

Fighting Racism

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social media,” James explained. “That’s a huge difference from days past.”

The policy director of the Asia Pacific American Network of Oregon, Zahir Janmohamed, says that while the stabbings have brought new media interest to the issue of racism in Oregon, Portland’s communities of color are well aware of the region’s historical white supremacist activity.

“This has been happening for quite some time,” Janmohamed told the Portland Observer. “We’ve seen the presence of white supremacist groups.”

According to a March 23 study released by the nonprofit investigative journalism group ProPublica, Oregonians reported the highest numbers of hate and bias crimes per capita in the country.

In a widely shared opinion piece that he penned for CNN, Janmohamed writes about how an extensive string of racially motivated attacks have been making waves in Portland’s communities of color over the past year.

James says that ignorance of Oregon’s racist past must be confronted for the region to move toward greater racial equity.

“White people in this state and in this city don’t know the area’s history,” James explained. “It’s not taught in schools.”

Oregon’s state constitution initially included a series of exclusion laws that banned black residents until 1926. These measures continue to haunt the state’s demographic makeup, as 2013 Census Bureau data reveals that just two percent of the state’s population is black.

Janmohamed says that Oregon’s white population has a responsibility to counter racism and white supremacy.

“I’m Muslim -- I’ve been hearing for as long as I can remember that I need to go to Muslims and talk to them about problems of violence and extremism,” he said. “I’m trying to address problems that I see within the Muslim community. Where are white Portlanders on this issue?”

Statements from other officials including Mayor Ted Wheeler and community organizations such as the Oregon AFL-CIO labor union and the Oregon Justice Resource Center expressed both condolences for the families of the victims and solidarity with the state’s immigrant communities.

James says that the community



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SENN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Visitors pay their respects to the victims of a racially-motivated stabbing attack on a MAX light rail train at the Hollywood/42nd Avenue Transit Center. The front of the station’s concrete façade has become a makeshift memorial.

and the city at large should continue to rally around and support the families of the two men killed, the man who survived the attack, and the two teenage girls the three heroes came to help when they were harassed by hate speech, including anti-Muslim taunts. One of the girls was wearing a hijab.

“I don’t want the two young girls to get lost in this conversation,” said James, “and in some sense I think they have been.”

Jackson says that while the incident is tragic, she is heartened by the willingness of the men who came to help the two young women and stand up against bigotry, Rick Best, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche and Micah Fletcher.

“They did it because it was the right thing to do,” Jackson said, adding, “I wish that we had more people who did those sorts of things so that we can engage in

a system of checking people’s behavior, hopefully without the loss of life.”

James says that as Portlanders mourn the lives lost, they must also remember the racially motivated hatred that resulted in the violence.

“This conversation is really about the need to understand what these motivations are,” James said. “This is about racism, pure and simple.”



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June 2017

CALENDAR

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY

				1 ☾ Stand for Children Day	2 George Mendoza born, 1955 Radio Patented, 1896	3 First U.S. Space Walk By Ed White in 1965
4 Aesop’s Birthday First Ford Made, 1896. First Hot Air Balloon Flight, 1783	5 First Apple II computers sold, 1977 National Gingerbread Day	6 World Environment Day First Drive-in Movie Theater, 1933	7 Nikki Giovanni born, 1943	8 Frank Lloyd Wright Born in 1867	9 ☉ World Egg Day Donald Duck born, 1934	10 Maurice Sendak born, 1928 National Yo-Yo Day