

Chapter Research Project:
**Legends of Texas History: The NTCC Webb
Chapter Film Series**

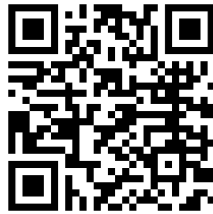
*To view the finished work of the NTCC Webb Society on its
Texas history films in the Year **2024**:*

The Traveling Preachers of Early Texas.

&

*The Trailer for our Newest Film, Crude Conquest, on Big Oil, and
Texas Politics in the Mid-Twentieth Century*

Query:



Or Follow the Link:

<https://www.ntcc.edu/honorsfilms>

*To view the developing rough draft of the upcoming film, Crude
Conquest, query <Crude Conquest: Oil and Politics in Mid-Twentieth
Century Texas> on YouTube or use the link: <https://youtu.be/01wUiyPBurU>*

Premiere Date: 4 April 2025 At the Whatley Center for the Performing Arts at Northeast Texas Community College

Our film this year was based on a prize-winning essay by NTCC's Texas Heritage Bank Scholar, Vanessajane Bayna. Bayna had won a state-wide Caldwell Award in College Station in March of 2024. Bayna's essay on toxification and politics had, we thought, a marvelous story in it, and one that had not been told. When one moves from Texas Governor Allred in the 1930s to the election of oilman William Clements in the 1970s and 1980s one basically has a narrative that features a triumph for Big Oil. Allred had dreamed of a revenue tax and

substantial regulation, but by the time Clements came in, Big Oil had essentially converted the Texas political establishment to its own way of thinking. And, as Bayna's essay had pointed out, toxification has become a more and more serious problem as a result.

On the flip side, how could we do a critique of Big Oil? Our gracious donor, David L. Stevenson, above, ran a trucking firm. Wasn't Clifton Caldwell, the Webb award-giver, an oilman? At NTCC we have Eckman Awards, and a Whatley Award in honors—all were into oil. When one of our donors learned about our film on toxification, she wondered why we were going socialist! In another almost funny encounter, we had a conversation with a very powerful backer from Morris County. The conversation involved Courtney Baldwin. Baldwin is a Walter Prescott Webb Society Success story! She was a star in our Caldwell-Award winning film on opera singer Barbara Conrad. She leveraged that and other accomplishments, went on in politics, and was a speaker at the Democratic National Convention meeting last summer in Chicago! One can still see her speech on *YouTube*.¹ In any case, when our Morris County donor learned that Baldwin had addressed the Democratic National Convention, he opined: "I guess she didn't learn anything at NTCC!"

It was against this backdrop then that we pursued our new film. It too would involve more research, a film research trip, script formation, recruitment, organization, memorization, filming, a film trip, multiple financial transactions with the Honors foundation fund at the college, more appeals to donors, press releases to keep our donors aware, and autumnal work by a new film producer. These steps will be described more fully in the section labeled, "Procedures Followed," below. However, the email carrying this report will also include the following items:

- ✓ Press Releases Involving Film work for the year, 2024

¹ "Courtney Baldwin Speaks at the DNC/Chicago 24" *Democratic National Convention* < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV_de6j_JVY&t=1s > [Accessed 9 January 2024].

- ✓ The NTCC Honors Newsletter, *Alacrity* for the summer of 2024, showing three Webb film veterans on the cover, Neida Perez, Michelle Calderon, and Luke McCraw, all winning major honors.
- ✓ A Summer of 2024 Letter to Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery
- ✓ A Christmas Greeting to David L. Stevenson
- ✓ The itineraries of the 2024 film trips to Austin, and Jefferson
- ✓ The purchase order for the 2024 summer trip to Jefferson
- ✓ The final script of the 2024 film on oil and Texas politics

As to the scope of our film work in 2024, we should mention one other facet. For the tenth time in our history we were able to present our Webb film series idea as a general session panel at the meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council in November, in Kansas City. The panel was titled: “Cinematic Harmonization: Niche Films, Culture and Community Engagement.” The session included our trailers of the “Traveling Preachers,” and “Crude Conquest,” and the students involved gave perhaps our best panel, ever, in our ten-year series at the NCHC. They were not only articulate, and knowledgeable about the processes involved, they were quite personable. As it happens, not only is Monse Rivero a regional leader in PTK, Vanessa Bayna, our 2024 film scholar, has attained the top student spot in the Great Plains Honors Council. She defeated an upperclassman from Midwestern University to obtain this spot this past October.²

² “Current Executive Board” *Great Plains Honors Council* < <https://greatplainshonors.com/current-executive-board> > [Accessed 10 January 2025].



