

# Black Tea Episode 4

## INTRO

**Mel:** Welcome to this week's episode of Black Tea and before we started, we wanted to acknowledge the incredibly tragic shooting of Jacob Blake and Kenosha, Wisconsin. We're going to get into it more in our tea segment. Um, but this is just contributing to just endless unrest regarding, you know, the treatment of black lives.

**Dalton:** Yeah. You, you nailed it now. I mean, I'm tired. I'm numb. I'm angry. I'm frustrated. I'm all of that. I'm outraged, you know, and, uh, it's just this, uh, police brutality, 24 seven anti-black racism, 24 seven, uh, cycle. It needs to stop. It needs to end ASAP like yesterday, you know? You know, what's interesting, Mel, you know, whenever we plan episodes of the show, um, you know, we're always going to dig into timely topical issues as they relate to sort of, you know, race, class, gender.

Issues around sexuality, all of the above. And you know, but sometimes, you know, admittedly, we're looking for a little bit of emotional relief, you know, some things that feel a little lighter. And, um, and I think we kind of found that with Ryan McMahon, the comedian we have, uh, on today's show, but you know, nothing could have prepared us for this daily news cycle that involves black death, black misery.

And it's just, it's extremely frustrating. You know, as, as your cohost extremely frustrating.

**Mel:** Yeah. Yes. And absolutely. And I'm glad that we have our tea segment to really explore these issues because as frustrating and as maddening as this is continues to be important to discuss, um, you know, the ramifications and the pain of anti-black racism.

## INTERVIEW

**Mel:** Comedy and satire. They're excellent for political discourse and critique. And today we really wanted to get into, you know, the responsibility and the weight of racialized comedians, um, telling their stories in the space, how the space has been, you know, accepting or not accepting to those voices. So I'm excited to have a discussion with Ryan McMahon about it.

**Dalton:** If you don't know who Ryan McMahon is, perhaps you've been living under a rock on the, in a bunker. Like most of us have during COVID-19 sadly, and unfortunately, but Ryan McMahon is an Anishinaabi creative, that jokes, talks yells and writes for a living. Now in 2012 McMahon became the first native comedian ever to record a one hour mainstream comedy special.

Since then he's recorded four other specials. And today he is one of the most sought after indigenous creatives on the planet. Now, McMahon is a graduate of the second city conservatory in Toronto and his storytelling comedy stylist, irreverent. And boundary

pushing and his podcast and media work has literally has audience of millions audience of millions and his writing.

Not only challenges the status quo, but it forces readers to think about the big questions of our times through a uniquely indigenous lens. Ryan McMahon, how goes it with you today?

**Ryan:** I keep it average. I keep it right in the middle. So, so it's not, it's not, it's not terrible, but it's not as good as it could be.

And that's sort of for anyone listening, needing life advice, uh, that's the way to keep yourself safe from disappointment and anger and frustration. So. I keep it average.

**Dalton:** Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, I'm kind of like that myself. I always tell, you know, just friends, colleagues, like I don't, I try not to get too high on stuff and not too low, kind of stay in the middle, like equilibrium, you know, like just keep it, keep it G you know,

**Ryan:** like I get more excited about a good sandwich than I do about like a professional opportunity where like, Yeah.

You know, when you grill a sandwich, like if you have like a like grilled cheese and, and, and just the way the cheese melts perfectly, I'm like life is so good right now. And, uh, you could be fielding offers from like publishers or something like that. And it's like, Oh, this is gonna suck. So.

Uh, these days, I get more excited about sandwiches than anything.

**Dalton:** You know what I mean? That sounds like very COVID-19 ESC, this type of narrative, you know, like, like, like let's get into it. I mean, we got to talk about like, COVID-19, you know, the pandemic it's, it's great. I mean, our expectations for a lot of things are, are lowered, greatly lowered, you know?

And, uh, this pandemic it's grim, it's scary. It's unpredictable. And, um, you know, like, like myself, like I don't want to go near anybody. You know what I'm saying? Besides my wife and kids, of course. Uh, so, you know, so as a comedian and, uh, and also, you know, sort of King of all media, you know, this idea of going to live shows, concerts, comedy shows, this feels a lot different, you know what I mean?

