

Just Because I Take the Bus

Pay for what you take, dude

By Kat Avila | Published on LatinoLA: September 6, 2016



"You shouldn't take things you haven't paid for," I said to the white-bearded old and thin man.

I had been sitting on the stone bench at Mission San Juan Capistrano waiting for the bus. This was around closing time. Suddenly a T-shirted old man rushed by throwing something small toward two trash cans and then dropping his eyeglass case hard on the sidewalk. A staff member followed. She looked into one of the

trash cans, but didn't find what she was looking for.

The old man kept pointing and talking about the eyeglass case on the ground. This was to distract her and me. (This was what I figured out later.) After the staff member left, he searched through the other trash can that she hadn't checked and he retrieved something. It might've been a beaded rosary. I couldn't be sure since it happened quickly.

When I confronted the man about his shoplifting – as a person who has worked retail I don't look kindly on shoplifters – he started jabbering about the eyeglass case and opened it up to reveal a syringe. It's broken, he complained.

When we were on the bus, the bus driver had to tell him to sit before she could pull away because he was pacing up and down the bus. Perhaps the man was crazy, but he certainly knew how to distract a person's attention from his shoplifting.

I sat behind him, but he later moved to another seat. I was tempted to tell him that he would be cursed for stealing from the church's store and that he would stay cursed until he returned the item. (A horror story in the making!)

Instead I closed my eyes to listen to a couple of homeless people from the East Coast discussing places in the county where free food and clothing could be had. I reflected to myself how I've been broadly educated because I use public transportation and I meet and talk to a number of people I normally wouldn't encounter.

Kat Avila works in both L.A. and Orange counties, and is a keen observer of trends in the Latino and Asian communities. She will be enthusiastically voting for Hillary Clinton and English-Spanish bilingual Tim Kaine this fall.

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