

Oregon's History

Just as agencies are expected to learn and know the harms and inequities in Oregon's policies and practice, this plan acknowledges and makes visible many historic instances of oppression and violence in our state, specifically based on race and ethnicity.

The below timeline of Oregon's history illustrates some, but not all, statewide and federal policies and actions perpetuating racial inequities.

Year	Policies and Actions Perpetuating Racial Inequities
1790	Naturalization Act: This act prohibited non-whites from accessing U.S. citizenship by limiting it to white immigrants (primarily from Western Europe) who had resided in the U.S. at least two years and with children under 21 years of age. The act also granted citizenship to children born to U.S. citizens while abroad.
1844	Exclusion: The first Black exclusion law in Oregon, adopted in 1844 by the Provisional Government, mandated that Blacks attempting to settle in Oregon would be publicly whipped — thirty-nine lashes, repeated every six months — until they departed.
1855	Statehood: After the gold strikes in southern Oregon, pro-slavery forces advocated forming a new state in southern Oregon and northern California. It failed when Californians rejected the idea of reducing the size of their state.
1856	Rogue River Indian Wars ended with the surviving Native Americans sent to two newly created reservations: the Siletz and the Grand Ronde.
1857	State Constitution: The Oregon constitution, adopted in 1857, banned slavery but also excluded Blacks from legal residence, owning property, making contracts, voting, or using the legal system.
1859	Like earlier exclusion laws, the constitutional slavery ban adopted in 1857 took effect when Oregon became a state in 1859. It was not retroactive, which meant that it did not apply to Black people who were legally in Oregon before the ban was adopted.

Year	Policies and Actions Perpetuating Racial Inequities
1862	Color Tax: Oregon adopted a law requiring all residents who were Black, Chinese, Hawaiian (Kanakas), and Mulatto (an archaic term referring to people of mixed ethnic heritage) 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. Also, interracial marriages were banned in Oregon. It was against the law for whites to marry anyone who was one-fourth or more Black.
1866	Miscegenation: Oregon banned all interracial marriages, extending the 1862 law to prevent whites from marrying anyone who was one-fourth or more Chinese, or Hawaiian, and one-half or more Native American. It was previously illegal for white and Black people to marry.
1867	School Segregation: Even though the total Black population in Oregon in the 1860s numbered 128, Portland assigned Black and Mulatto children to a segregated school.
1868	No Citizenship: The Oregon Legislature rescinded the state's ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, endowing African Americans with citizenship — this despite the fact that the amendment had just become federal law.
1875	Page Act: This law prohibited the importation of unfree laborers and women brought for “immoral purposes.” It was enforced primarily against Chinese due to anti-Chinese xenophobia around the U.S. as an early effort to restrict Asian immigration via select categories of persons whose labor was perceived as immoral or coerced.
1877	Military Action: The Nez Perce Tribe clashed with the U.S. Army in their Wallowa homeland in northeast Oregon. Chief Joseph and his people refused to go to a reservation. Instead, Chief Joseph tried to lead 800 of his people to Canada and freedom.
1879	Chemawa Indian Boarding School opened in Salem, Oregon as the third such boarding school in the nation. These schools were designed to assimilate Indian children into white culture and teach them vocational skills. Students were prohibited from speaking their Tribal languages or practicing any of their traditional customs or culture.