So I wanted to sort of talk to you about that, Ryan, like, I would imagine, like, let's say I go to, you know, like, you know, Yuk Yuk's is just like, yeah. Booing, Heckling like it's just not the same through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Like this is not the same effect. Like how do you, so can you let us know what's going on in the comedy industry as far as live performance and its impacts on you?

**Ryan:** Well first of all, we have to identify what's wrong in your life that you're going to Yuk Yuk's and heckling comics. That's that's, that's some mean \*Bleep\* right there, but, um, who knows what happens next? Um, and you know, I, I wrote a new live show for 2020. Yeah. I had full intentions of, of sort of, uh, Leaving some of this media work behind the podcasting and whatnot to get back into comedy full time.

I was, I was really starting to feel the weight of a lot of the work that I was doing. You know, it's, it's, it gets heavy and, and it's hard to leave that stuff behind. So I wanted to get back into comedy. I booked a tour in 2020, uh, fall of 2020 and winter of 2021. And slowly by, I guess it was the beginning of April.

That's when the cancellations started happening in the meetings and the phone calls with the theaters and universities and places that were booking me, um, slowly started canceling. And so it feels like that's, that's a lifetime away. It feels like that might not happen for a very long time. And, you know, even if, even if, you know, they said, well, Hey, you know, everyone could come back.

I don't know if I want to. You know, bring my audiences into danger and potentially have an outbreak, uh, happen in, in a show of mine. So it's, it's one of those things. I think it's, we're a long way away from knowing what's next for us.

**Mel:** I just wanted to kind of shift and talk about, cause you mentioned the weight of your work, cause the space that you occupy is so unique here.

Um, not only are you comedian, but you do such strong activism work and you bring awareness to just so many issues in your communities. So, I mean, comedy is obviously an important part of social commentary, but is there a right way to joke about injustice? Is that what you're trying to just stick to comedy now?

Are you marrying the two? Like I just sorta wanted to talk about your work being on the axis of comedy and activism for such a long time.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Well, that's, that's a good question. And it's really one that I, I guess I try to keep at the front of the line for myself is, you know, what is the. What is the value of the work that I'm, I'm putting out.

And, um, my, my hero who was, you know, sort of the, the real, one of the real trailblazers for indigenous comedy, um, Charlie Hill, he was an Oneida comedian born and raised down in Wisconsin who went to Hollywood, who was actually on Richard Pryor's, uh, sketch comedy show that I think prior had it for five or six episodes, then they they canceled them.

Um, but prior him, Richard Pryor himself said, you know, brother, Charlie Hill is one of the, one of the best comedians to ever live because Charlie really did that work in, in, in the 70's, and he did that work. I'm where native people weren't allowed in bars. And you know, all of this other stuff for him to find a, uh, a stage to perform on.

It was, it was a lot of work, but he stuck with it. And, um, He, I toured with him through, uh, 2010 to 2014 just before he died. And, um, he became not only like a mentor and a hero of mine, but kind of like a grandpa figure. So we would sit and chat. And the one thing that he said to me once that I'll never forget, that I try to share with, with everyone is comedy is too important not to be taken seriously and and I just, I liked that a lot. And for me, those comics that really say something, uh, for better or worse, um, when we can make a list of them that are, that have moved their work this way, it's, it's important to kind of do that dance with activism and, and laughter and, and, um, commentary, because, you know, if, if you can

catch, if I can catch 400 or 500 people in a soft seat theater on a Friday night and change their mind about an indigenous issue by maybe being self deprecating or being reflective of, of the hypocrisy between our big white daddy, Justin Trudeau, and what's actually happening in communities like.

If we, if I can do that, if just for an hour, maybe people leave that theater a little bit more informed. Um, and you have a chance to say something and I've had miserable sets at Just for Laughs and really high profile, you know, opportunities where I've gone in with my \*Bleep\*, and, and knowing no one gets it. And, you know, the, the three comics before me were all making jokes about getting high with their cat, uh, eating macaroni and cheese, uh, off the stove top.

And I'm sitting there talking about, you know, cops killing indigenous youth and, um, I'm not a hero by the way, you know, comedy. I mean, I have soft hands. I type for a living, you know, it's a weird job where you do actually have an opportunity to, to, to try to move people towards change.

**Dalton:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, yeah. let's get into that, this idea of, um, sort of, you know, like in, in, in certainly in the black community, um, you know, we look at comedy, you know, a little bit as it is a little bit of a tool for survival, right? Like if we don't, um, look at, uh, we see, you know, the Anti-black racism, police brutality, um, pretty much weekly.

