisation of Nigerian culture. I said I wasn't. That I thought culture was distinct from tradition and open to change. Culture, for me, is what we're doing today. It shifts, absorbs and evolves.

But the question stayed with me. And it has resurfaced my perpetual question about how my parents and I speak English today after a relatively short colonial period. I'm still amazed by this. The language of an entire peoples changed in less than 100 years.

Change can be good. The problem comes when we get fixated on the current state of things completely oblivious that the behaviours are relatively new. We say "This is not our culture" for things that were indeed our culture not too long ago. We think our way of doing things is -

superior forgetting that some of these "ways" were adopted recently and sometimes not voluntarily. This is why I think most things should be open to contestation. So I will keep asking "Why?" whenever I hear "We don't do that."

I do think cultures should interact and evolve.

P.S. Another good example is "African print" and its funny history. A culture of an entire peoples created by capitalism.

Anyway, I do think you can take something foreign and make it yours. Which is why I tell people my first language is *Nigerian* English ■.