Twitter Thread by Michael W. Twitty



Michael W. Twitty
@KosherSoul

Hi Twitter I can't sleep again. I need to ramble and rumble myself into passive aggressively sleeping.
The past 12 years haven't been easy for many but for those of us who are Jews of African descent in America it has been a trial by ordeal.

When Obama was president I remember when 1 of my students expressed a sense of fear of him. Their parents compared him to Hitler, wary of his passionate speeches &ability to arouse the masses. I immediately balked but knew where there was this sentiment there were others.

I lost a friend in Eva when she called him a Muslim born in Kenya. She also splashed a kid in the face with water...a lot...and I was like that's not cool but I also realized that would be my ass if I did that.

A parent I did not know threw a Karen moment at me before I knew what they were for wearing an Obama kippa...I took it off after a mild talking to...and I put it right back on after he won.

Then Trump came on the waves of birtherism. People we thought we knew became more and more hostile, untrustworthy and mean. We saw our community struggle between 2/3 mostly ok with us and 1/3 not. Many of us stopped going to the shuls we always had.

We were constantly given loyalty tests. The outside world became woke. We ft empowered to say new things. We were also textbook intersectional. We were asked to fit into boxes we did not and live in bubbles we never wanted. We were liberated and enslaved simultaneously

My heart breaks when I consider the abuse we have incurred on this site.

Patrilineal descent, conversion, matrilineal descent...none of it mattered. Gatekeepers rose up demanding our papers. We now had to be checked in, approved, our microphones taken...we were called imposters.

Its shameful when I feel most Jewish when I'm called a pervert and told to go back to Africa or Israel by a Trumper with a pic of Andrew Jackson wearing a Maga hat as his image....

I would get constant DMs demanding I insert myself into the conversation over Israel and Israeli Arabs or Palestinians.

I got told I wanted to be anything but Black because I wore a kippa and tallit in a picture...

I couldn't win but I smiled just the same. Inside I was dying.

I tossed a few pages of the siddur around, prayed in the park, pretended I was on some island begging to be rescued.

Friends faced more racism in traditional shuls...I went to a seder in Brentwood in LA where politics came up. I didn't know how to feel when I left.

Seeing my new friends torn to pieces on here for four years...is something I have been loathe to talk about.

Recently Rav Ovadia Yosef's words were used against me as if to say, "Yeah but look what you're a part of..." classic antisemitism....being made to answer for all Jews

And at the same time a sparse minority of Black folks needling me for being Jewish as if it made me suspicious, a double agent...
Sandwiched with a so called brotha who harassed me for wearing my historical clothing at Colonial Williamsburg accusing me of being

A fantasy for "white suburban housewives in Charlotte."

Why Charlotte? I dunno. I had to remind myself that the block button is a necessary positive.

Plus, I'm not known for being a fantasy for women...

Jewishness is not solely grounded in faith. Blackness is not solely grounded in color. Both represent a peoplehood, a set of underlying understandings. Something more complicated than 240 characters.

We have been asked to brave an era between acts of violence committed towards Jews and Jews in authority in an administration that has acted in abominable ways. We are Warnock and Ossoff and we are Miller and Owens...we are never far from blessings and curses. We worry. We pray.

A so called Black Hebrew creates havoc in a store and people are shot. A schoolboard is taken over in New York, landlords confess they want to take advantage of the desire to self segregate, people call Farrakhan a leftist...nice try....a man brings a machete into a rabbis home

And yet we still do the work. We still represent. We still speak up. We ignore the voices that don't want us to have a voice.

We know why we are here. We know the news stories will keep coming&the flashpoints,we know we are more visible than ever before&it comes with risks

Ask me how I felt when Ruth Bader Ginsburg died or John Lewis or Larry Kramer....
The world I live in was shaped by people like me...who gave a damn.

Complex, sometimes problematic, but gave a damn. Lived for something. Had a path...a plan.

It's hard to make those contributions when people fuck with you and try to delegitimize you.

Some of my friends have experienced deep clinical depression and anguish because they had their identity challenged by people who thought they were soldiers but were really cowards.

This daily existence takes a lot from you.

I remember being called a Black faggot three blocks from Union Station the day before the Trump inauguration.

Or being harassed for ten minutes on the DC subway while saying tehillim by a fringe group of white nationalist Christians.

But I don't want to give up. Not because of American exceptionalism...not my theory of choice...but I do believe this is the only place I'm possible..by circumstance....and I want to...I have to make my existence work...while at the same time being awake bc I am tense and angry

My only hope is that I belong to a militia of the spirit, people called to a tradition of empathy and concern, compassion and moral suasion, self respect and cultural and spiritual confidence. Those willing to cede ego for healing, choosing caution over power

I want you to know that my struggle is not over who I am or why I am...it is over whether or not I want to engage with those for whom my who or what or why is a challenge to their definition of American. How many culture wars will it take to remind them they are wrong?

I see on here and other social media people who are grieving&struggling& trying to cope. I know these traumas are graying us, stressing us, killing us, sending us into nihilistic spirals of apathy and despair. I see you hurting. I see you shaking your heads.

And in this moment I am so proud to be part of a family of people that defines itself by gratitude for the struggle to obtain the blessings of this life and this world and a family of people who is defined by our consistent demand that America live up to its ideals.

Every trip I made to Africa I got to see part of what makes us an incredible Diaspora. I got part of the source code. I've been able to see and pray in Yerushalayim/Al-Quds. I've traveled the American South looking for reconnection and redemption. I've more work to do.

To all those who feel marginalized& abandoned...who have anguished over babies in cages and women who have been sterilized against their will or the label of shithole countries&transgender service members told their sacrifice wasn't= or those who weep over a ravaged environment

Lets welcome a new day together. Let's stop the dread as much as we can and pull out our blankets and drink warm and comforting cups of resistance and watch the sunrise together. We made it, we made this moment, with a million different pieces of human. We lived through

We lived through a cultural apocalypse but we made it to tomorrow. The aftermath of an apocalypse isn't picking up the pieces, it's seeing what was revealed about us. Apocalypse means to uncover or reveal. The soul searching is in what we've learned not just what we lived.

I am not here because of the weak, I am here because of the strong.

I am here because of tikkun olam...the repair of the world...and tzedek..justice..
I am here because of a■é, ìwa& itutu...creative fire, good character& the power of the cool.

I'm here bc life is with people.

I have to try to sleep. Good morning.