

The Power of Chantelle FINAL

Fri, Dec 13, 2024 9:20AM 24:47

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

COVID-19 impact, police shooting, mental health, community building, racial stereotypes, police accountability, trauma recovery, civil lawsuit, media misconceptions, emotional wounds, community support, healing process, police charges, systemic racism, future plans

SPEAKERS

Yanika Saluja, Carmine Posteraro, Noel Tesfa, Adam Floujeh, Chantelle Krupka, Michael Headley, News Report, Gabrielle McMann, Jelena Vermilion, Unnamed Speaker

- Y** Yanika Saluja 00:09
This is We Met U When... a podcast by journalism students at Toronto Metropolitan University. I'm your host. Yanika Saluja. We go back in time, dig up new stories from the past and track down the people in those stories. Usually we go back 10 years, but this season, we're going back to 2020. The World Health Organization declared COVID 19, a global pandemic. It was a time of lockdowns, global protests, disruption around the world, and it affected all of us in different ways.
- G** Gabrielle McMann 00:50
During COVID like we weren't allowed to gather. We weren't allowed to come together for pow wows. And I think many people's spirits and their mental health kind of felt that,
- C** Carmine Posteraro 01:01
you know, I woke up. I had a catheter in me. I had a philosophy bag on my backside. It was just like intense. I couldn't move like my you know, I didn't move for 12 days. My muscles were all deteriorated. I got this scar.
- C** Chantelle Krupka 01:13
I'm not all the things that they like to stereotype us as, and I was still almost killed by the police, and so, like, I'm trying to say that they use those stereotypes as an excuse to devalue us.

Y Yanika Saluja 01:27
We want to know what happened after their names were in the news.

J Jelena Vermilion 01:32
I've had journalists like, reach out after to follow up on a different story, but not not. I've never once had a journalist be like, Hey, are you okay? I saw those comments. I want to check in. Like, no, not once, not one time.

Y Yanika Saluja 01:45
No one was in a position of power. But many of them felt the power a new story can have. We're exploring what's changed and what hasn't.

U Unnamed Speaker 01:56
Chloe. Can I say something? Is it fair to say that you're of Korean origin.

N Noel Tesfa 02:02
It's a heavy thing to talk about, but I think it's also very important. This is something that people need to hear.

Y Yanika Saluja 02:11
We're also thinking about the difference we journalists can make going forward by first going back to 2020, you're listening to we met you when season three. This is the power of Chantelle.

C Chantelle Krupka 02:30
I actually, like felt it before I heard it, which is crazy. That's one thing that really stuck with me, like, That's how fast that hits. And it put me in, like, immediate shock, and I was actually quite calm, and I locked eyes with Valerie, and I was like, did you just shoot me? And I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it, and I still can't, I still can't. And she was quiet, but then she came over to me, and it just seems like everybody arrived at that time, and everybody came swarming. And she came up beside me, but she wasn't saying anything like, what are you doing?

A Adam Floujeh 03:08
It happened on Mother's Day, 2020, it's not easy to talk about but this mother sat down with us to share her story. She wanted to see her son that day, there was an argument with her ex
mother but that message. Several hours later, a police officer shot this mother outside her

partner by text message. Several hours later, a police officer shot this mother outside her home.

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Chantelle Krupka 03:30

My name is Chantelle Krupka, and I was wrongfully shot by the police in Peel Region, and I'm unfortunately not an isolated case. And often these stories are buried, and I think it's important for them not to be. I think it's important for the truth to be told so that maybe some change can start happening.

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Adam Floujeh 03:56

Chantelle was tased before she was shot. Her current partner, Michael Headley, was there. He was also tased.

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Michael Headley 04:04

I didn't know what was going on. I ended up at the hospital. And that was also traumatic for me as well, because my my younger sister passed away in 2015 and to cancer, um, and I was it was, they brought me to the same hospital where she had passed away, where she was in palliative care and everything. So that was traumatic for me as well. And they took my pants that I was wearing, they took those because it was a taste, and they gave me, like, kind of like a coveralls, like a COVID cover, all thing. But it couldn't fit me, because I'm a big guy, so I had to just have it around my waist. And I just wearing a hoodie during that whole ordeal. I never knew that Chantelle was alive or anything like that, so I had to wait about 24 hours after that I found out that she was alive.

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Adam Floujeh 04:51

There were multiple news stories about the shooting in 2020 including this one on City News,

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News Report 04:57

Former appeal police officer Valerie Briffa has been charged by Ontario's police watchdog after shooting Chantelle Krupka in the abdomen. The incident happened after police were called to Krupka's home.

