



Mississippi  
Alberta  
North Portland

Vancouver  
East County  
Beaverton



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SENN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Two children carry powerful messages to the steps of the Hollywood/42nd Avenue Transit Center during a moment of silence to remember the two men killed in a racially motivated attack on light rail more than one week ago. The Friday noon observance was organized by TriMet which asked all buses and trains to pull over and stop for one minute in honor of the victims.

Advocates say political climate has emboldened hate

BY ZACHARY SENN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Racially—motivated fatal stabbings on a Max light rail train more than a week ago has raised concerns from a number of community leaders that a new connectivity on the Internet and a new sociopolitical climate has emboldened people with racist views, energized by the election of President Donald Trump.

Dante James, who serves as director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights for the city of Portland, has called on the media not to downplay the role that white supremacy and racism played in the Memorial Day weekend attack.

“Unless we acknowledge this reality and use these words,” James said, “we will not be able to address the root causes of the problem.”

# Fighting Racism

In an interview with the Portland Observer, James explained that using diluted terms, such as “alt-right,” “ethnic slurs” and “biased language” in conversations surrounding attacks motivated by racism can inadvertently help white supremacist groups to propel their agenda.

“They have in fact become more mainstream and can now use euphemisms like “the alt-right” to be more readily accept-

ed,” James said.

James says that the campaign of President Trump has emboldened those with white supremacist sentiments to be more vocal and violent.

“The election didn’t create this,” he said, “It just created an opportunity for it to be more comfortable in doing what it wanted to do.”

Dr. Shirley Jackson, who serves as the

chair of Portland State University’s Black Studies Department, agrees that today’s sociopolitical climate makes it easier for racist speech to be made publicly.

“In the past, people may have felt that they needed to take these kinds of remarks to the back room,” Jackson said in an interview with the Portland Observer. “Now, there is this feeling that it’s okay to say certain things that in the past might have been characterized as inappropriate.”

Both Jackson and James believe that social media has played a role in connecting those expressing racist and white supremacist ideology.

“People on the Internet are looking for people who share their ideas,” Jackson said. “Like-minded people will find comfort in those types of relationships.”

James says that enhanced connectivity is one of the vectors allowing white supremacist messaging to continue to spread.

“You can have a mob mentality without ever being in the mob now, because of

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