

How to Get the

Shot

Revealing the Secrets
Behind Unforgettable Photography

Blog #1115: The Outlaw and the Law



The Outlaw and the Law

Do you know that feeling when you know you've doing something you should not have done, and now you're caught? The sense of guilt is only overwhelmed by seeing the repercussions of your action unfolding right in front of your eyes. It's a primary emotion that is instantly recognizable. It can send us back decades to reignite memories of our earliest transgressions when that candy bar from the local convenience store seemed too hard to resist, and too insignificant to be missed when the money to buy it was just out of our grasp.

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything was turned around and it seemed like every time you left home, something else was being taken away. For those of us in Florida, the idea of the miles of sandy beaches actually being closed was unimaginable. Many of use concluded that if you stayed away from everyone else for a swim or a stroll on the beach, what chance did we have of being infected or infecting others? Yet the serious nature of a pandemic hit all of us with a vengeance. The beaches were closed. Bright orange markers announced the restrictions, and for good measure, police patrolled the shore to prevent outlaws from taking the law into their own hands.



During my morning walk on the sidewalk adjacent to the shore, maneuvering interactions with other masked pleasure-seekers and athletes, I saw an officer jump up on the platform separating the beach from the road. I knew there was an outlaw pushing their luck. And there she was. A woman in her 30s or 40s, with an adorable co-conspirator in the form of a dog going for a morning swim as if the world hadn't ended. Behind her, far out at sea was a docked cruise ship, empty and waiting for life to be inhaled when the pandemic had run its course.

She saw the officer's stance letting her know the jig was up and consequences must be paid. As she approached the exit from the beach, he was there, lecturing, taking down her identification and handing her the ticket that would result in a fine or a court date.

I didn't want to interfere with official police business, so I stayed back under the protection of a telephoto lens, but it was a moment that captured the culture and angst of the pandemic at hand. At once, the infraction elicited empathy for a local just wanting the continue what would otherwise be a morning ritual with her best buddy to a beautiful beach and the enjoyment of a morning swim. On the other hand, it was a reminder that in times of uncertainty, we're all responsible to a higher level of conformity it that hopefully gets us all back into the water faster. Photos like this can be a souvenir of a moment in time, reminding us of the things we cherish and how quickly life can change.

TAKEAWAYS

1. Everyday activities can be the subject for photos. Have your camera ready when the changes occurring around us present themselves for documenting. Protests, community reactions and our reaction to change, injustice or unfair treatment can be compelling images to capture.
2. If you find yourself photographing a incident with police or offenders, be conscious of what you are recording and any issues that could put you at risk or interfere with official duties, and back away.