

Occupying the O.C. Bus Stop

Three transfers and a long walk

By **Kat Avila, Contributing Writer** | Published on LatinoLA: November 20, 2011



Watching the cars go by, I sit on a cold bus bench. Kitty-corner across from me is **Occupy O.C.** at the **Irvine Civic Center**. Despite LED electronic signs asking drivers to please not honk, a few still do. I understand the annoyance to the residents who live on the other three corners of the intersection.

Because I have some time, I stroll over to the civic center for a look-see. The occupiers are off to one side of the sidewalk so city workers can do maintenance on the front lawn (on Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.). Since the occupiers seem preoccupied, I talk to no one.

At the civic center, I browse the electronic message boards. I pick up the **O.C. Weekly**, brochures about the **O.C. Great Park**, and walk up the stairway to view the display cases on the second and third floors. The City of Irvine is celebrating its 40th anniversary (1971-2011).

The glass cases have the usual letters of recognition and commendation. There are Sister City agreements with Seocho-gu and Nowon-gu in Seoul, Korea; Taoyuan, Taiwan; Hermosillo in the state of Sonora, Mexico; and Tsukuba in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan.

As I walk out of the civic center, I note to my right the dark shadow of a homeless man settling on a bench. Before him yards away the Occupy O.C. encampment has blossomed like colorful mushrooms after a rain since it is after 3 p.m.

After waving down the bus, I take a seat. One rider acts like the bus is his home office, making and loudly taking calls on his cell phone. I silently correct his English in my mind: "We ain't... / We aren't." "He don't do no'ting. / He doesn't do anything."

For an hour I ride plugged into an audiobook "**Dexter in the Dark**" by **Jeff Lindsay**. I get off to transfer. That bus will arrive in another hour. While finishing off the rest of a saved sandwich, I stare at a weight-control center ad featuring the blowup of a woman's rear end. It says, "Love your rear view."

I go back to watching cars. Big cars, little cars, new cars, old cars, owners-in-debt-slavery cars. Smoking cars, chugging cars, lugging, zooming, zipping, screaming, squeaking, stopping, belt rattling, howling, shushing, (motorcycle roaring), plaintively beep-beeping cars. Whoosh-whoosh-whoosh!

The autumn wind is blowing harder, urging me to get off the bench and start walking. But it's uphill. I've tried once before under an unforgiving summer sun. I got as far as a market to get something to drink, and that wasn't even close to halfway home.

Finally I see the bus in the distance. I take off my gloves to get out my pass. After this bus, it will be a half-hour walk home. My stop is at the end of the line. I'm the only passenger left on the bus by then.

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Total travel time (for 15 miles): Three-and-a-half hours from Irvine to the south side of the county. Just for comparison's sake, by bullet train I can go from Tokyo to Kyoto (230 miles) in two hours and 45 minutes. (Which by the way, I have done.)

A writer who tries to carpool as often as she can.

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