

In a gray parking lot

I wanted to write about the crisis in Argentina because I feel very strongly about it. They are making big mistakes and there are important lessons to be learned from history. But I am not going to do it.

Instead I decided to write about what happened to me in a parking lot. A gray parking lot. Half full. You could see the many yellow lines going everywhere. Nowhere. The cold blue December sky made the air crystal clear. The sun was shining on the asphalt.

We arrived for a business lunch at a private club for businessmen. The car we used was black – what else. We got out of the car, talking about a business opportunity. I was curious to see what kind of food they were going to serve. You see, I like to eat well.

Suddenly, disturbing the order of what was happening, a black man came out of nowhere. He was angry. Very angry. He stayed at a respectful distance, but he soon started to yell. He was looking at us as if he wanted to tell us something. I do not think he was asking for anything. He was wearing new, sparkling white running shoes.

Anyway, I could hardly understand him. And we were cautious because we really did not understand what was happening. I could capture two sentences in the midst of his diatribe. “I need gas”, and “He called me nigger”.

Suddenly I realized that I had in front of me the human condition. He was frustrated and mad because someone called him nigger. He was right. He was mad. Poverty. The need to tell other people, in a furious way, that he needed help. He needed to be associated with someone.

What was impressive was the intensity of this man. Why was he so excruciatingly mad? Was he trying to get some money? Was it worth it? The routine seemed too different from the usual beggar. Besides, those white shoes intrigued me.

I felt something inside. I wanted to tell him that, in a way, I understood his plight. I needed to see a nice, happy face in front of me for just a few seconds. There are enough tragedies around the world. I took a \$20 bill and gave it to him.

He could not believe it. His face changed. A smile. A soft, confused thank you came out of his mouth. He was smiling now. My party slapped my shoulder in a sign of understanding. For a few seconds his world changed for the better. I was pleased with the outcome. In a gray parking lot.