Twitter Thread by Jennifer Mercieca



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I can't find the clip from yesterday where I tried a new approach to debunking Trump's big lie conspiracy about the election, but I'm going to try to write it in here. (thread)

The problem with trying to debunk conspiracy is that (as I've said so many times) it's a "self-sealing narrative." Meaning no evidence is allowed to count against it. You can neither prove or disprove conspiracy.

If you say "there's no proof," they say "they hide it."

If you say "the evidence disproves," they say "they made that up."

Of course motivated reasoning & confirmation bias are at work here. What's worse, conspiracy makes heroes out of the accuser and the believers--they aren't stooges, they know the truth, etc.

So I said all of that in this interview and then they asked what I would say to students about this in 10 years. I said in 10 years it will be easier to talk about then it is now. Now is hard because no one knows for sure. BUT, what if we used Occam's Razor?

(Occam's Razor says that the simplest solution is usually the correct one). Conspiracy is like this guy, right?

Trump's election fraud conspiracy asks you to believe there was a coordinated plot among states, Governors, Secretaries of State, courts, voting machines, and the everyday Americans who run elections. Many of these supposed plotters are Republicans, Trump supporters & appointees.

Trump lost 60 court cases about this alleged plot because there was no evidence to support it. But Trump asks you to believe that those 60 courts were in on it too. Including Republican courts. Including the Supreme Court, which has three Trump appointees on it.

That's a lot going on, a lot of pieces to put together into one giant conspiracy. How did they coordinate? Why wasn't the plot leaked with so many knowing about it?

Isn't there a simpler answer? There is. Trump lost.

It is far more likely that Trump just lost. Trump is an unpopular president. He's never had more than 44% approval. He's the least popular person to run for president in US history, isn't it more likely that he just LOST? It is.

Occam's Razor would say it's more likely that "Trump lost because he's unpopular & always has been" is true than that the "Trump election conspiracy" is true.

This way of framing it might cause some cognitive dissonance in conspiracy supporters.

Their brains will fight back--we reason much more like lawyers building a case to prove what we think is true than as scientists open to believing what the facts lead us to believe is true.

They will think: "the plot is real, I know it!" "the Dems cheated, I know because they're cheaters!" "Everyone loves Trump!" And, etc.

But, they don't know it. Occam's Razor--did all these Republicans throughout the US really get together with the Dems to do this? Really? What about the regular Americans who run elections? How did they coordinate to do this? Does that really seem likely? The Republican judges?

Trump's conspiracy has offered no proof. Instead he offers a toxic mix of sleight of hand, conspiracy, suspicion, emotion, & distraction. It makes people who want to believe, believe.

Perhaps Occam's Razor can cause enough doubt that his followers wonder if they should believe.

(I'm not sure if the reporter appreciated this explanation, she stopped the interview right after and didn't engage with anything that I said. ■■)

Oh, and remember you can't disprove conspiracy. So this approach is "meta"--I can't disprove that the conspiracy happened, but what I can do is introduce doubt that causes the believer to question the reasonableness of their belief. They may then abandon their belief.