NCHC Film Panel: Skylar Hodson, Monse Rivero, Vanessajane Bayna, and Alison Majors.

B) Its Purpose:

The overall purpose of our film work is to unify and uplift. We hope to: 1) educate members of our community and indeed ourselves about significant Texas history themes, 2) highlight various regional legends that can bring us together, and encourage discussion and regional/patriotic spirit, 3) enable students to enhance their résumé of citations, and talents, and 4) to build our Webb-Honors group into an ongoing team with a common, year-long reference point.

Educating Members of our Community:

Both the Traveling Preacher and Big Oil Films involved narratives that were new, new not in the sense that the basic material for the stories had yet to be discovered, but new in the

way narratives were dramatized. In most cases, Stephen F. Austin's empresario story is considered in isolation from the story of the traveling preachers. Historians like Gregg Cantrell do not belabor his agnosticism, and stories of individual preachers, such as the autobiography of William Stevenson do not concern themselves with Austin. But the obdurate opposition of Austin to "Methodists"—who in his mind were worse than horse thieves gave us our story. Likewise, the story of big oil's triumph in Texas has not been framed before in the way we were able to suggest. Texas moved from possible control over oil with Allred, to deal-making with Lyndon Johnson, and Ralph Yarborough, and finally to outright support with Clements. This particular way of chronologizing a story was not known. Therefore, we believe we have taught people something with each presentation.

Highlight Legends that Bring Us Together:

We were surprised by the way our community responded to the traveling preacher film. Our college administration initially, knowing we were doing a film about religion, appeared to look on, somewhat skeptically. But we do live in a series of "school and church towns" here in Northeast Texas, and if one is not connected to a school, one had better be connected to a church to realize some kind of community. We perhaps then should not have been too surprised. Since the film also took in the case of Baptist Joseph Bays, a Baptist, we had an outreach to the two biggest Protestant denominations. Because our big Catholic church in Mount Pleasant, St. Michael's--as Caldwell readers will read about with our submitted essay from Araceli Landaverde--is also conservative, and sensitive to over-secularization, there was also support from that quarter, with one exception.³

³ Luke McCraw who won the excellent scholarships to attend Dallas Baptist University was one of our best student presenters ever. In one talk, however, he ventured into a critique of Mexican Catholicism as it was practiced during the time of Austin. Afterward, there was a critique of this part of his story by two distinguished ladies. Neither was Catholic, but both thought Luke went too far. Fortunately, Luke took a cue from this, and changed his story. He became more sensitive to this issue, actually then winning the McGraw Poster contest against twenty-two other competitors, and pleasing some eleven judges in the process who gave him outstanding scores.

The toxification film, as noted above, has not quite worked yet to strengthen an overall sense of community. Some of our honors students who we immediately try to bring into the Webb Society wanted nothing to do with the political innuendo of this film. In terms, of student recruitment, in fact, this toxification film did as poorly as the outreach during the COVID summer of 2020, when we did our film on Bo Pilgrim! But we believe a consensus was reached with the script, and production phases that will make this film relevant to many in our community. TRAP gases (Traffic-Related-Air-Pollution), superfund sites, the state's powerplants, and landfills are spreading contamination at an alarming rate in Texas. Without blaming those who have helped the state to prosper, we all have reasons to address these issues.

Enable Students to Build Résumés:

We have mentioned above how Michelle Calderon, Luke McCraw, Monse Rivero, Courtney Baldwin, and Neida Perez have benefitted from participation in our films. In each case, their stories were enhanced by their participation, and they went on to win higher accolades. Already with our newest film, we have seen the benefits of this. Both Skylar Hodson, and Vanessajane Bayna, who deserve the most credit for our toxification film, submitted their stories to the spring App of Phi Theta Kappa in Texas. Bayna is our film scholar of the current film, and Hodson our director. Astonishingly, they were one-two in the state last summer! Hodson won the Dr. Mary Hood Scholarship of Texas, and Bayna won the Yolando Romero Scholarship of Texas. Later in the fall, the Texas Phi Theta Kappa gave out other, Walter Cooper awards of over \$1,000. In this competition we had two state winners, again both active in our films, Monse Rivero, and Noah Pettey. Pettey, who plays Lyndon Johnson in our upcoming film, notably is not an honors student.