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Adam Floujeh 05:08

Much of the news has focused on charges. A Toronto Star headline from March 2021 reads charges dropped against Mississauga, woman who was shot and tased by peel police. That's right after being shot and tased by police, Chantelle was charged. The charges against Chantelle were dropped, but the whole ordeal left her feeling like she was made to look like the problem.

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Chantelle Krupka 05:35

This woman was screaming and yelling, and she was saying bad words, and she said, f the police and f you pigs, and, oh, poor Valerie, like they really made her the victim. And me, I'm the angry black woman that somehow made her shoot me by yelling, you know, and it's like, but now you've, now you have made an angry black woman. I wasn't that before. I was, and if you asked anyone who knew me, I was a bubbly, happy, you know, soul, and now I'm angry and jaded. You know, so a lot of times they create these monsters that they love to point at.

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Adam Floujeh 06:08

Valerie Briffa was a rookie police officer when she shot Chantelle. Ontario's police watchdog the special investigations unit charged her with criminal negligence causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon, and careless use of a firearm. Later, two of those charges were withdrawn. Briffa resigned shortly after the shooting. She pleaded guilty to one charge, careless use of a firearm and was sentenced to 18 months probation to Chantelle, that seemed like a slap on the wrist.

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Chantelle Krupka 06:43

And I'm gonna point out as well that they used a black judge in her case, because, again, this is what, if we look back in history, this is what they do. They'll pick a black person that they have in a seat of power and use them to say, there's no racism here, you know. And that judge said that, that judge said, I didn't see any evidence of racism or racial racial bias here, and its so angreing.

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Adam Floujeh 07:05

In our research for this episode, we learned there's no government compiled database of police shootings in Canada, not in the states either. There is a project called tracking injustice in Canada that is working on tracking this kind of information. According to trackinginjustice.ca here in Canada, 787 deaths involved police use of force, between 2000-2024. Chantelle's grateful she survived and can tell her story. She's spoken out a lot since 2020 but she's rarely felt heard. She launched a civil suit against Peel Regional Police last year, and that is ongoing. We wanted to know how she doing. How is she healing? Is she healing? In our first conversation, the anger from what happened in 2020, was so close to the surface, we could feel it.

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Chantelle Krupka 08:05

like I'm disabled for life. Now I'm 38, years young, and have to walk with a cane, you know? And before this, I was like, I was like, fly and a little bad gal, and now I have a cane. I'm like, dang. You know, it's, it's kind of, it's so hard to get used to, and I'm trying to accept it and work to

accept it every day and accept my new body the way it is and things like that. But it's, it's difficult, and I'm in a lot of pain every day, and, you know, so the pain is just a constant reminder of the trauma and then just triggers the anger.

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Adam Floujeh 08:47

Mother's Day has a whole different meaning now.

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Chantelle Krupka 08:51

I wanted to see my son. It feels nice to be with your children on that day, but after that, just the anniversary of something horrible that happened to me, even if it doesn't land on the same day, you know, like, same date. Little things like that day, you know, just just before they called, when they were outside my house, I ordered from captain, Captain's Boil. So I had some crab legs, and I had, like, a bottle of rosé, and I was like, whatever was a crappy morning, but I'm gonna, you know, chill out for the night, and, like, just as I cracked my wine, that's when the guy called. So I didn't even get to, like, touch my crab legs. And since then, I haven't even looked at captain's boil, you know, so it's like, Mother's Day, captain's boil every time I see a police officer. All these things are just so triggering. Still.

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Adam Floujeh 09:42

Chantelle says physio wasn't possible for the first two years because her hip bone was so fractured, she had emergency surgery and another surgery to flush out bullet fragments. She says she may need more surgeries, there are still bullet fragments inside her body, the emotional wounds are just as deep. Chantelle says there are misconceptions about her. She says some media reports framed her as being aggressive, even sometimes in the choices of photos published, then came social media comments, not to mention in person comments from people out in the public Chantelle says those misconceptions are painful.

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Chantelle Krupka 10:30

I'm not all the things that they like to stereotype us as, and I was still almost killed by the police, and so, like, I'm trying to say that they use those stereotypes as an excuse to devalue us, but to them that doesn't matter whether or not you fit into those stereotypes, like the racism really does exist. And even though I'm just half black, like my father is very white, you know, it just like I'm not white enough to have their respect and to be safe in their space. And so I just wanted to say, like, yeah, like some people out there think that I probably deserve this for some reason, because I was yelling and cussing, you know? But I hate that I have to say I'm not a bad person, you know what I mean? I'm not a bad person, I'm a loving mother, I'm not a criminal, I'm not anything that they ever try to paint us as, and I didn't deserve this. And don't want to sound like a victim or whatever. I feel like I survived, and I feel like a survivor, but, yeah, I just our people don't deserve this, that's all.

