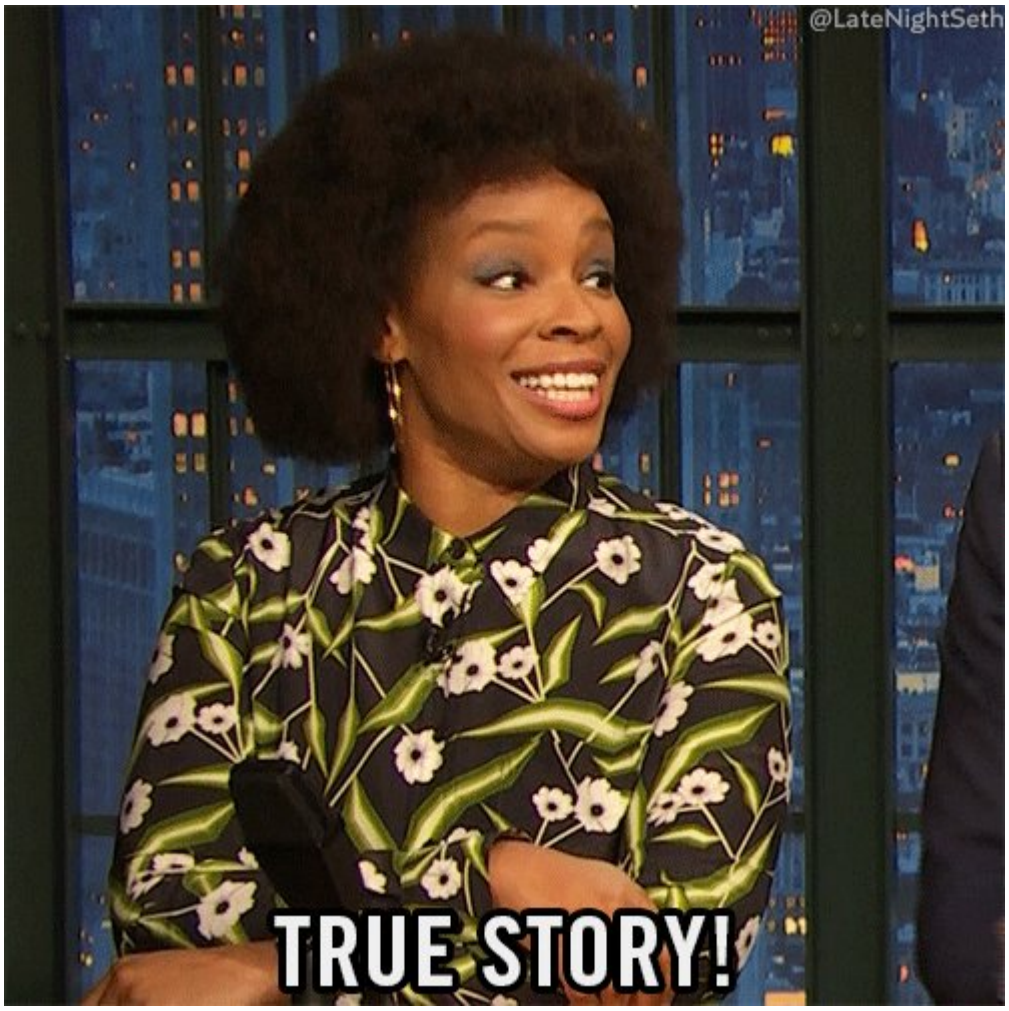
Twitter Thread by Axel Folio, PhD, Mad Marxist Beyond Thunderdome

Axel Folio, PhD, Mad Marxist Beyond Thunderdome
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THREAD: Lesson time about speaking up & allyship

My Dad once told me something that has stuck w/ me & applies to so many things (as those sorts of truths do). You see, I had this old beat up car that was handed down to me. I hated it. 1/25
#academictwitter #blacklivesmatter



We didn't have much, but I still got an old car handed down to me. I wasn't grateful. 2/



My parents worked so hard & made due w/ this little thing for years. When I was in college my Dad gifted me that car to get to work & school. It was an '84 Chevette. It was literally called a scooter. I hated it. I wasn't grateful. 3/

Not mine but it looked like this:



The car was white for starters.■After a short while the car really started to break down cause it was close to 20 yrs old. The inside light broke. The radio was broken. The AC was broken so it was stuck blowing heat at me year round. One windshield wiper didn't work. 4/



