Twitter Thread by Ash Sarkar



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Staying well out of this beef, but I've spent the last 48 hours in hysterics since I learned that an influencer has been getting fans to give her money by calling it "individual reparations."

That's the joke line I use when I want one of my white mates to get a round in!

I get how this dynamic emerges. Social media blurs the distinction between influencer and activist. Individuals are seen as totemic of a wider political struggle, so you want to see them succeed. And of course, supporting people's work is meaningful.

But it's not reparations.

Reparations isn't an individual white person giving money to an individual black or brown person (apart from when I'm broke and want a cocktail, in which case it's very much that).

It's about recognising that

a) colonialism and slavery have had a lasting economic impact

b) this impact is not just a legacy, or a long tail.

It has been reinforced by the underdevelopment and debt servitude of the Global South, and the exploitation of labour and resources from the Global South.

And unless you're a billionaire or a central bank, it's unlikely that your PayPal activity is going to make much of an impact on the root causes behind the Global Movement for Reparations..

(Also, if you're a billionaire or a central bank, you're probably why there needs to be a Global Movement for Reparations, but I don't think that's my core audience tbh)

If you, as a white person, want to give money to a black or brown person because you like their work or you think it's politically useful, that's great.

But if you're serious about wanting to support reparations, it can't be an individual thing. It's about movement building.

I think what's going on is that there a lot of young, socially conscious white people for whom the last few years have been a big wake up call. Which is good!

But they're not necessarily politically active - more that they're avid consumers of political content.

That means people who produce politically-flavoured social media content can equate supporting them with supporting the politics.

And it works because social media encourages us all to see individuals with a platform as totemic of the values we want to see in the world.

There's room for influencers to cynically exploit that, and come up with what is essentially intersectional Thatcherism.

The solution to that, imo, is better movement building. White people shouldn't just be supporters of antiracist struggle - they should be participants too!