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HOST: Chantel Moore. Regis Korchinski-Paquet. Jason Collins. D'Andre Campbell. Eishia Hudson. Across the country, Canadians are taking to the streets, protesting police violence. And while some are calling for reforms, others are questioning the need for police altogether. Journalist, activist and author Desmond Cole recently tweeted that when he gave this talk in 2017, he was scared to propose a cop-free future in a room that included the Governor-General and members of the armed forces, RCMP, and local police. Welcome to The Conversation Piece. This is Desmond Cole from The Walrus Talks National Tour: We Desire a Better Country.

Desmond Cole: Good afternoon. My name is Desmond Cole, and I hope my words will please and honor my ancestors.

I'm looking forward to the end of the war, the war between the police and my people. But perhaps equally, I'm looking forward to the day when all those who deny the existence of this war will no longer have the power to prolong it with their actions and their inactions. I long for the day when white people who see Black people or Indigenous people walking down the street and become afraid will not have the option of calling the most well-funded well armed, well organized gang in Canadian history to roll up on us in their squad cars and inspect our humanity.

On that day, if any of those scared white civilians think about taking violence into their own hands, the way that Gerald Stanley did to Colten Boushie, may he rest in peace, they will fail. Because too many Canadians will be willing to stand next to us, stand behind us and if necessary, stand in front of us to protect us. The day is coming when those who speak of the truths of policing that I am speaking now will no longer be afraid of even more policing by their local police forces, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

We are working towards the day when there will be no more police in our schools and on that day, the fortune that we spend policing Black and Indigenous children will be spent to hold them, to nurture them, to cover them, to counsel them, to sit with them, to facilitate and animate their dreams. You see, they call my people thugs, and then they'd be moaned the culture of hug a thug. This country would deny us a loving embrace and present us instead with a police officer with a gun, a taser, a baton, handcuffs, and a license to kill us. We are working towards a day when the suffering of my people will be met with love and care and compassion instead of fear.

One day Black and Indigenous people will have the skills to protect ourselves and there will be no thought of armed white knights coming to save us with their weapons. We will all of our children to meet conflict with words, with gentle hands, with the wisdom to deescalate and diffuse. We will not rely on a police force.

One day when Black and Indigenous people are in crisis, are having a breakdown, are having a mental health emergency we will cover them clear space for them to breathe and to recover. We will learn from the failures of calling police into situations that they cannot and should not be asked to handle. One day those who served as police and who targeted a Black and Indigenous sex workers instead of helping them, who have made our sisters disappear or who have ignored their disappearances, who have shamefully covered for one another one day, they will be held to account.



One day there will be no jails and prisons. There'll be no place to detain queer, trans and two-spirited people in places that expose them to even more violence. We build towards the day when the resources used to stalk and arrest and jail people without status will be used to pay for the lodging that they choose, for food and clothing and education and protection. Indeed, we dream of a day when citizenship and status are irrelevant because everyone is truly welcome.

We strive for the day when we can acknowledge that the police, complicit as they have been in capitalism, in colonialism, in white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, that they are not the cause of these forces. One day we will dismantle and decentralize the Canadian state and all governments responsible for the persistent policing of our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

I'll leave you with a story. In September of 2016 two Peel Regional Police Officers were called to an elementary school in Mississauga, Ontario to deal with a six year old Black girl who was acting out. Those two officers entered the school and they shackled the six year old, 48 pound, beautiful Black girl by her wrists and her ankles. Of course, I dream of and I fight for the end of policing as we know it. But on that day, on that glorious, glorious day, instead of simply dreaming that this precious Black girl who should have been protected, might grow up to be prime minister. We will direct our energy and our labor and our dreams to making sure that she and all of my people and all of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island are free. Thank you.

HOST: Desmond Cole is the bestselling author of *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*. And he's just one of over 800 brilliant Canadians who have graced the stage at The Walrus Talks. Wish you had been there? Wish granted. Our YouTube channel is THE PLACE to find all The Walrus Talks. And we're coming to a city near you! Live and in-person as soon as physically possible. Until then, stay in touch with our events newsletter - find it at [thewalrus.ca/newsletters](http://thewalrus.ca/newsletters).