And, um, so if we don't find something to laugh about, you know, as, as a black or, or native citizen in this country, it's like, it will be crying all day, you know, uh, given the BS, we have to endure daily. So, so I wanted to talk to you just, yeah. Just about that. Do you feel like, um, yeah. Is this some of the.

The, you know, the comedy, the jokes, like you, you have to do it out of choice or necessity. Like, do you feel that incredible responsibility, your community? And like, can we talk a little bit more about that?

**Ryan:** Yeah. I mean, first of all, I think the elephant in the room is that I look white. And so for me, what I talk about through my comedy is very different than like a, an indigenous person that, that fits the stereotype with the braids or the cheekbones.

So, you know what I'm joking about isn't necessarily, always about survival. I mean, I feel. The discrimination in a different way. I can't tell you what racism feels like because I've never been chased out of a grocery store, cops don't card me, uh, because I look like their nephew. The first joke I ever told him TV, uh, on CBC was, um, they only gave me this comedy special because I look white.

And so my experience of, of, you know, writing for survival or, or joking for survival, Um, it would be disingenuous for me to say that, however, yeah, of course my family, I mean, many of my family members are Brown and, and do face those things. And so, so I do feel a responsibility to talk about those things, but I really have to be careful to talk about them in a very specific

way and like, you've, you've alluded to you. They do say laughter is medicine. And I certainly understand why they say that. And I think any diverse communities that have faced, uh, oppression historically, or, or in contemporary modern, uh, reality certainly understands. Why we joke at some of the dark \*Bleep\*, right?

Like I'll speak for indigenous comics. We go right to the darkest. We go, we go directly to some of the, some of the, some of the darkest \*Bleep\* that you might not ever say in public, you know, just to regular citizens in line at Starbucks, but in the context of comedy and when you're really providing the nuance and the complexity of these.

These, these situations that, that, that we face in our lives, you can get into that dark stuff. And it does make people laugh because people recognize themselves in the truth. And, um, another one of my favorite comics, Paul Mooney said, that's what laughter is. Laughter is the nervous energy being released when you recognize the truth.

And so, so I, I just love the idea that, that there is a place in the universe where we can still try to tell the truth because our politicians aren't telling us the truth, right? Our parents lie to us our whole lives to keep us in air quotes, safe. Um, you know, Obama tells us we can be the change we want to see in the world.

Everyone's Bull \*Bleep\* us, but when you walk into a dark room to listen to a comic, share their truth, um, I think it's valuable. I still think it's valuable. I also refute this idea as, as comedy or laughter is medicine. Um, and I, I refute the idea. Laughter is medicine specifically from an indigenous context? Um, just because laughter is, is also

So much more than that it's inherent in our worldview. And so we have this, um, w we have these, these characters, these figures that we have, you would call or categorize as trickster. we would maybe call them, Weesageechak, if you were Cree, you'd call them Naniboujou, If you were Anishinaabe and those characters, those, those tricksters in our stories in, um, in our belief system and our worldview are there to teach us something. And so by saying, laughter is medicine. It kind of, it kind of takes something from us. It doesn't, it doesn't, um, articulate our actual worldview and, and where we belong in this, this world through our stories.

And so I'm always quick to point out. Yeah, laughter is medicine. Uh, but it's also, you know, so much more, um, And when you start to connect the Ojibwe language for me as an Ojibwe person, you can go into our language and really start to look at the way our language supports our worldview and how laughter is sort of sprinkled throughout.

You know, you'll go to a funeral. In Indian country and the person doing the eulogy is kind of doing a roast. You know, um, the person doing a eulogy is, is there to make everyone laugh. Um, and you know, we believe that at our funerals, it's, it's, it's from the time the person passes to the, to the fourth evening after we give ourselves that four days to tell stories, to, to share memories, to grieve. And to, to honor that person, um, and you'll sit around for those four days and you you'll you'll have never laughed harder. And so laughter plays a big part in our, our everyday lives outside of the context of comedy as well.

**Mel:** I feel like you sort of touched on it before, but sort of, you know, racialized people making their way into the comedy space and sort of destabilizing the power of stereotypes that other people used and turning them around. But do you think that that has actually happened. Like I know that there's been so many issues with, um, well apologizing for doing black face people, still apologizing for offensive jokes.

