Twitter Thread by Kendra "Gloom is My Beat" Pierre-Louis



Kendra "Gloom is My Beat" Pierre-Louis
@KendraWrites



Shared this on the gram but a friend's comments made me think I should share this here.

Martin Luther King Jr. rose to prominence in his 20s. By the time of his murder 10+ years later, his viewpoints had evolved. He had begun to explicitly link white supremacy to capitalism.

https://t.co/qzRARQ2Zw4

Remember: he was in Memphis when he was killed supporting the sanitation workers strike over wages and working conditions. This is a man who said, "what good is the right to sit at a lunch counter if you cant afford to buy a hamburger?"

King also spoke out strongly against the war in Vietnam. I've copied an excerpt from his 1967 speech Beyond Vietnam Below but you should listen to the whole thing

I also want to note, the NYT's and WaPos reaction to King's speech at the time (and the NAACPs)

The last two are courtesy of Stanford's King Institute. You can find a link to the text to Beyond Vietnam , as well as the paragraph I cited about the media's reaction to the speech at the time. The full speech is on YouTube if you want to listen: https://t.co/Vnw9G4YJNJ

Oh a piece I forgot to add is: What king was addressing is that Black men were disproportionately likely to be assigned to combat units in Vietnam. What king was getting at is the war was being fought by Black men denied basic human rights at home.

This was not the first time (see: WWII, and WWI), but they were being tasked to murder other people of color who were fighting for self-governance, the hypocrisy ate at him. He tamped down his anti-Vietnam positioning in 1965 because being called a communist was dangerous.

Corretta turned up at anti-war protests though. This speech came in 1967. He was assassinated a year later. The first time, I got any inkling of ANY of this was as a teen via the Rage song Wake up! "they murdered King, when he spoke out on Vietnam"

https://t.co/GAkmIKBEoP

I think a lot about my AP US History class and how much it did not teach me and the conversations I'd have with my HS teacher today who loved history but really only loved the history that told a fictional story of perpetual progress in service to white supremacy.

Two last thoughts cause this is doing numbers

1. Idc what you think about King, but you don't have right to pretend he was a Hallmark greeting card platitude

2. He was YOUNG. Of course his ideas evolved over time. Black people are denied their youth. It's important to recall

he was 26! When he emerged as a civil rights leader. He was trying to balance more radical wings of the movement with more conservative ones. Older folks who said "go slow" with younger ones who said "we're done waiting." In an era he couldn't just Google information.

I point out his youth because I think it gets papered over. I was an idiot at 26. He wasn't.