The antifreeze or window washer fluid would squirt away from the windshield cause that was, you guessed it, broken. There was a huge crack in the windshield. I had to replace the timing belt. The tires. The side of the car got hit in a parking lot & something (axel?) fell off
5/



and I literally couldn't turn the vehicle. That time was the first time it got towed. So my Dad's mechanic friend fixed it. Shortly after the thing kept breaking down. I was late for classes and sometimes for work a lot, lol. 6/



In-between saving for a new car and forking out money to keep that piece of shit going, I just neglected it. Inside and out. My Dad was helping out with things, but I guess there was a lesson in there for me. 7/

Ok, so here's the kicker. Dad noticed the condition of the car one day and how I was letting it deteriorate in ways it didn't need to be. It was filthy inside too. So, he finally said after he helped fix it up *again*, "you know Mary, if you don't appreciate the little you
8/

have and care for the things you have now, you'll never appreciate and care for the new things you have." This wasn't abt having me suffer. It was witnessing me be careless when I knew better. At the core was to value what I had and to take opportunities to care no matter
9/

my present circumstance. I think a lot of us who grew up poor get this. We have to stretch our pennies & keep things going for long. But on another level this is about where we are in life and how we choose to respond in certain moments. 10/



The layered meaning here is for those grad students who are scared. You feel like you are in a shitty chevette. You witness things breaking down around you and it's hard. You hate it. You do what you can to fix the cosmetic things or maybe fix things to just keep that
11/

Chevette going or, in other words, help maintain the status quo. You don't speak up abt change & revolution but abt keeping things the way they are. Oh wait, this seems to not be a story just for grad students. Sounds like it's for early career scholars, tenure-track folks, 12/

and beyond. We are always waiting to speak up later. "I'll speak up when I'm done grad school" turns into "I'll speak up when I get a job" turns into "I'll speak up when I get tenure" turns into "I'll speak up when I'm promoted" turns into "I'll speak up when I'm retired." 13/



Those moments to speak up pass us by. We don't speak from where we stand, in our moment.

What the hell does this have to do with an old chevette? A lot. We have to consider what is important and valuable in our lives and care for those things. To this extent, I am not 14/

talking about materials. Ok, I'm not literally talking about chevettes and cars now. I'm talking about caring and looking after not things but one another. We have prioritized *I* to the point that we will allow our friends, family, colleagues or strangers to suffer until
15/

we get on the ladder. That is not how allyship works. If you don't speak up now ("if you don't look after that chevette now Mary"), you never will (you won't look after your new things). Think of this when you think of racial justice and equality. 16/

So for those who are scared to speak up because it will cost you, imagine marginalized folks who speak up because they have no choice. It costs them. They have to use their voice and they do it knowing they will face consequences. This is what advocacy is.
17/

Decide what is important to you. What do you value? To watch academia (or any institution) become more broken means you will be in the driver seat of a shitty car no matter how many new cars you buy. You have to take care of things from where you are at.
18/

So, no, this isn't just for grad students. I hear grad students say they are scared all the time. Sure, you have all right to be. Academia is broken. I don't tell grads (particularly BIPOC) to stay any more unless this is really what they want. 19/

But grad students are not totally absolved from speaking out. Maybe bravery comes in numbers. You usually aren't alone. You also would not be *as* scared if more senior folk opened their mouths more often &spoke not just privately in meetings but openly & publicly. You too
20/

are usually not alone. Look, we all are worried abt job situations &putting food on the table. The thing is academia is tied to capitalism in such a way that stifles us from change. It dangles a carrot perpetually. I am still in favor of burning shit down & rebuilding
21/

something new together, but there are so few of us committed to that in reality. Lots of ppl agree in the abstract.
Back to grad students momentarily. I have heard you. Some of you are brave. The ones who I see speak out most often are BIPOC grad students.
22/

I think we need to consider why many BIPOC grad students are willing to take these risks to call out problems. What do they have that most wyte folks don't? Maybe it's bc they know struggles & have a lifetime of experience of speaking out. Some of us become activists
23/

as soon as we are old enough to interact in a wyte world. We have no choice. But courage isn't something you are born with. It's a choice.

This story was prompted by a memory of several scholars telling me they'd speak out *eventually.* Eventually has come and

gone.
24/

I've witnessed some become abusers &perpetuate horrors of academia in their own way.

Moral of the story: work w/ what you have &don't wait. Racial justice won't wait for tenure & if you can wait, you're one privileged mofo.

Also don't buy a wyte Chevette.

Thanks Dad!❤■ 25/25

