

20 years strong AMERICA WALKS

On September 12th, 2018, America Walks hosted the webinar, “Pedestrians Are People Too: The Criminalization of Walking”, where we highlighted the increased messaging around victim-blaming, distracted walking legislation, and other moves to criminalize walking. It featured Topher Sanders, investigative reporter for [ProPublica](#), Angie Schmitt, editor of [Streetsblog USA](#), and Andrew Stober, Vice President for Planning and Economic Development for [University City District](#).

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees. Our panelists took time to offer their expert answers, to continue the conversation and provide further insight on how policies such as jaywalking are used to discourage walking and target individuals of color, and how to take action against messaging, policies, and programs that criminalize walking.

Can you tell me who was working with you on this very impressive project? Amazing data dive. Would love to read the report.

Topher: I did a lot of the analysis myself. My work was checked and rechecked by ProPublica's Data team. The Data team also conducted the correlation analysis comparing the location of tickets and the location of pedestrian deaths.

Have you been in contact with NAACP LDF? Any idea when they'll decide whether or not to move forward with more?

Topher: The LDF did take a look at this but I don't know when they will make a final decision.

NY does very data-driven training for enforcement agencies with high rates of pedestrian crashes, but totally emphasizes the value of education over enforcement precisely because of profiling concerns (e.g., stop and frisk). Do you know if there's formalized training for police agencies in Florida?

Topher: There is no formalized training in most Florida police agencies around pedestrian enforcement. It's given as on-the-job training.

Are you implementing any systems level policy to ensure that police officers are held accountable for issuing erroneous tickets?

Topher: We are not. We are just reporters.

In the neighborhoods that are predominately Black in Jacksonville, has there been any improvement to the walking infrastructure? (e.g., have more crosswalks been implemented, have streets and roads been redesigned so pedestrians can cross safely, etc.)

Topher: The city has begun to put in place some mid-block crosswalks but there still needs to be an analysis on what communities are getting those crosswalks.

What have you done to make walkers aware of where they can walk so they don't get tickets?

Angie: I don't think trying to educate walkers is the best strategy. If a lot of pedestrians are crossing in the wrong space, perhaps there is a need for a crosswalk there.

Topher: The only thing we've done is produce the project which consisted of about 12 distinct stories. The community and its leaders will have to take it from there.

How do we implement change?

Topher: Community must request it from its leadership. Leadership has to be willing to listen and grapple with the issues.

Can you talk with folks in ABQ? Their story [HERE](#) seems to be slanted towards blaming the victim.

Topher: I'd be happy to speak with any reporter about these issues if they reach out to me.

Angie: I can't contact everyone, which is why I say advocates should do it themselves. The email address or Twitter handle of the reporter should be displayed by the article. You can use that to reach them then send them [THIS](#).