Twitter Thread by Gregg Gonsalves

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Eight years ago, Spencer Cox died of #AIDS. He had access to #antiretroviral therapy, but in his own struggles with #depression and substance use, he stopped taking them. 1/

Spencer left college, dropped out like me in the 80s, and we both found ourselves in @actupny where we joined the Treatment and Data Committee, doing battle with drug companies, the @US_FDA, the @NIH on a quest to save ourselves and our friends from near-certain death. 2/

Now everyone knows what those dark days before the advent of antiretroviral therapy were like. Waves upon waves of dying friends. A government who couldn't care less for the sick and dying. 3/

All this has happened before, and all this will happen again. AIDS. #COVID19. The next pandemic. The fire next time. 4/

And it changes you. Seeing so much death so young. Seeing those in power turn away from the catastrophe, even joke about it (find, listen to the tape of Larry Speakes in Oval Office w Reagan laughing about AIDS). 5/

And it doesn't end after the drugs, or now, in the case of #COVID19 with a vaccine, because there are the survivors, the still at risk, whether from this virus or the next one. 6/

The living struggle to make sense of the past, how such barbarism flourished among them. How quickly people ignore, forget, move on (read Campo dei Fiori by Czeslaw Milosz). 7/

And the pain doesn't go away it burrows deep inside you, one mutation away from something akin to a cancer that can take your life, like it did Spencer's. 8/

And the barbarism endures too. AIDS is still ravaging the US, except that it's young, gay black and Latino men, who get a @NYTimes magazine article, every decade or so, when we rediscover the virus in our midst. 9/

“I really don't care. Do U?” from @FLOTUS' $39 army-green parka to an American anthem. We really don't care. Don't care enough. 10/

Because we just paint over the damage and the rot. The roots of the now two pandemics of my lifetime, an American politics that gave us @realDonaldTrump, also gave us this virus sweeping the nation, 40 years after the first one came to our shores. 11/

I don't know what to say anymore, in consolation or in inspiration, because I am done. We let two viruses run amok in this place I call home not in spite of who we are but because of what we have become, perhaps always were. 12/

I'll just quote @PeterStaley quoting the late Paul Monette and hope someone hears it out in the universe among the stars one day, takes it up, delivers us. Here we go: 13/

"We queers on Revelation Hill, tucking our skirts about us so as to not touch our Mormon neighbors, died of the greed of power, because we were expendable. If you mean to visit any of us, it had better be to make you strong to fight that power." 14/

"Take your languor and easy tears somewhere else. Above all, don’t pretty us up. Tell yourself: None of this ever had to happen. And then go make it stop, with whatever breath you have left. Grief is a sword, or it is nothing." end/