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Adam Flouieh 11:48

Adam Floujeh 11:10

Before getting shot by police. Life was different. Chantelle was working on a lot of projects.

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Chantelle Krupka 11:55

I stopped doing all that. I was doing like I was, you know, in music. I was recording music. I was connecting with a lot of great people. I was working on an app, like developing an app, and I was, you know, I was working on a number of things, and all of that, just like, just crashed the day that, that happened, and and so I feel like I lost myself in a lot of ways, and I'm just trying to put the pieces back together right and be whole again and get back into..

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Adam Floujeh 12:30

As student journalists, we started to feel a bit overwhelmed. Chantelle shared certain details with us that we realized we could not confirm without including voices that could re traumatize her. We realized we needed to leave those details out, but then we started to panic about how Chantelle would feel about that. We knew she was frustrated by some of the past coverage, so we consulted our professors, journalists who teach about duty of care, and they said we needed to go back to Chantelle and be completely transparent this time we met up at her home. I was feeling so anxious before going in. I was worried Chantelle would feel that we were letting her down in some way. Her two youngest children were there. They're three years old and eight months old. Both of them were full of energy, laughing, playing. Michael was trying to keep them quiet during the interview, seeing them running around, I was just amazed at the thought that they were born after the shooting.

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Chantelle Krupka 13:52

I've questioned that too, but how did I get shot in my pelvis, retain the bullet? The bullet is still there. And then carry, I have no exit wound. The bullet is still there. They weren't able to remove it and carry two healthy, beautiful babies after like, survive that and then carry like that is the magic of woman, like we can never underestimate the strength of women, but we should not have to be this strong. We shouldn't have to be warriors and taking bullets like champs. But that is that is our strength.

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Adam Floujeh 14:24

Chantelle plans to get back to pushing for change as soon as she can.

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Chantelle Krupka 14:29

So what I'm thinking is that moving forward organizing will happen from within the community and be focused on community building so that we can minimize the need for police on our on our streets, right? Because they don't understand us anyways, and I believe strongly that community members should be the ones looking out foreach other. So to do something like establish a service that is insteadof calling 911 instead of calling the police, call. Call them and

at least, you know, they can be one step in between you and that, right? And somebody would understand the going ons of their community a little more than a police officer who grew up out of town and is afraid of people of colour, right? So I think that we have to focus more on that, and that's about funds, you know? That's about fundraising and community building and things like that. And then the hope is that in doing that and showing that these programs like this are successful in lowering crime rates and in protecting communities and whatnot, then we can move towards defunding police and reallocating to programs like this, right, so now...

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Adam Floujeh 15:43

But for now, she really needs to heal. It's been difficult accessing care, psychological care, physical care, partly for financial reasons and partly because it's hard to trust the system after everything she's been through. It's also hard to accept not being able to do everything she used to do.

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Chantelle Krupka 16:06

Michael had to pick up so much slack. We don't have the funds to pay for housekeeping full time and our cook and the things that we need that I used to do. Loved doing, but now can't anymore, you know, and he has to pick up, as I said, a lot of my slack. And so we're we really are struggling to keep afloat. We, like every ounce of our energy and time is spent towards trying to make sure these two don't feel the pressure and the stress and the anxiety that we feel

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Adam Floujeh 16:40

With two small children, Chantelle isn't protesting as much as she did in 2020. At that time, protesting was part of her survival. That wasn't easy for her two older children.

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Chantelle Krupka 16:59

Oh, man, they saw their mother very abruptly change, and they didn't know how to handle it. And of course, they're in their teen years, and that's the years when parents are embarrassing. Anyway, here I was out there shaving my head like, raaaah, you know, marching in the streets, and it was a little bit much for them. And, you know. But now that they're a little older, now that my daughter's 18, she understands, you know, she sees what happened to me, she understands that it was completely unfair, completely unjust, and that what I did makes sense, you know, so

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Adam Floujeh 17:37

and being in the headlines wasn't easy for anyone in the family.

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Chantelle Krupka 17:41



Chantelle Krupka 17:41

We were in Barbados and got recognized by somebody from the UK, you know. So I really understood the day, that day, like the scope of this, this case and the story. And obviously not everyone who recognizes you likes you or agrees with, you know, just making our private life a little less private,



Adam Floujeh 18:03

And here we are making her the focus of our podcast episode. I was nervous arriving at her home, but when I explained there's a limit to what we could include, Chantelle was really understanding. I was so relieved, but I still wanted to ask how she thought we were doing as student journalists.



