Twitter Thread by Ally Fogg

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You know how occasionally you get glimpses of just how casually racist the world we grew up in really was & you get like a vertiginous lurch in your stomach? Heads up, this thread does need a content warning.

Background, I worship The Kinks & rate Ray Davies as one of THE great songwriters, but they're ruined for me by one song - 'Apeman' - a cod calypso in a comedy Caribbean accent with the chorus "wanna live like an apeman" & I thought it was about the most racist pop hit ever >

Well last night I happened upon a 1971 song by Harry Nilsson, a white man from New York, called 'Coconut,' which is another cod calypso etc in an even more offensive comedy accent ("put me lime in de coconut" etc.) I was appalled enough by it, but then >

I looked it up on Youtube & there's an old promo performance video of him doing the song. And it's just him and a guitarist and they are wearing actual monkey suits. I'm not going to paste the vid here because it is genuinely horrible.

But the moral of the story is, people my age (54) & older, we grew up SWIMMING in this stuff. Surrounded by it. People talk about the horrors of the Black & White Minstrel show as if it was in isolation. The truth is our culture, from films & TV, drama to sitcom >

> stand-up comedy to pop music was riddled with horrific racism. When people in 2020/21 lose their shit about anti-racist activism, decolonisation & all the rest of it, this is what they are defending. This is where we started & if anyone thinks we're past that point, >

Bear in mind that I didn't just grow up thinking racist pop ditties were normal & harmless, I also grew up with a media that told me this was fine, it was just a joke, & anyone complaining about it had no sense of humour, kicking up a fuss about nothing. As years went by >

they rephrased it as "political correctness gone mad" or "woke snowflakes" but their argument & their thinking has not shifted one millimetre. When all is said & done, they are still defending a white guy dressing in a monkey suit to sing calypsos.

Just wanted to get all that off my chest. As you were.