Webb Team Building:

As we were less able to attract honors students coming into NTCC last summer, we branched out and had PTK students Noah Pettey, and Tristan Dierflinger become a big part of our film effort. Their parts turned out well, and we have reason to believe they will support our effort to attract patrons to our premiere. We also found at least one student who lacked an interest both in acting and cinematography suddenly rise to the occasion as our film editor. Yahir Garcia did a masterful work with our recent film, including finding an opening film segment with smokestacks, and swirling smoke, that when set to Goodson's talented composition, should be riveting!

C) Procedures Followed:

Our basic film procedure is research, the organization of an executive committee, script formation, the reach-out to fill the needs of casting, rehearsals, filming, production, and the non-diagetic musical overlay.

In each of these areas, there were notable developments in 2024:

Research: We were very pleased to travel to the citadel of Texas-History research, Austin, for work last summer, both at the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library, and the Dolph Briscoe Center. We noticed that the restrictiveness of these archives is increasing, and were thankful that our Isabel Tresidder passed a pre-test, allow her to work at the LBJ Center.



Our Research Team at the Briscoe Center: Title V Director, Athena Hayes, Ariana Tagg, Isabel Tresidder, Avery Woods, and Rebeca Martinez

Executive Committee:

Our first effort to get organized last summer seemed to go well. We had a good group meet at Starbucks in Mount Pleasant, thanks to our donors. But lacking the charismatic Allen Herald and Hannah Goldblum this past summer, and having a little more controversial topic,



Our First Film Organization Meeting at Starbucks in June, 2024

we were unable to move forcefully ahead from this point. Aside from Skylar Hodson, and the surprise appearance of Luke McCraw, who although awaiting matriculation at Dallas Baptist University, came to help, we had no one from last year to assume a leadership position. Sarah Dieflinger, however, did step forward and volunteer to be Unit Production Director.

Script: On our way back from our Austin trip, we talked about what our research meant. One young student—she was only sixteen--Isabel Tresidder, asked if she could write the script!

Tresidder is a unique person. Her family is from South Africa. They lived for a time in Anna, north of Dallas, but witnessed a shooting involving homeless people right outside their house. They came to Naples, a small town near us. There Tresidder got an introduction to the wolf spiders, who for a time seemed to be dominating her bedroom.

Tresidder had a lot of verve. She had worked steadfastly during our three-day stint in Austin. She convinced Yox and Director Hodson, she was serious. Alas, she also was so young, and she had trouble imagining scenes. Though she placed second and won \$300 in the fall Northeast Texas Poetry Contest, this kind of writing was new to her. The writing slowed down to a crawl. Skylar Hodson began a vigorous education of herself on the politics of big oil, and began to assume parts of the script. When Luke McCraw found out he could be William Clements, he worked on that part of the script. Another Austin researcher, Ariana Tagg, had worked on Rita Clements, and she became the same character in our film. Her work provided some help. Dr. Yox had to intervene at the very end, and somehow a united script came together.

Our **Casting Outreach Success Quotient** this year as noted was weak. But the one thing Isabel and Skylar's script did do is imagine a low number of cast members. Students began to show interest. Alison Majors, who would go on to win a Leader of Promise award, enthusiastically assumed the part of Lady Bird Johnson, and got her friend, Madeline Simmons, to join the team, and become Opal Yarborough, the wife of Senator, Ralph. Another young student who had missed the Austin trip because of sickness, Remington Covey came on as Ralph Yarborough. The team was smaller this year, but as we believe the film would show, the acting was above average.



The 2024 Film Team at the Beginning of August in a Photograph by Hudson Old of the East Texas Journal. Sarah and Tristan Dierflinger, Skylar Hodson, Luke McCraw, Andrew Yox, Isabel Tresidder, Andrew Perez, Noah Pettey, Kaden Groda, and Remington Covey. The group is meeting at Jo's Coffee House, in Mount Pleasant.