Like, are we there in comedy yet where it's an equal playing field.

**Ryan:** Mel's coming on with the fire this morning. She's like, you know what, McMahon, I'm gonna take this deeper. Um, and I appreciate the question cause you know, I think if you put a hundred racialized comics in a room and you ask them about the responsibility, they felt not just articulating their own experiences, but their community's experience.

Of course you would get a diverse, you you'd get all kinds of different answers. You'd get all kinds of different opinions and whether, whether they can even do that or not. And I'm, but I'm of the opinion that, yeah, I think, I think, I think comedy is a real change maker and I think that historically, you know, comedy comedy has been used as a tool for change, uh, by racialized people.

And, um, I mean, you can, you can make the list of, of comics that. That have really put these issues on the map. And there's a shortlist of the best comics in the world. And most of them are black comics, right. And they've, they've used their, their platform. And, and again, you know, we can't just sing the praise.

Cause a lot of these comics have also failed in, in, in some ways, but they've used that platform as a, as a chance and an opportunity to say something. And so I, I don't know that we're there yet. I think that audiences, especially today are really split. There's this? I mean, it's playing out in partisan politics through North America.

It's playing out in workplaces. It's playing out all over where issues are, are, are left and right. You know, there's this, there, there's this split now where. We either like this comic or don't we don't listen to everything the comic says, but if a comic says a word that in air quotes triggers us, we throw the comic out.

We don't want to hear the rest of the set.

**Mel:** Comedy has become pretty inherently political.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah. And, and, and so, I don't know. I mean, I it's it's, um, It's a really interesting space. It feels dangerous, which is, I think for comedy, because it's really exciting, you know, it's a challenge to go in there and ensure that you do a good job.

Um, and therefore, you know, the stakes are higher and I know for me when the state or high, I, I really dial in. Um, and, and I get, I feel a lot sharper, um, then save versus like an open mic where there's 11 people there. And no one's really listening. We can point to the fact that, you know, when you, when you look at a lineup at, Just for Laughs or, or, or other festivals, you know, Sometimes they'll have like, Hey, here's the, here's the diversity night.

And you're just like put me in a lineup with everyone else. And if I, if I suck, I won't come back. But if you, if you actually give me a real shot, maybe I'm funny. Maybe, maybe I'm I'm, I'm I'm native, but I'm, I'm also funny. And I don't have to, I don't have to be one or the other. And I think, I think for, for any young comics, any, uh, young racialized comics listening to this, really, please just fight against that, uh, that space where, you know, they're clearly trying to create these diversity check boxes at festivals or, or nights, um, in the city where you perform and just be a comic that happens to be native or, or black or, or

Or East Indian, whichever community you're repping, just fight against that and fight against the need to, to put that forward first. I mean, if I look back at the first three or four years of my standup comedy career, I thought I was Chris Rock. I thought I was ready for HBO, man. Did I think I was good. Um, but I look back at some of that stuff.

It's like, you are an insecure. Angry person trying to tell everybody all the things all the time. And I'm happy that my comedy has evolved from that space.

**Mel:** Do you think that like a mainstream audience that actually helps break down the stereotypes that they formerly had about groups when it's quote unquote like funny or like, cause that there's such a line between like laughing at racism or being racist.

**Ryan:** yeah, I think it does. I think it can. I think it depends on the comic. I think there's a lot of really smart comics out there that know exactly what they're doing and set up jokes in a certain way. To antagonize or to, to draw people into their work and then, you know, can write around the uncomfortable space, um, to bring people through to the other side.

Um, but I, I also think that there's a lot of dumb dumb s out there that think they're funny and write jokes and want to be edgy and, you know, really, really say something, but then end up. Just, just leaning on those stereotypes and those tropes and, and just reinforce all, all, all the shit people think about us.

And that's the danger and, and, and, uh, Paul Mooney wrote a book called black is the new white, and, and he talks about creating the Def Comedy Jam and, you know, sort of, sort of. Uh, popularizing the N word on TV for, for, for black comics. Cause he had used it so much and you know, he had, um, he was friends with red Fox and was the head writer of the Richard Pryor show and the Chappelle show.

