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See A&E, page 10

The Portland Observer 46

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PHOTO BY CERVANTE POPE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Brothers Pablo, Romeo and Emilio Herrera documented racial harassment on a MAX train by one rider against a young mom and her family and then took action to prevent further violence.

Standing Up to Violence

Three brothers catch racism in action

BY CERVANTE POPE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A local band of brothers who documented racial harassment on a MAX train by one rider against a young mom and her family and then took action to prevent further violence, showcases how heroism, fear and racism can collide in powerful ways.

Emilio, Romeo and Pablo Herrera were Portland bound from the Beaverton Skate-

park riding the Blue Line on Aug. 13 when commotion from the other side of the MAX car caught their attention. What happened next, as caught on 21-year-old Emilio's cellphone video, was a racially-based attack in progress.

"We had seen was this large man just yelling at a woman and we weren't sure what was going on," says Romeo, 18. "We just saw him hovering over her and screaming."

The unidentified man was supposedly upset that the woman, Nitasha Sweaney, didn't give him the 75 cents he asked of

her and everyone else in the MAX car.

Sweaney, a 27-year-old new mother, told the Oregonian the man became enraged, stood in front of her, her daughter and her godmother and flipped them off, refusing to sit down when asked.

"He did not listen and came about a foot away from us and was yelling racial slurs and cussing in our face," says Sweaney. "At this point the only thing I could do was hold my daughter tightly and cover her ears."

It was at this moment that the Herrera brothers intervened with camera in hand,

attempting to end the incident.

"When he saw Emilio recording he left the women alone and directed his attention on us and started yelling at us," Romeo says.

The assailant then pushed his way through the young men and swung at the camera, directing his use of the n-word now towards them. Romeo says he put his hand up for protection and didn't use any physical force, but the assailant ignored him and began antagonizing at Emilio.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5