Practices and Filming:

Webb Director Yox was hopeful that this year scenes would be shot more efficiently than last summer, when the filming dragged through Nacogdoches, and went on into the months of October and November. However, though Herald was no longer with us, his disciple was. Skylar Hodson, who herself wants to be a director, like Herald, wanted things nice and slow and perfect. Hodson indeed working closely with an expert cinematographer this year, Emily Hamlin, got the audible dimension of the film, perfect, and won the respect of the students. Yox fretted whether the team had completed enough scenes for a feature-length film.



Emily Hamlin and Kaden Groda filming story of Crude Conquest in Jefferson B&B, the Kennedy Manor, August 2024.

Production and the Non-Digetic Musical Overlay:



Yahir Garcia

What no one foresaw was the way our film editor, Yahir Garcia, an incoming freshman, would take to the film. Garcia, the winner of our Cypress Bank scholarship, got a new Dell laptop to use. As a computer major, he was intrigued with Adobe Premier Pro, and with copyright-free footage that can now be obtained. He was fast and competent.

Meanwhile our composer, Kenny Goodson, who has become progressively more booked over the years, still attended our film dinner

last summer. He wanted, most of all, to ensure that his compositions would not be edited out at the last moment as they were when Herald was the director. Given the luster of his music, the remarkable help his wife, Ann, has been through the years, it was not hard to grant him this request. He is currently working on the score of the new film, after finishing the score for the trailer, which can be heard from our QR Code on page 1. Furthermore, Garcia felt that Goodson's baritone voice made for an ideal narrator. Garcia and Yox decided to lengthen the film with a narration, and to allow Goodson to do this as well. Garcia's expert editing, and the narration made our current film, *Crude Conquest*, go over the fifty-minute mark, making it too, a feature-length film.

D) Findings:

Both Bayna's original research, supplemented by our Austin work, and then Tresidder's coming essay on Lyndon Johnson have made it clear how indigenous oil has been to the political landscape of our state. Conservatives have viewed wildcatters and the oil makers as great preservationists of individualism and capitalism. Twentieth-century liberals such as Lyndon Baines Johnson, and Ralph Yarborough saw cherished petrochemicals as the way to pay for schools, end poverty, and achieve the Great Society.

Oil has done a lot for Texas. On the other hand, just as the state had a problem with filthy urban roads when horses provided a key means of transportation, it now has a problem with toxification. There are consequences to the "Crude Conquest" symbolized by the rise of William Clements, Big Oil, and the seemingly unbeatable modern Republican Party of the state.

E) Conclusions:

Jarrige's, and Le Roux's, *The Contamination of the Earth* provides the best introduction

to global toxification.⁴ However, its argument--that a fragmentation of knowledge has enabled a re-chemicalization of the world--underestimates the willed ignorance that operates in politics. A good example is Modern Texas. With its booming petrochemical businesses, and derivative chemical businesses, modern Texas has succumbed to chemical contamination. Toxicity is found everywhere, from boundless prairies to flowing rivers and Guadalupe Peak; chemicals have even trespassed into mother's milk. Texans have created a Frankenstein, but have yet to place this Frankenstein in the clear light of observation. This is because Frankenstein has been so good to the values Texans have held dear.

F) Significance:

We have stuck with our story on toxification despite the tensions described above, and the lower turnout of student support. Though we do not yet have the energy going into our premiere as we did last year at this time, we do think the film will represent a consensus that our community needs to take to heart. Though in an area dominated by rural agribusiness—chickens, farm and ranch equipment, animal feed—we have real problems with pollution. We have fields laden with arsenic--which in small amounts can aid chicken growth, and lakes laden with fecal coliform and other contaminants. Pilgrim Pride, once the nation's leading poultry producer, and headquartered in our area, has sold out, but the plants are still here. So are our power plants, toxic areas, lignite mines and landfills. We still have trouble with land, air and water. We hope that history will lead us to see the logic that led to such toxicity, so we can understand, and not simply be critical of the past. We hope that a knowledge of our history will also point us in a better direction. Automobiles were once a terrific solution to

⁴ Francois Jarrige, and Thomas Le Roux, tr. By Janice and Michael Egan. *The Contamination of the Earth: A History of Pollutions in the Industrial Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2021). In a recent *U.S. News and World Report* survey, Texas ranked 42nd among the fifty American states in air, land, and water quality. <<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/natural-environment/pollution>> [Accessed January 16, 2024]. Because toxification coincided with practices Texans valued, Texas has been more oblivious than most to the problem.

horse-drawn carriages. Even terrific solutions, however, in history have to be superseded in time. For they are so often efficacious, in a changing world, only in temporary way.

