



Evidence found in vandal's home included acid, spray paint and photos.



Little Tokyo store window, above, furniture and bus window, below, served as canvas for vandal.



## GHOST Officers Arrest Vandal in Graffiti Spree that Scarred Metro Buses, Little Tokyo

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 7) Three days after Christmas, a 16-year-old boy stepped onto a bus in East Los Angeles, whipped out a razor blade and started to scratch his moniker on a window.

He had hardly begun when LAPD undercover officers, who had been watching the boy's movements for several days, arrested him. Suspect in tow, Officer Todd Waymire and Officer Kevin Huff – armed with a search warrant – went to the boy's home in East Los Angeles.

There, in a house whose rooms and furniture were shockingly defaced with graffiti, they found 92 pieces of evidence: spray paint cans, a bottle of acid powerful enough to scar glass, two liquid shoe polish applicator bottles filled with an acid mixture and photos of the boy in the act of writing graffiti.

It wasn't merely by chance that the officers, members of the LAPD's GHOST anti-graffiti team, arrested the youth. They had spent 20 days talking with witnesses, researching graffiti monikers, and assembling other evidence of a string of vandalism crimes.

### \$12,500 in graffiti damage

In the boy's wake were at least six Metro Buses – almost certainly many more – whose windows he allegedly had destroyed with etch bath acid. In Little Tokyo, officers found the boy's moniker permanently etched on 11 store windows: \$12,500 damage from one four-hour nighttime vandalism spree.

"One window, alone, was \$2,500 in replacement value," says Waymire, noting that etch bath is

the vandals' latest weapon of choice. "The kid also tagged a bus going there, the bus stop, the bus he took home and that bus stop."

[MORE on Graffiti:](#)  
**'Pilot Project Will Estimate Cost of Graffiti Zero Tolerance Program'**

After pleading guilty to one felony vandalism and one misdemeanor charge in juvenile court, the boy was sentenced to three years and four months in the California Youth Authority facility and given five years' probation. He and his parents also are responsible for monetary restitution for the damage.

What does Officer Waymire hope will result from this case?

"I'm hoping bus operators will fill out a crime report when their buses are tagged and that division managers will immediately report these incidents to the police," he said. "It wasn't until Dieter Hemsing at Division 1 reported that six buses in his yard had etch bath damage, that we became aware of it."

[Back to MTA Report](#)

