

I asked to speak today to tell you I want city council, like it does in many other municipalities to have more control over how the police budget is allocated. Right now, if the police budget is cut, TPS can decide to retaliate by cutting something good like the RIDE program while they continue to pour money into big boy toys like paramilitary gear for example. This is too much control for the police to have of a QUARTER the city's spending in this climate. It's our money, we deserve to control it's investment.

To best make this point, I really struggled choosing between statistics and anecdotes with only a few minutes to speak. I've opted for anecdotes because you all already have access to the statistics that show the racism, the violence and ineffectiveness of the Toronto Police. My anecdotes you won't hear anywhere else and hopefully my personal experience will mean something to you as a citizen of your city.

I'm A White Canadian English as a first language woman. I'm queer but I don't look it. I am the one rung down on the privilege ladder from a white man. I need you to listen to these stories and imagine how folks feel one or two or five rings down from me. Because that hierarchy is real.

At 20 years old, I learned the police are not here for women. They're here for work. Even female officers because in this story, two female and two male officer attended. So here it is: 2am, studying for finals and I heard a girl crying and screaming while her boyfriend threw beer bottles at her in the street below my second story window. I called the police like anyone would, thinking that they would help. I went down and diffused the situation and sat with her while we waited for police to arrive. While we waited, a strange man pulled up and started trying to convince the girl to get in his car with him. This man, I assure you, was a predator. When the police arrived, they asked HIM who he was. He lied and said he knew her. The police believed him without any ID or verification, without asking the women present. I had to scream at him MYSELF, in the presence of 4 officers to get him to leave the scene. I guess the officers all thought this was too complicated for them, because they all left and I sat with her, convinced her to call her family and waited, in the street at 2 am surrounded by broken glass until her dad came, hoping the whole time that her boyfriend wouldn't come back. She was 16 and I was 20. Who did they serve that day? Who did they protect? I'm just gonna give us a few seconds of silence, and I want each of you to think about all the things that could have happened to that 16 year old drunk girl if I hadn't been awake at 2am studying for finals.

I'm not done! I have 3 friends with severe epilepsy. They have all been violently restrained and arrested just after seizures because police are ill-equipped (this is me being generous, by the way) to de-escalate and create a safe space for someone post-seizure. These friends have been having seizures around their family, partners and friends for years and their loved ones don't feel that their lives are in danger, but for whatever reason, the police, in their flack jackets and steel toed boots do? Regis Korchinski-Paquet was epileptic and my neighbor. I believe, like the police let my friends down, they let my neighbor down in her time of need. Let's all take a

second to say her name - Regis Korchinski-Paquet. Before the police made Regis into a victim, she was a person. Before the police turned her into a statistic, she was a person. Say her name.

On Monday, a young woman of color was fainting in the lobby of my building. I did not call for help, because I don't know if a fall from her floor is fatal. I took her home, I am glad her roommate was there and was capable of looking after her because the thought of having to call for a wellness check made me sick.

Here's one about the best cop I know. My uncle, good dad, a pillar in his community, recently retired Peel Regional Police Sargent, Raymond Ward. The best cop I know is so committed to maintaining the status quo that he completely cut me out of his life after I unapologetically attended the march for Regis. His wife, a child and youth worker with Waterloo District Catholic School board threatened me in response to my social media posts questioning police conduct. If these are the good ones, my family, the people who have a personal investment in me, how bad are the bad apples?

Have you ever bought a Swiss Army knife? You had really high hopes, maybe you spent more than you planned to to get the best one. Did it actually perform any of the tasks you used it for as well as a purpose-built tool? Did you have buyer's remorse? Well, like a Swiss Army knife, while the Toronto Police look nifty, they're are pretty much useless for every task you point them at, and I am not the only one with buyer's remorse.

We know that incrementalism like that presented today does nothing. I call on you, officials of the city of Toronto to take control on behalf of your constituents. Make systemic change to attack a systemic problem. Defund an inept, corrupt, colonialist body and reinvest that money in housing your homeless, reaching out to your restless youth, making transit affordable and decriminalizing poverty. Attack the roots of and reasons for crime. Investment in compassion, not incarceration. Pay for crisis and mental health workers. Pay for non-violent intervention. Pay for people, not police.

And if you think this is radical, if you think I'm radical, I wasn't until the police killed my neighbor. I was complacent, complicit, and quietly avoidant, a good Canadian. Until the police killed my neighbor. Now I'm radical. You can thank yourselves for that.