Appendix A.

Letters that Went out to Faculty and Local Churches

Dear Colleagues of NTCC:

15 February 2024

Imagine a new Steven Spielberg, but from Northeast Texas.



Many of you, I know, have had **Allen Herald** (left) in class, or engaged with him on our campus. He has over sixty hours at NTCC. But his heart has always been with film, and he is now in Austin, with his charming associate and fiancée, born in South Africa, Hannah Goldblum, trying to make it, in the film business. Both Herald, and Goldblum, very graciously donated hundreds of hours last summer, and hundreds more this fall, in their effort to enhance the film-making capacity of our honors students. I was amazed with Herald's charisma and leadership. Our honors students officially met with him fifteen times beyond our already stuffed-to-the-brim film-week in August, and some, participated in filming activities that went beyond that. His theme, our theme, is a dramatic story, a legend of Northeast Texas, concerning the struggle between the secular state of early Texas, and the traveling preachers of the Second Great Awakening. It was a contest of wills, with Mexican authorities and Stephen F. Austin on one side, and colorful Baptist and Methodist ministers on the other. Who will

win?

The film-score is written by our Texas Mozart, the former head of NTCC computer services, **Kenny Goodson**. His high-tech, compositional creative vitality is amazing, and he is also a former Methodist minister who has heard the sounds of hymnody over a lifetime. **You** are welcome to attend our free film premiere at the Whatley this Friday, February 23rd at 7 p.m., and support Allen, Hannah, Kenny, and our honors students. There will be free refreshments & a chance to meet the whole group involved with the production of the film afterwards.



Dr. Andrew Yox

Honors Director

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Empowering Students to Succeed.

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Leader of the Wednesday Morning Men's Prayer Breakfast
Tennison Methodist Church
313 N Church St, Mt Pleasant, TX 75455


Hi:

I am the honors director at the college. Once I gave a talk for your prayer breakfast. I have actually been more involved, with the Methodist church in Naples and their prayer breakfasts over the years, as a good friend of mine, John Bryan, keeps asking me to present there.

In any case, our honors program thanks to Methodist backers like Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery of Mount Vernon, has a film coming out 23 February on the Traveling Preachers of Early Texas. Most were Methodists! They broke the Pine Tree Curtain of Mexican Texas which under Stephen F. Austin and others was turning into a secular state. Our film is about that story. We were able to link up with an aspiring local film maker, Allen Herald of Camp county, and Kenny Goodson, former Methodist minister, but now a composer in Hughes

Springs. The trailer is pretty amazing www.ntcc.edu/honorsfilms.

I have a devout young man from our honors program, Luke McCraw, from Mount Vernon who was our film scholar, and could, I believe present a very good overview, with the trailer included of this story, of how secular Texas became part of the Bible Belt. Would this be possible say before 23 February? I know this is short notice, but thank you so much for your consideration. I would come too and cover the media etc.



Dr. Andrew Yox

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2 February 2024

Pastor
First Baptist Church
202 West W M Watson Boulevard
Daingerfield, TX 75638

Hi:

I am sorry that I could not find your name online. I am the honors director at NTCC, and I thank you for any forbearance you can show me in writing your church this letter. In our diverse activities we did have one of our student scholars publish an article on Marvin Watson, who gave you the name of your street, and who I believe was one of your parishioners. Watson, of course, was a de facto Chief of State for President Lyndon Johnson, and a president of Dallas Baptist University during the 1980s. I would be pleased to send you this article if you were interested; it was about how Watson complimented LBJ, and one of the ways he did this was vouching for Johnson's Christian beliefs.

Our honors students have been putting together feature-length films for each of the last ten years, but the one premiering this Friday, **23 February at 7**

p.m. at the Whatley is special. It is about the traveling preachers of early Texas, one of whom was a prominent early Baptist, Joseph Bates. We did not realize before we began our research at SMU that the early-Texas lead empresario, Stephen F. Austin, was quite a pronounced secularist who did nothing to encourage the Catholicism he professed. In 1825, there were only two Catholic priests for 50,000 square miles of Texas settlements. Incoming Protestant evangelists were exiled, imprisoned, and beaten. Texas could have turned out differently. But without denominational support to speak of, or any real financial backing, the traveling preachers broke the Pine Tree Curtain of Northeast Texas both along the Red and the Sabine, bringing the Gospel to all the major towns by 1836.

