The Myth of Liberal Oregon
A History of Discriminatory Legislation

1850 Donation Land Act is passed. The DLA entitled white males to 320 acres of land in the Oregon Territory and if they were married, their wives were entitled to an additional 320 acres. By entitling land to white settlers only, the Donation Land Act excluded blacks from staking a claim in Oregon.

1851 Judge Thomas Nelson orders Jacob Vanderpool, a sailor from the West Indies, to leave the Oregon Territory. He is the only person on record who was expelled because he was black.

1859 Oregon becomes the 33rd state in the Union. The state constitution bans slavery, but also has an exclusion clause that declares it illegal for black people to live within the state.

1873 Portland City Council had passed the Cubic Air Ordinance, which barred any residences from housing more than one person per 550 cubic feet and required the arrest of all people living in such conditions. This was mainly enforced in the shanties near Guilds Lake in Northwest Portland and in Chinatown, where there was the highest population of Chinese residents.

1886 A mob of white men force fifty Chinese laborers residing in Oregon City on a boat headed to Portland. The same year, similar violence and expulsions happened in the shanty town near Guilds Lake, in Mount Tabor, and in Albina, as well as in Seattle, Tacoma, and various cities in California.

1942 Vanport is destroyed by a flood, displacing over 18,000 people. The Albina district in North Portland was the only option for displaced African Americans, prompting a massive population influx into the neighborhood.