And. In his book, as he's reflecting, he said that maybe a lot of Def Comedy Jam is partly responsible for the racism in America, because, because a lot of that comedy just reinforced stereotypes and, and for native comics that are, are finally getting shine, uh, throughout North America, I share that chapter of that book with them all the time.

Just so as to say like, Hey man, if, if we're exploiting ourselves, Through comedy and you're sitting there teaching people how to hate us. It's it's a step backward. I think it can create change, but I think it really depends on the comics and their perspective on, on the work they're doing.

**Dalton:** So, Ryan, yeah.

I want to talk a bit about, um, you know, this idea of a, you know, cancel culture, you know, and, um, and you know, when we look at the art form or genre of comedy, I mean, it's, it's essentially all about, you know, pushing the envelope, pushing boundaries. Asking super tough questions and, you know, not nothing is really taboo like that.

So, you know, when I hear that, you know, it's interesting cause like Dave Chappelle, you know, some of my favorite comedians of today and then others that are just making a ton of money, Kevin Hart, like they've all been, you know, gotten, they'll start in many cancellations over things, tied to sexuality, the trans community, LGBTQ.

And it's just like, You know, what are your views on cancel culture? Like, you know, where do we draw the line? You know, because it's a lot of comedians and, and, and others. Yeah. Or being sort of dragged online on socials. And I'm including some of my favorites, you know? So I don't even know where to draw the line because it's, it's the one genre where you're supposed to kind of, nothing is taboo.

You can just kind of go there, you know? So like, what are your views in general around cancel culture?

**Ryan:** Well, I would like to thank you. First of all, for this opportunity to get myself cancelled by answering this question, I'm really looking forward to the tweet storms of folks that, and people are probably going to be pissed off by me being on this show.

Like I'm canceled already. I'm just going to face it. I could use the break, frankly. I'm tired. I think cancelled culture, depending in the context of we're talking about is just trash, that if we're talking about. Uh, Harvey Weinstein. And we're talking about these issues, then we have to acknowledge of course, uh, sexual violence.

We have to acknowledge of course, sexual assault. We have to keep perpetrators of these things accountable and kick them out of our community when they hate people or hurt people. Sorry. Um, Yes, absolutely. I think we have a responsibility in our communities to keep our communities safe from, from these types of people.

But if we're talking about comics that, that say something that upset us, um, there are lines that that can, and shouldn't be crossed. But, you know, I think that if, if we're, if we're talking about canceling a comedian, because they've said something that, that upsets us taking the context out of what someone is saying and putting it in a tweet or putting it in a headline, it removes the context and not always are comics being profound philosophers and, and, you know, not always are gonna look back on these words in a printed page and go man they were ahead of their time. I mean, most often not, but I think in a lot of ways, there are spaces that we need, we need to.

Allow people to express themselves, uh, under, under free speech. And I'm not afraid of knowing that there are racists out there. I'm not afraid of knowing that there are transphobes out there. I'm not afraid of knowing that. People think native people don't work or, or are alcoholics or, or I'm not, I'm not afraid of those things because, because what I'm focused on is really trying to build up and support the work of those that, that counter those

stereotypes and that, that put them their best self forward each and every day to completely shatter those stereotypes.

And so I worry that. We get so caught up in the canceling of, of, of people that we forget to live our lives. And, and I'll say that while I think this, this, this relatively new phenomenon of cancel culture is loud. And is is important. I feel like, I feel like we can really get lost in the weeds if we stay there too long, if we're living in an angry way all the time about everything, uh, that hurts us.

Uh, I think it's an unhealthy behavior. I think if someone steps over that line, And collectively we've decided that that's not cool then I think that's, I think that's a, a worthy and good conversation. And I, I could share a story about being canceled from, from about six or seven years ago. When I tweeted a \*Bleep\* thing and, and apologized, I can tell you a story about telling a joke.

Using words, um, in the very last joke of my, of my set, where I used a word that upset, uh, a part of my audience, where I was called in after the show by, um, a half a dozen people or so to tell me that the words that I used, uh, were hurtful. There have been instances where I, as a comic have had to make decisions or, you know, are these words or these ideas.

Are these the ones that I'm willing to, you know, to fight for and it turned out no, I was wrong and I apologized, I pivoted and never told those jokes the same. And so for me as a comic, like I'm, I'm willing to listen and I'm willing to learn and respond appropriately when called on to do so. But I feel like cancel culture becomes, becomes performative and, and tired when.

