Twitter Thread by Fortytwo_to_4and2

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@F4and2

Ugh. I’m going to struggle with this. Need to contemplate after coffee. Smokey and the Bandit was great. I think if I’m to blame The Dukes, I gotta blame Coy and Vance. Need coffee to be sure.

@johnroderick After some coffee induced thought, I have to agree. What is causing the decline of our nation? I think it comes down to a several things: race relations, corruption in government, and the presumed wisdom/righteousness of rural America. We'll start with the last one first.

@johnroderick The only characters in DoH that were not corrupt, were always shown to be moral and won in the end were the rural Duke family. It's important to note, only one of them had travelled outside of Hazzard County when the show started, Luke. He was a Marine.

@johnroderick Yet despite this lack of worldly ways, the Dukes always came out on top. This set the stage for the mythology of the righteousness of rural America. It's values would always see them through. You see this manifest today in the distrust of city-dwellers and foreigners.

@johnroderick The values of rural America trumps all. (No pun intended.) Now we need to address corruption in government. Hazzard County was rife with corruption and nepotism. The county commissioner was related by marriage to the sheriff. When Enos left for L.A, his replacement was the cousin

@johnroderick of the county commissioner. Nepotism was normalized. Corruption was as well. Boss Hogg (played by the magnificent Sorrell Brooks) was always skimming funds and generating cons using his position to enhance his personal wealth. This normalized both practices by creating a

@johnroderick perception that this is how people in power act. When elected leaders use their position to short stocks, sell their homes to industry leaders they regulate, appoint in-laws to important positions, etc. this has become normalize behavior thanks in part to the DoH.

@johnroderick Finally, let's get to race-relations. DoH didn't treat POC any differently than many other TV shows of the era, such as Starsky and Hutch or CHiPs. In fact, the only semi-competent law enforcement officer in the state of Georgia, as portrayed by DoH was Sheriff Little of

@johnroderick Chickasaw County (played by the indominable
Don Pedro Colley). No the real problem was the blatant racism inherent in the show's main character, the General Lee. The car was great. A 440ci 68 or 69 Dodge Charger, with turbine wheels, the General was a siren song to youngsters

@johnroderick of all colors. Unfortunately, between the name and the battle flag of the army of northern Virginia, the main character helped to normalize symbols of hate. It provided the thin veneer legitimacy to rhetorical arguments such as "heritage not hate," which totally ignore that

@johnroderick the heritage was one of hate. Like the Civil War being over state's rights. Yes, it was, the main right being fought over the was the "right" to keep human beings in bondage. I digress. The unfortunate byproduct is the normalization of the iconography of hate, and enabling

@johnroderick politicians to use "dog whistles" to mobilize hate groups, while being in polite company. After a while, it will bleed over into the normal political discourse and the dog whistles become train horns.

@johnroderick Contrast this with Smokey and the Bandit. The Bandit is in Atlanta. He's a city-dweller. He has travelled throughout the South, at the very least, as a truck driver. He has a broadened view of the world than the Duke family does. Further, the system isn't corrupt.

@johnroderick There is a corrupt sheriff, but for the most part "the law" is chasing down a serial speeder, who is driving recklessly throughout the southeastern US. Even better, the Bandit, as his name implies, knows he's an outlaw and at one point is ready to accept his punishment for

@johnroderick violating societal norms. While the battle flag of the army of northern Virginia does make several appearances in the film, it is not a personal icon of the main character, nor the main character itself. Finally, let's talk about Cledus Snow (played by the delightful Jerry Reed).

@johnroderick In the post desegregation south, Cledus not only patronized a black-owned business, it is obvious that he is a regular there. There was definitely some mid-70s virtue signaling in that scene.

@johnroderick In summary, I have to agree. DoH took the worst aspects of Smokey and the Bandit, amplified them, and put them on prime time TV. Unfortunately, I cannot blame Coy and Vance for the decline of the nation, but I will blame them for ruining my childhood, just like Indiana Jones 4.