

Christopher Aque

Idling

March 3 - April 21, 2018



Regards,

I'd go for a run in the mornings before Neal left for work—down our street to Franklin Ave, then along Eastern Parkway to Prospect Park. I'd usually do a full lap, circling through Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, and Prospect-Lefferts, before heading back through Crown Heights and home to Bed-Stuy. Seven miles of changing Brooklyn demographics.

Eventually it got too hot to run, but working from home through the dead of summer, I found a lot of time to kill. When I did all the cooking and home improvement projects I could think of, I'd go to the park just to walk around. The pace suited me—the rustle of the trees, the empty Long Meadow dotted with figures bronzing their skin in the sun.

Wanting to indulge my aspirational bucolic fantasies, I took a hike through the woods insulating the park from Flatbush Ave. It felt restful in an upstate sort of way—leaves on the ground, branches cracking underneath. The solitude was eventually disturbed by footsteps; a middle-aged man appeared behind me, looking more the part for a Thursday afternoon hike in his cargo shorts and athletic t-shirt. I changed course, following a different footpath, but it eventually led to the same place; we had merely switched positions. I turned around and headed for the main road. By now I was acutely aware of the forgotten clothes and condom wrappers that had become part of the forest floor. Up in a small clearing, another pair of eyes followed me as I made my way back into the sunlight.

In 2015, the Prospect Park Alliance announced plans to renovate the Vale of Cashmere, citing “mature trees and overgrown shrubs.” Maybe it also had something to do with its status as a historically black cruising ground. Goats were brought in to clear the vegetation, earth movers restored the paths. It opened again last fall.