When the, when the stakes of doing so are relatively low. For most of the people doing the canceling, I think comics should about what they know. We have a word in my language, which is the word that we substitute that we use for truth. Um, how you say truth in my language is Debwewin, but when you break down the word for truth in my language, Debwewinwhat that word means.

There's there's many words inside of the word, Debwewin . And what it actually is talking about is to only speak to the extent of your experiences.

**Mel:** So stay in your lane basically

**Ryan:** right! That's my truth. My truth is I can only speak to the extent of my experience and I think that's. I think that's funny when comics speak to the extent of their experiences.

And so a lot of comics take pot shots and cherry pick their, you know, their way through their sets. They think it's funny and that's \*bleep\* that's \*bleep\* comedy. Should we cancel that comedy? No, but \*bleep\* comedy. That's what it actually is. It's lazy and yeah, they don't deserve audiences. Um, but you know, Getting caught up in, in canceling people time and time.

Again, I feel takes away from us living. Um, it takes, it takes, takes some time. I think away from us to have to put that energy out into the world all the time. I already can hear the

tweets. People saying this is coming from a place of privilege. I'm a straight man, white passing. All of those things are true.

All of those things are true, but to my friends that have spent hours. Canceling people who, and I've talked with them. Um, that's my advice is like let's put more attention into what we love and less attention into what we hate and see and see, see what happens to our communities. Do we build faster? Do we go further?

If, if we're putting our attention into what we. What we love versus what we hate. Let's face it, racialized communities. We have a lot of things we can hate. We can be disappointed every single day. We wake up in this world. Our grandmother's wake up heartbroken every single day. And I think it's our job to try to, to create better worlds for ourselves to live in.

And if that. Means you, you spend your time in the cancel culture conversation, then, then respect to you. But for me, it's exhausting and it's tiring and it's, it's, it's difficult. And the last thing I say, and, and this is me purely trying to defend myself against Twitter. If that's for you, then that's for you.

Um, And when you need help or if you need help and you need those allies to come, I'm happy to fight the fight, but I can't wake up every day fighting that fight. It's a, it's too exhausting.

**Dalton:** Right, right. Um, so Ryan, I wanted to go back in the trenches, you know, like on the comedy scene, like what, like for you personally, um, I want to know, uh, you know, what's the meanest thing that anyone has ever said to you after a gig?

**Ryan:** 'You're canceled. No. Um, I know the meanest thing. Um, so there was someone that, uh, they drove a four or five hours to come and see the show. And, um, and after the show, you know, I always go out and say, hi and take pictures and shake hands. And, you know, I'm very grateful for people that support the work. So I spend as much time as I need to.

It's not like a 30 minute window and then I bounce it's it's um, I kind of, you know, just, uh, stay out until, till people go home. And, um, and this one group of, of older, I believe they were Cree women. Cause I was in Saskatchewan. Um, Came after the show and, and this one woman goes, Oh, you know, you, look, you look so much younger in person.

She's like, boy, you know, you just, you look so young, like you're in your mid-twenties or whatever. And the woman standing sort of in my periphery, kind of behind. And, and beside me, she goes, ah, he's not young. Look at his neck.

Yeah. That is the meanest \*bleep\* anyone's ever said to me. I don't, I can't see my neck, but I, and I don't know what it looks like, but it must look like \*bleep\* if she said that. So, um, that is, that is by far the meanest thing anyone has ever said to me. Ah, he's not that young look at his neck.

**Dalton:** Totally. But how about to juxtapose that what's the best thing someone has said to you?

Feedback you've gotten after a gig?

**Ryan:** Yeah, well, one that comes to mind, um, is, uh, in, in Minnesota, I was, I, I toured pretty extensively through the United States through 2010 to 2015. I mentioned my friend Charlie Hill. Um, you know, we did a lot of work down in the US and, um, and we, I ended up in, uh, in this casino in Minnesota over and over again through those years and this, uh, grandmother and her granddaughter came to the first show and she was wearing this white bomber jacket and she had all the comics sign her jacket.

And every time thereafter, when I showed up, there was more and more signatures on this jacket. And she said, you know, I, I wear this jacket to these shows because I really want to, to show my granddaughter that there are native people out there doing positive things and, you know, one day I'm going to give her this jacket.