Chantelle Krupka 18:24

I think that you guys are asking the right questions, and I appreciate that, because I've dealt with journalists that are, you know, much older and like, I guess, professionals and, you know, recognizable, you know. And I was kind of baffled by some of their questions. So I appreciate, it feels like you guys are trying to get down to at least my truth, and not just asking questions to help structure your narrative. I'm so thankful that you guys are even interested in in our story, to be honest, you know. And you guys are like, I think I said this to you before. You guys are the future, you know, and it's so it brings me hope.



Adam Floujeh 19:10

Chantelle genuinely seems different since our first interview, something's changed.



Chantelle Krupka 19:16

I think I have experienced very recently, some deeper healing in that I realized that I need to, in a way, forgive these people who hurt me for myself, because the anger and the rage and the bitterness is just so it's so powerful, and it's so deep, and it's even changed, like my face, I don't even look the same in the mirror to myself anymore, and I don't want to carry that with me anymore, you know, I want to release it and release them, and let the universe and let karma and let God do. They do and and I need to move forward. And you know, otherwise, I'll be spiritually connected to these people by this anger. And I don't, I don't want it.



Adam Floujeh 20:10

Chantelle said, this shift just started.



20:15

i understand the power of God. And so yesterday on stage at church was no different, and they prayed over me, and I was given the message that I need to release, I need to let go, not for

prayed over me, and I was given the message that I need to release, I need to let go, not for them, but for me. And it very much resonated, and it very much gave me a sense of peace, like a taste of it, like this is the peace you will feel if you do that, if you're able to do that, which is what, exactly what I want for myself and for my family. And so now I feel like peace is tangible and healing is tangible, and it's something I can get to if I can just let go, because I don't have control of what's going to happen to these people at the end of the day, it's true. And I'm telling you, Saturday, I was not feeling like this Saturday. I was like, I'm gonna, I'm angry. I'm still angry at them, and I'm gonna hold on to this forever, you know. And I can't let go of it, because if I let go of this rage, then nothing will come of it. But I'm in, I'm it's like, it's wonderful. I'm in a different place, and I feel like, I said, like, free.

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Michael Headley 21:21

She just seems more uplifted and more like a little bit more of herself. You know,

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Adam Floujeh 21:26

Michael's a big part of that.

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Chantelle Krupka 21:28

He's a caregiver like not, he's a young man like, you know, but still, he's just so mindful and caring, and he took such good care of me in a moment of need. And I know that sounds selfish, but like it was so shocking that he was able to do that. To be honest, I didn't, I didn't, you know, expected it, so just seeing him as a father and knowing how he was able to take care of me just makes him like, you know, is it? Yeah, you're embarrassing me. I'm not. I'm crunchy about this stuff. It's hard. But, yeah, he's just, he's really special in my eyes for that.

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Michael Headley 22:13

I'm very proud, very proud, very proud of her and what she's achieved, how far she's come. It's miraculous. It's actually, it's, it's amazing. She's an amazing woman. She's given me two beautiful, beautiful kids. And it's, it's a blessing. I love, I love how she how she is as a mother. You know, it's beautiful. It's very beautiful. And it's something that I wish I had, you know, in a sense, like, you know, like, I wish like I'm glad that my kids get to experience it, you know, I'm very, very glad, glad and grateful.

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Adam Floujeh 22:51

So is Chantelle.

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Chantelle Krupka 22:56

I'm so grateful to have survived that, and to be here being able to tell my story with you beautiful people and my beautiful kids and partner and and that is just priceless. And I feel like

beautiful people and my beautiful kids and partner and and that is just process. And I feel like, you know, God is on my side, and I feel hopeful for the mediation that's upcoming, and hopeful that it's going to be the end of this chapter in my life and I'm able to move on.

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Yanika Saluja 23:29

We Met U When... is a production by journalism students at Toronto Metropolitan University. This episode was narrated by Adam Floujeh. It was produced by Adam Floujeh, Martha Nyakuan Gai and me. Additional research by Megan Bevis. Additional editorial support by Professor Eternity Martis. Shari Okeke is our executive producer and professor. Eunice Kim is our senior producer and teaching assistant. Angela Glover is our Director of audio production. Our season three theme music, composed and performed by Eric Croda, web design by Lindsay Hanna. Special thanks to the creative school, the School of Journalism, and the journalism Research Center at Toronto Metropolitan University, for supporting Season Three by sending some of our producers to the resonate 2024 podcast festival in Richmond, Virginia. I'm your host. Yanika Saluja, thanks for listening. You.