



[Image Description: A person in a dark green winter coat wears a sign around their neck that reads, "I walk because... everyone deserves a home" while holding a coffee cup in their right hand. Their body is visible from the waist up and their face is partially obscured.]

Photos from Winter Walk 2020 were taken by Chris Shane, Evgenia Eliseeva, Stewart Ting Chong & Belinda Soncini.

Don't Walk By Prologue

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[music comes in]

Ari Barbanell: Homelessness touches everyone. According to the 2020 census on homelessness in Boston, over 6,000 people found themselves without permanent shelter on a January evening. But unhoused and housed people in Boston alike have been working to change that.

Paul English: *The Winter Walk was sort of a lark...*

That's Paul English, the founder of Winter Walk.

Paul: *...the basic idea was to demystify homelessness and have people better understand that these are our brothers and sisters and just regular people in the community who due the various types of hard luck ended up on the street.*

Since 2017, *[ambient: voices chattering in a crowd gathered outside]* thousands gather each year on Copley Square for our annual walk through Boston's Back Bay. We march shoulder to shoulder raising awareness and funds towards an end to homelessness in Greater Boston.

Not only do we walk... We sing...

[clip from past Winter Walk: live musical performance]

Share stories...

[clip from past Winter Walk: guest speaker shares on stage, "And how we help courageous moms is we provide a safe place to live. We provide opportunities to build skills and self-esteem..."]

And make our voices heard.

[clip from past Winter Walk: Ari onstage at past Winter Walk says, "...and we don't have to keep walking, how about that. That we can end this. That we can end homelessness" followed by guest speaker who says, "Yeah, get a lot of people out the street. It helps." Ari says, "Absolutely. Thank you guys so much. Thanks for being here" while crowd cheers.]

This year marks the fifth annual Winter Walk. And... we're doing things a bit differently.

Hi, I'm Ari Barbanell. And this is Don't Walk By.

[theme music comes in]

Over the past few months, I've been interviewing members of our community...

In a typical, year we walk for two miles outside in February, the coldest month of the year, experiencing just a tiny fraction of what our homeless community might feel out on the streets. It sounds very heavy, and it is; but it's also a joyful, meaningful day where we celebrate coming together for this cause.

This year, we can't join our voices together in a live event. So, that's why we started Don't Walk By: to share these stories with you, to walk with or share together.

Over the past few months, I've been interviewing members of our community.

[Montage begins, interview guests share their name one by one: "Hi, my name is Kelly." "Hi, my name is Barbara." "Hello, my name is Ten." "Hi, my name is Bob."]

To bring their stories directly to you.

[Montage begins, interview guests share one by one: "We're here to talk about my experience with housing instability." "And I'm here to talk about my history." "I'm going to talk about the Common Cathedral." "And I'm here to talk about my story how I became homeless and how I came out the other side"]

You'll hear from elected officials.

Annissa Essaibi-George: *How do we now as a city, how do we now as decision-makers and policymakers and those with our hands on the levers of power, how do we make better decisions?*

And public health workers committed to change.

Justin Alves: *It really stems from this belief that every single human being is worthy of love and respect and care.*

Elisabeth Jackson: *Housed and unhoused together, we can build a beautiful, loving community that will advocate for one another and fight and strive and work hard to end homelessness in Boston.*

[music fades out]

You'll also hear from people experiencing homelessness in our community.

[music comes in]

Luis: *...you no have support, you have nothing...*

Barbara: ...so, like, it's no different being for me, like one person being in the streets and us being homeless, the only difference that we got a place to stay and they don't...

And those who've been there in the past.

Kelly: I used to get angry, like, I can't believe like my teachers aren't noticing... or like, no one's saying anything. But looking back, I did everything I could to play the part of someone who had food every night and soap in the bathroom. [giggles] I'm happy to be sharing now.

Ten: ... My work permit was expired. So, I couldn't work. So, that meant I couldn't afford to pay my rent, So I left. The sense, well, insecurity that you get, you know, like it's overwhelming. You feel so insecure. And I was out like, in front of a church two days. That was my first, like two days out in the street. And I was pretty new also in this country. And it was so scary. Like it was really, really scary...

Bob: Life right now is pretty good. I've got security in terms of where I live because part of the situation was a lot, you know, increased amount of fear -- where am I going to stay? Am I going to have enough? Is this going to happen again? A fear of recurrence but the support that I've gotten has really helped me to feel stable. And now it's broadened out where I want to help others with that.

Homelessness is not a single experience. There's not just one story to tell. There are many. Don't Walk By is a glimpse into the reality of homelessness in Boston and how we're working to end it.

Episode 1 of Don't Walk By will be available on January 29th. Tune in at www.winterwalkboston.org.

[music fades out]

END OF PROLOGUE.