Twitter Thread by Sheryl Gay Stolberg

Sheryl Gay Stolberg
@SherylNYT

Some thoughts from yesterday. A thread:

I have spent 23 years at The @nytimes, seven of them covering Congress. I made my home at a desk in the press gallery off the Senate chamber. I felt privileged to do so. I consider the Capitol sacred space. 1/

I have been there for any number of historic moments. The funeral of Ronald Reagan, a few years after 9/11, when the building had to be cleared in a panic because the governor of Kentucky flew his plane too close to the Capitol and the police thought it was a terrorist attack. 2/

The confirmation of Supreme Court justices, including John Roberts, the chief. The swearing in of Nancy Pelosi as the first female Speaker of the House. Twice. The impeachment of President Trump. I still have my own handwritten tally of the vote to acquit. I bore witness. 3/

I know that building inside and out. I know (or once knew) where the bathtubs in the basement are. They were put there in to the 1800s because senators didn't have tubs in their own homes. The Senate historian once gave me a tour. 4/

I know where they keep the Lincoln catafalque – the funeral bier, or platform, that has held the casket of every person who has lain in state since Lincoln. It's housed behind a locked gate in a little alcove underneath the crypt, the circular room underneath the Rotunda. 5/

I know the artwork – my favorite modernist portrait of Shirley Chisholm, and the awful portrait of NASA astronauts that was painted into Constantino Brumidi's Italianate frescoes on the corridors of the first floor of the Senate side of the building. 6/

And more important I know the people. Great legislators like Ted Kennedy. Historic figures like John Lewis. Future presidents: Barack Obama and Joe Biden. But also the unnamed staffers, kitchen aides and janitors who make the place run. And the journalists, my colleagues. 7/

So to see that building defiled yesterday – by American citizens no less - was almost too much for me to bear. On 9/11 terrorists tried to take down the Capitol. They were thwarted by brave Americans who basically committed suicide in a field in Pennsylvania to prevent it. 8/

But yesterday American citizens managed to do what the terrorists could not. They invaded. And to see that happen at the instigation of an American president is something I am having a hard time wrapping my mind around. 9/

And I couldn't help thinking that if that were a Black Lives Matter march, those invaders smashing windows and scaling the walls of the Capitol would have been shot dead on the spot. 10/

America is strong. It has survived civil war and unrest before. We, all of us, need to fight to make it better than it was before, a place where all people – and especially the least of us, those who live in the margins, those who struggle – can be lifted up and respected. 11/

We have to be about building up, not tearing down. And we have to agree on what the truth is. 12/12