

OREGON RACIAL LAWS AND EVENTS, 1844 - 1959

1844	Slavery is declared illegal in the Oregon Country. The infamous “Lash Law,” requiring that blacks in Oregon – be they free or slave – be whipped twice a year “until he or she shall quit the territory,” is passed in June. It is soon deemed too harsh and its provisions for punishment are reduced to forced labor in December 1844.
1848	Oregon’s Provisional Government passes the first Exclusion Law in the Oregon Country. It is unlawful for any Negro or Mulatto (of mixed ethnic heritage) to reside in Oregon Territory.
1850	The Oregon Donation Land Act becomes law, granting free land to “whites and half-breed Indians” in the Oregon Territory. Blacks, however, are prevented from claiming land in Oregon.
1854	Oregon’s Exclusion Law is repealed.
1855	Law is passed preventing mixed-race males from becoming citizens.
1857	Although slavery is illegal in the Territory, a bill to protect slave property in Oregon is proposed in the Territorial Legislature. It is voted down on the grounds that it would grant special rights to slave owners. Meanwhile, a new exclusion law is added by popular vote to Oregon Bill of Rights
1859	On February 14, 1859, Oregon becomes the first state admitted to the Union with an exclusion law written into the state constitution.
1862	Oregon adopts a law requiring all blacks, Chinese, Hawaiians, and Mulattos residing in Oregon to pay an annual tax of \$5. If they could not pay this tax, the law empowered the state to press them into service maintaining state roads for 50 cents a day. Interracial marriages between blacks and whites are banned in Oregon; it is against the law for whites to marry anyone ¼ or more black.
1866	Oregon citizens do not pass the 14 th Amendment, granting citizenship to blacks. The state’s ban on interracial marriages is extended to prevent whites from marrying anyone who is ¼ or more Chinese or Hawaiian, and ½ or more Native American.
1868	14 th Amendment passes in Oregon.
1870	The 15 th Amendment, granting black men the right to vote, is added to the U.S. Constitution despite failing to pass in both Oregon and California. The federal law supersedes a clause in the Oregon State Constitution banning black suffrage.
1883	An attempt is made to amend the Oregon Constitution to remove its ban on black suffrage. The effort fails despite the fact that the clause in question was rendered moot following the passage of the 15 th Amendment. Further attempts to remove the language prohibiting blacks from voting were made in 1895, 1916, and 1927.
1914	The Portland chapter of the NAACP, the oldest continually chartered chapter west of the Mississippi River, is founded.
1926	Oregon repeals its exclusion law, amending the state constitution to remove it from the Bill of Rights.
1927	Oregon State Constitution is finally amended to remove a clause denying blacks the right to vote.
1951	Oregon repeals its law prohibiting interracial marriages.
1951	Insurance surcharges for non-white drivers are removed.
1959	Oregon voters finally ratify the 15 th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.