

DAVID L. JOHNSON

NACHTRUHE

GALERIE THOMAS SCHULTE , 10 SEPTEMBER TO 7 NOVEMBER 2026



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David L. Johnson
Nachtruhe, 2026
inkjet print, 172 × 127 cm | 67 3/4 × 50 in

In the city of Philadelphia, City Code §10-303 (*Unlawful Conduct of Minors*) prohibits unaccompanied minors from remaining in public spaces after designated nighttime hours. Minors thirteen and under have a curfew from 9:30 PM until 6:00 AM, while minors fourteen to seventeen have a curfew from 10:00 PM until 6:00 AM. The curfew alters the legal conditions of public space, providing police extended powers to stop and detain youth on streets, inside local businesses, and in green spaces.

Since 2014, the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation has installed Mosquito devices in over thirty parks and recreation centers across the city. These sound deterrents emit high-frequency tones between 16 and 18.5 kilohertz, causing irritation and, in some cases, nausea with prolonged exposure. Marketed as primarily affecting people under twenty-five, Mosquitos are often audible to a much broader group of listeners. Although the city states these devices are active only during curfew hours, some remain on throughout the day, making their sonic presence a permanent condition of several neighborhood parks.

In New York City, the enforcement of park curfews intensified during the 1980s, when many city parks were still open 24 hours a day. In 1988, an attempt to impose a nighttime curfew on Tompkins Square Park, then home to the city's largest community of squatters, sparked protests that were met with widespread police violence. Three years later, the park was forcibly cleared and closed, followed by landscape and security renovations that enabled greater control over access.

Today, gates, floodlights, and police barricades continue to restrict access to New York parks like Tompkins. At the same time, many publicly accessible spaces in New York are privately owned and governed as privately owned public spaces (POPS). Though largely ungated, private security firms often patrol these spaces. In some instances, firms illegally drill or adhere patrol tags to trees and other city-owned property to verify guards' rounds, extending private surveillance beyond the properties they are contracted to patrol.

Berlin's Görlitzer Park forms part of a *Kriminalitätsbelasteter Ort* (kbO), one of seven designated policing zones where Berlin police may conduct identity checks and searches without individualized suspicion. Maintained under successive Senate coalitions, the precise boundaries of these zones remained undisclosed for years. Following sustained public pressure and inquiries to the Senate by organizations including *Kampagne für Opfer rassistischer Polizeigewalt* and *Wrangelkiez United*, a new police reform law required the Berlin Police to make their exact boundaries public for the first time in February 2026. The State of Berlin published each kbO as a separate map on its website. Viewed together, the maps show that the kbO containing Görlitzer Park extends well beyond the park, crossing the Landwehr Canal and connecting with the neighboring Warschauer Brücke kbO.

A nighttime closure of Görlitzer Park took effect on March 1 as part of a security agenda advanced by Berlin's CDU-led Senate. The measure restricted access after 10:00 PM, and after 11:00 PM during summer months. To enforce the closure, officials fixed gates to an existing stone wall, originally built as a retaining wall for the nineteenth-century Görlitzer Bahnhof. On June 1, following several material and legal interventions by local activists and residents, the Berlin Administrative Court suspended the closure, finding that the Senate administration lacked the authority to impose it. The park remains open at night while the legal dispute continues, but the enclosure remains in place.

Text by David L. Johnson

David L. Johnson was born in 1993 in New York City. His work, uses photography, video, found and stolen objects, and installation to document and intervene in the spatial politics of cities with attention to the quotidian. Johnson received a BFA from Cooper Union in 2015 and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2020. He is an alum of the Whitney Independent Study Program and a part-time lecturer at Cooper Union and Parsons MFA.

Recent solo and dual exhibitions include: Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin (2026); Fanta MLN, Milan (2025); The Shop at Sadie Coles HQ, London (2024); Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin; Galerie Noah Klink, Berlin; Art Lot, Brooklyn (all 2023); and Theta, New York (2021). Recent group exhibitions include: The Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2026); Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg (both 2024); Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago; MoMA PS1, New York (all 2023); and Artists Space, New York (2022). Johnson's work is held in the public collection of The Studio Museum in Harlem and the Columbus Museum of Art. David L. Johnson lives and works in New York City.