And, um, so every time I went, you know, we'd add a new signature with a date and, um, And then the last time I went in 2015, um, grandma wasn't there and just the granddaughter was there and grandma had passed away and the granddaughter said, you know, as wearing, she was wearing this jacket, you know, this'll be the last time that anyone signs this thing, but just, you know, could you sign it?

You were the first one to sign it. So you'll be the last one to sign it. And she just, she just sat down and told me about the conversation she'd have with her grandma after these comedy shows. And, you know, this is where her grandmother, you know, disclosed her, her awful experiences at residential schools.

Um, they call them boarding schools in the United States, but they were the same thing. And, uh, yeah. And there was this bond between grandma and, um, and the granddaughter. Um, over, over these stand up comedy nights. And so I think that that is one that I'll probably never forget, um, is, is how I think standup comedy can, can unite families and unite people, unite communities.

Um, and if it feels good to, to think about those folks,

**Ryan:** Now, if, if that story that I just shared, doesn't get me on canceled from being canceled for answering your cancel culture question, then I quit. I can't do better than that. That's the nicest thing I can tell you.

**Mel:** Thank you so much, Ryan. This has been great.

**Ryan:** Yeah, I, yeah, I definitely want to say thank you for sharing this space with me and, um, Well, melayna knows this. I've listened to this podcast. Um, I've listened since day one and, and, uh, it continues to be an important one, especially in a country like Canada, that can't have conversations about race.

And, and I just, uh, I just really appreciate, um, the work here and, um, the work that you all do and, and thanks for having me.

## Tea Segment

**Dalton:** Yeah. And a welcome back it's time to talk, you know, it's time to spill some tea, talk about some things that are really disturbing and just like, I mean, Mel, I got to say, I honestly never dreamed that I'd be living in a time where black and misery black death could become so normalized. So trivial, so commonplace.

Right.

**Mel:** It's really upsetting.

**Dalton:** Yeah. Yeah. It's not, I mean, as it speaking as a black male, um, it, it is just not normal. No, I'm speaking as a human being first, uh, you know, it's just not normal to see an unarmed black guy getting shot in the back seven times by a police officer at close range in front of his three kids.

Um, you know, or, or even seeing, you know, a black guy that could be me getting coped out. By police, uh, you know, as we've seen the recording while, you know, and we just sit there and watch his body lifeless, this stuff is too triggering. It's way too triggering for me. You know, part of it, you know, I'm a news junkie mel

and when I see this kind of footage, you know, men getting choked out bodies going numb and lifeless. Now we see it's 24 hours a day, right. It's part of the new cycle, quote, unquote. And then I'm supposed to like wake up and go back to work. Like it's just another day at the office. Right?

Yeah, I don't think so.

**Mel:** Yeah.

I mean, you know, many people this week, public figures, athletes did walk off the job. Um, and they, you know, they said that they've had enough and you know, it's hard to really figure out if, if it really, if it, if it helps, is it helping with police, accountability that constant triggering seeing this happening because we know what's happening.

Now it's just constantly being videotaped.

**Dalton:** Yeah. That is the one, uh, only difference. I mean, I think, I mean, I see pro sports teams protesting and, uh, you know, wearing jerseys with messages, uh, black lives matter inspired slogans and all that, but so they should go on strike. Right. They should withhold their labor.

Right. Until we get an appropriate response from, from police forces, governments, uh, you know, 100%. But, but here's the thing, Mel, if they stop playing like a game or two. Like is, is that enough? Like, if you're like, if you're asking me how the Toronto Raptors are gonna fare in the playoffs this year, I'm here to say that I honestly couldn't care

**Mel:** right doesn't matter

**Dalton:** That's all irrelevant to me right now. It's anticlimactic. It's just not that important to me, you know?

**Mel:** Yeah. It's really upsetting. And I mean, I just think that police in general, like the notion that. They give this illusion of public safety. It's just untrue. You know, it's not black and white people are subjected to different justice systems.

It's opposite justice systems. Um, but a lot of the time the police are just showing us and maintaining the very principles that policing were invented on, slave patrols. You know, that's a colonial system. This is the way the system was meant to. And I, I guess people don't realize that, you know, the notion that police keeping people safe, like that's really never been a reality for racialized people.

