Twitter Thread by Ash Kalra ■



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MLK Day gives me mixed feelings. When he lived, MLK was hated by most Americans. That hatred may have been seeded in white resentment, but it grew as Dr. King focused his attention on our unjust economic system & started marching with workers, joining them on strike lines. 1/

Today, we see major corporations like McDonalds, Walmart, Amazon, Uber, etc. produce million dollar ad campaigns celebrating Dr. King. If he were alive, he would be in the marches and rallies continuing to protest with the workers these companies exploit. 2/

He's celebrated for racial harmony. However, he saw economic injustice as the engine that drove the racial injustice he fought so hard against. He condemned "the tragic inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes." 3/

He believed we needed massive wealth redistribution. And, today, we have more income inequality then when King was alive. It's easy to focus on the racial harmony piece while ignoring the hard work required to achieve racial equality within our economic system. 4/

"We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together...you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others… America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order." 5/

When Dr. King was assassinated, he was in Memphis standing with @AFSCME sanitation workers. King believed strongly in labor unions & the right to organize and he condemned "right to work" laws that sought to further exploit workers. 6/

""In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights." King was not killed at the height of his fight for Civil Rights. 7/

King was murdered as he began to more publicly, and successfully, expose the economic exploitation of our nation. He was killed 5 weeks before he was about to lead the Poor People's March on Washington as the 1st major event hosted by the Poor People's Campaign. 8/

King regarded the Poor People's Campaign as part of the 2nd phase of the Civil Rights Movement. It has still not been fulfilled as the 1st phase for racial equality continues to be fought in 2021. For those that praise King, I would hope you would commit to his unfinished work.9/

It appears we have strayed far from King's words and actions. Rather than celebrate a gentle fiction that makes us feel good, we should emulate a radical that brought tension to our society through direct action and honest words. That is how we lovingly memorialize Dr. King. 10/

So, when posed with societal dilemmas or faced with difficult situations, we should ask ourselves what would Dr. King do? Not the King that is shown to us in fancy ad campaigns. But, the King that was hated by Americans when he was assassinated. The one that forced change. 11/

Every year, I read Dr. King's Letter from a Birmingham jail. If you haven't read it, you should. You may recognize some famous quotes. But, the entirety truly lays forth a template for using direct action to force the negotiation of injustices that are far too long ignored. 12/

"You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations." So, let's celebrate Dr. King's birthday as a loving radical & aspire to be the same 13/