

# Oregon Secretary of State

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## Petition to Allow Thomas Family to Stay in Oregon 1854

### Transcript of Original Document

To the Honorable Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oregon: The undersigned citizens of the Territory of Oregon, do most respectfully pray for the passage of an Act of the proper character by your Honorable bodies to exempt Morris Thomas a free man of color, and all and singular the members of his family, from the operation of the Act of the Legislative Assembly passed September 26th, 1849, and Entitled "an Act to prevent Negros and Mullattos from coming to or residing in Oregon."

The said Morris Thomas now is and for several years past has been, a resident in the city of Portland in the Territory of Oregon. He is an industrious, peacable, well disposed mulatto man, and we do verily believe the passage of the Act prayed for will be of no detriment to the welfare of the Territory or the interests of any citizen (?) and as in duty bounden we will ever pray &C (128 signatures)

### Background

American immigrants brought anti-black attitudes with them. These immigrants, mostly from the midwest, disliked both slaves and free blacks. The territorial legislature passed a law which prohibited free blacks from staying in Oregon. This petition requested the legislature to pass an act exempting Morris Thomas and his family, free blacks, from the provisions of the earlier law. Thomas, who lived in Portland, is described as a model citizen. The legislature discovered that the law excluding blacks had accidentally been repealed. Efforts to resurrect it failed.

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## Bill,

For the relief of Morris Thomas,  
 a free man of color of the City of Portland,  
 Washington County Oregon Territory.

Sec 1

Be it enacted by the Legislative  
 Assembly of the Territory of Oregon,  
 That Morris Thomas a free man  
 of color and all and singular the  
 members of his family, be exempted  
 from the operation of the act of the  
 Legislative Assembly, passed Sept-  
 -ember 26<sup>th</sup> 1842, and entitled an act  
 to prevent Negroes and Mullattas from  
 coming to or residing in Oregon Territory.

Sec 2

This act to take effect from  
 and after its passage