Our film will be the first to tell this story. Another interesting facet is that we did the film this year in conjunction with an aspiring film producer from your own Camp County, Allen Herald, along with his South-African-born fiancée, Hannah Goldblum. They now reside in Austin. In any case, the quality of this film promises to be our best ever. Kenny Goodson from Hughes Springs composed the score, and by God's grace we just happened to have guys in honors this year that were enthusiastic about doing this theme, and they came out fifteen times in addition to our standard film week in August to help with the filming.

We would so appreciate it if you could hang our sign up somewhere at your church, and/or perhaps even announce the event as something of relevance for our region. Except for Rev.

Hoke of Franklin County, the cast is entirely of young people. It also has a relevance in this age, when again, a large secular sphere has appeared, and again the Church is called to serve as the media of grace.

Thanks so much for considering all this! Our cast will be there the evening of 23 February, and the refreshments will be free, thanks to our donors. There will be an optional Q. and A. after the 80-minute premiere.

Sincerely,

Andrew G. Yox

Dr. Andrew Yox

Honors Director

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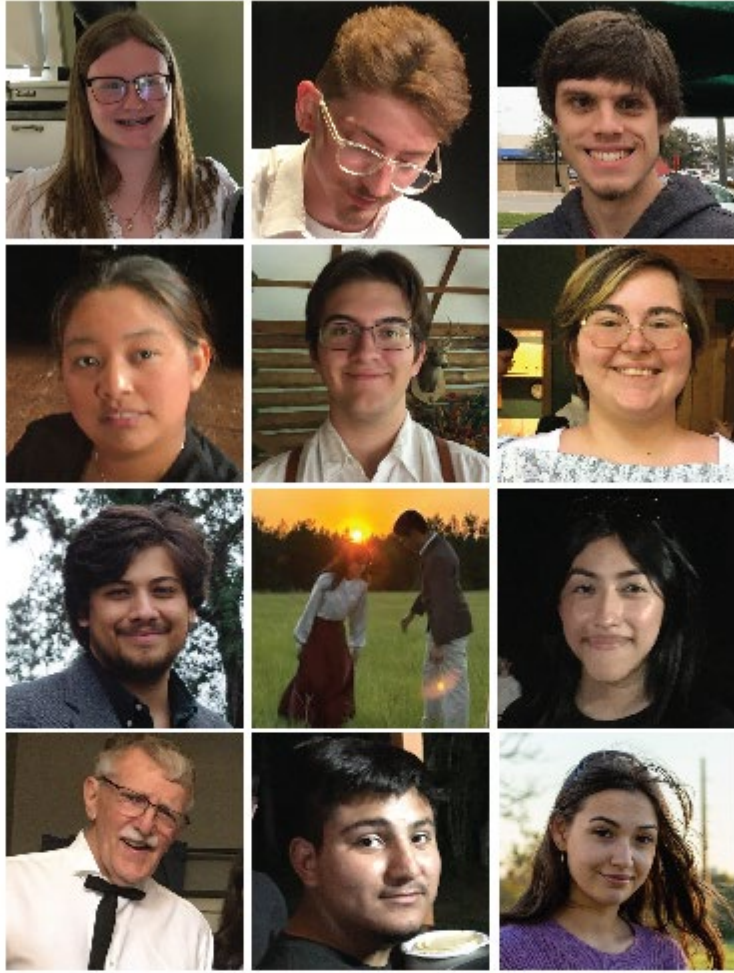
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Northeast Texas Community College.

P.O. Box 1307, Mount Pleasant, TX 75456-1307 • 903-434-8100 • fax 903-572-6712 •
www.ntcc.edu

Appendix B
Main Image Used to Advertise
Traveling Preacher Premiere
Through NTCC Contacts

FREE FILM PREMIERE



A HERALD AND CO. MOTION PICTURE, AND
FEATURE FILM OF NTCC HONORS & WEBB SOCIETY

Where E're The Sun

TRAVELING PREACHERS OF EARLY TEXAS



FEBRUARY 23 | 7 P.M.

THE WHATLEY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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