**Dalton:** Yeah, no, no. I mean, it says on the side of there, the patrol cars, you know, to serve and protect, right. To serve and protect who? It does protect, uh, black communities and some racialized communities, indigenous movie, clearly the statistics are telling or showing you,

**Mel:** I mean, the practice of criminalizing black people, this is dating back hundreds of years, state violence is something that has been inherent and in policing since the beginning, when slave cause from the abolition of slavery, it was, police had a hand in the colonial state to keep.

People under control and it wasn't white people.

**Dalton:** Absolutely. And the, and here's the thing, and that's a historical fact, right? We can't, that's not open to debate and, you know, you know, it's interesting to Mel when people hear, you know, we're based in Toronto and, you know, people just to localize, you know, some of these debates for, for some of, you know, some of the people out there who are kind of delusional and somehow thinking that it's an American issue.

I mean, we know that in Toronto, right. Just look at the hard data you can. This is Google-able. You know, black residents in Toronto, like what 20 times more likely to be killed by police than white people? 20 times!

**Mel:** Yeah and the Ontario Human rights commission came out with another report. I think it was last month, but many people were saying, you know, we already know this, but a lot of people are under the impression that, you know, the more data we gather, the more we keep you showing, you know, these institutions will, they be held accountable, but it just, it kind of seems like they won't.

Cause this is not something you can. You can't train people out of inherent biases in the system?

**Dalton:** No, no, you cannot

**Mel:** and what policing was established to maintain. It was established to maintain white supremacy. And it's, I mean, at this point, there's no debate whether this kind of policing is racially targeted. Um, and the, the excessive force is just, it's painful to watch, like you said,

and that's why, you know, when people talk about defunding the police, like we have to think about the ways that we can actually be safe, you know, divesting, that's just.

The billions of dollars that's invested in policing, you know, throughout this country, in the United States, you know, that's money being taken away from schools, taken away from healthcare and, you know, community programs that could really strengthen our wellbeing everybody's wellbeing.

**Dalton:** Right? Yeah. And, and you, and, and here's the thing, you, you, you know, you don't really, you don't need to be black to be outraged, right?

Like we're here presenting, you know, if I'm telling you that. Black people in Toronto where I live are 20 times more likely to be killed by police than white people like that. This is something we all really need to be concerned. You know what I mean? Like the, you know, our listeners of, of whom are, you know, multi multicultural, multi religious, like yeah.

That you don't need to be black to be, to get very angry. I mean, right near where my. Parents live in Toronto in the West end of Toronto. Um, you know, it's kind of like, yeah, these things hit close to home. Like Andrew Loko in 2015, like that's right. Like a couple, you know, a couple of blocks from my parents' house.

Right? The, you know, the, the black man and father of five, who. Because I was experiencing mental health issues and he was shot and killed by Toronto Police. That's a couple blocks away from my parents' house.

**Mel:** So that issue and again, mental health interventions, it's not up to the police to be intervening.

There's been so many cases where a mental health situation has been escalated by the police. Like where's the de-escalation.

**Dalton:** Yeah. Yeah. Where's the, the training you don't like what kind of training?

**Mel:** Yeah it's just such a human costs by continuing to invest in police instead of communities and, you know, I think we're kind of seeing right now the consequences of creating a society that looks to policing as an answer to real problems and imagined problems.

You know, look what happened with Amy Cooper. People know that they can call the police anytime they want and what they're gonna do to black people.

**Dalton:** Right. And, and, and, uh, you know, I would say, yeah, I mean, what's what we have in place right now. Um, it's not working. Okay. So, um, for people who, you know, look at the defund, the police movement as some sort of fringe, uh, not so relevant movement, it's actually super relevant.

Um, you know, cause it's, it's just a movement. That's essentially saying, you know, if you look at the data and what's happening day to day, Clearly society needs a serious reset,

right? It needs to get shut down. It needs a reboot. Something needs to change because what we have happening in front of us right now, it is not working at all.

**Mel:** Thank you so much for joining us this week. I'd like to thank our awesome guest Ryan McMahon and our great producer. Ryan Clarke, you can find us both on social media, on Twitter. @MelaynaWilliams is my Twitter handle and @theonlyMelly is my Instagram. And you can find Dalton @DaltonHiggins5, and don't forget to rate us five stars on your favorite podcast app.

We'll see you next week.