Year	Policies and Actions Perpetuating Racial Inequities
1880	By this date, the U.S. government had forced most Indigenous and Native people of the Northwest onto reservations.
1882	Chinese Exclusion Acts: Due to anti-Chinese xenophobia and bigotry, the federal government passed a 10-year moratorium on Chinese labor immigration, which was renewed in 1892 for another 10 years as part of the Geary Act. Chinese Americans already in the country challenged the constitutionality of the discriminatory acts, but the federal government did not listen. The exclusion law was made permanent in 1902 with added restrictions requiring Chinese residents to register and obtain a certificate of residence, or else face deportation. In China, merchants organized an anti-American boycott in 1905, which the American government pressured the Chinese government to suppress. The Chinese Exclusion Acts were not repealed until 1943.
1887	Violence and Intimidation: Of the many acts of intimidation and violence committed against early Chinese immigrants in the American West, one of the most brutal occurred at Deep Creek on the Oregon side of the Snake River in Hells Canyon. In May 1887 as many as 34 Chinese gold miners were ambushed and murdered for their gold by a gang of horse thieves and schoolboys in Wallowa County. Of the six men indicted: Three men fled and were never caught, and three others were declared innocent by a jury on September 1, 1888. No one was found guilty of the crime.
1919	Redlining: Portland Board of Realty approved a “Code of Ethics” prohibiting realtors and bankers from selling property in white neighborhoods to people of color or providing mortgages for such purchases.
1923	Alien Land Laws: There was growing hostility towards Asian farmers, most notably Japanese farmers in the Hood River Valley. The Oregon Legislature, dominated by members of the Klan, passed a number of restrictive laws. The Alien Land Law prevented first generation Japanese Americans from owning or leasing land. The Oregon Business Restriction Law allowed cities to refuse business licenses to first generation Japanese Americans. Alien land laws grew in popularity in the West, even in states with very small, isolated Asian populations.

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1934	Non-unanimous Jury Verdicts: Oregon voters amended their constitution to allow for non-unanimous jury verdicts in criminal cases. Its intent was to weaken the influence of non-white jurors.
1935	Segregation: Oregon law officially segregated Mexican students on the basis of being of “Indian” descent. It made clear to exempt “White Mexicans” those fair-skinned descendants of the Spaniards who do not have “Indian blood.”
1937-1945	Oregon passed a number of laws restricting Indians, mostly concerning the possession of alcohol.
1942	<p>WWII: Japanese Americans started to lose their homes, livelihoods and freedom, and were forced to report to a facility to be relocated to inland internment camps for the duration of WWII.</p> <p>The Oregon Plan: In May 1942, Malheur County became the site of the first seasonal farm labor camp where internees went on leave from internment camps to work in the sugar beet fields. Numerous Japanese Americans remained in Malheur County after an order excluding them from the West Coast was lifted in January 1945, and remained in Malheur to build a sizeable Japanese American community in Ontario and Nyssa to this day.</p>
1945	The Oregon House of Representatives passed a Joint Memorial calling on President Roosevelt to prevent the return of Japanese Americans “for the duration of the present war with Japan.”
1948	Redlining: Oregon realtors followed the “National Realtors Code” (based on an earlier state law) that proclaimed that a realtor shall never introduce into a neighborhood members of any race or nationality whose presence will be detrimental to property values.” This practice continued until the 1960s, when the civil rights movement led to the Fair Housing Act and later, in 1977, to the Community Reinvestment Act, when the federal government began to address these racist wrongs. “But even then, communities of color – particularly African Americans – continued to be displaced as investments in urban renewal and community plans resulted in gentrification, which still occurs today.”

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1954	Treaty Termination: Congress terminated federal aid granted by treaties with 109 tribes, dissolving the Klamath, Grand Ronde, and Siletz reservations and sanctioning the selling of their Tribal lands. Tribes lost control of their land and water rights, oil, and other natural resources. The Secretary of the Interior was a former Oregon governor.
1981	Two police officers dumped dead opossums at an African American-owned restaurant in Portland. The incident evoked ugly KKK imagery and touched off one of the most contentious disputes between police, city government, and the public. As a result, a citizen's committee to review police actions in Portland was created.
1994	Measure 11 was passed by Oregon voters to establish mandatory minimum sentencing for several crimes; it was reaffirmed in 2000.
2008	Oregon Driver's License Bill: SB 1080 was passed requiring all applicants for Oregon driver licenses, instruction permits, or identification cards to provide acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful presence in the country. This bill created significant hurdles for Oregonians, including citizens, to obtain driver license or identification cards.
2014	Measure 88 Defeated: The Oregon Alternative Driver Licenses Referendum subjected Senate Bill 833 to a popular vote through Measure 88. If it had been upheld, SB 833/ M88 would have made 4-year driver licenses available to those who cannot prove legal presence in the United States. The campaign opposed to the referendum was managed by Oregonians for Immigration Reform, an anti-immigrants' group in the state, as well as Protect Oregon Driver Licenses.

See footnote for Oregon's History Timeline sources.²⁴

²⁴ Sources:

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