

Chapter Research Project: Query on Youtube: <Pressed but Not Crushed, the UT Saga of Barbara Conrad>

NTCC Webb Texas History

Chapter Films

On Mary Kay, the Great Pragmatic Feminine

Entrepreneur and

*Barbara Conrad, and the UT Desegregation Saga of
1956-57¹*

A) The Scope of the Undertaking:

For the last seven years, our Webb Chapter has produced seven feature-length films. We have a 2018 film on Barbara Conrad; in 2017, it was Mary Kay; in 2016, the Texas Cherokee; in 2015, Ma and Pa Ferguson; in 2014, Harriet Potter Ames; in 2013, Wright Patman; and in 2012, Morris Sheppard. These films are all available on the website, www.ntcc.edu/honors, through the Scholarship and Art of Northeast Texas link, and on <www.ntcc.edu/honorsfilms>. They are on YouTube. Our Webb Chapter combines with Honors Northeast, as without the institutional budget and generous donors of this program, we could not undertake these projects. That said, our Webb Chapter and Honors Northeast are coterminous. The entering seminar of our honors program involves a course in Texas History. Honors students are expected to join the Webb Society.

These yearly films on previously un-filmed stories of Texas, however, have a two-year cycle. From the time we win our first grant, till our last presentation, enough time has gone by so that we find it difficult to include all our material in this one report. Last January when we submitted for a group Caldwell Award in this category, for example, we realized that this cycle was making it difficult to submit many of our materials. So this year, we have included our premiere materials and some media coverage of our Mary Kay film which occurred last February. We anticipate we will receive similar coverage for our Barbara Conrad film this February.

In terms of this preceding year, and the work on Barbara Conrad, major student work commenced a year ago, January when Brittany Houck, and Norma Hanson began research on Conrad. Conrad was a great international opera singer who was involved in a telling desegregation case at the University of Texas in 1957. Conrad, from Camp County, won the role of Dido, and was placed opposite a white male, playing the role of Aeneas. President Logan Wilson, under pressure from state legislators, yanked her from the cast! We might recall that this happened in the days when Price Daniel, a segregationist, was governor.

We were indebted to the Pittsburg Heritage Center, the site of a 2014 Webb Fall meeting for providing us with a key phone number. Edgie Reeves is a major landowner in the old African-American community of Center Point. This was the home that Barbara Conrad claimed, though our student researcher, Verania Leyva, has shown that her real home was Queen City near Atlanta. In any case, Reeves provided leads to Jimmy Smith, a half-brother of Conrad, and Rosie Smith, a sister-in-law. These contacts led to a phone interview with Mat Hames, who produced a PBS documentary on Barbara Conrad.

In May, students Mercedes Collins, Jacob Lambie, Peyton McClendon, Verania Leyva and Dr. Yox journeyed to the Dolph Briscoe Center in Austin for three days of intensive research on our film subject, Barbara Conrad (Appendix A). We were startled to see a large

wall hanging of Conrad, the once famous Texas-born opera star at the center of the Briscoe Center archive. We knew we were off to a good start! Our best contact at the Briscoe over the years, Margaret Schlankey, provided us with some excellent files pertaining to the Conrad incident.



Mercedes Collins, Jacob Lambie, Peyton McClendon, and Verania Leyva in May 2018. At the Dolph Briscoe.

The research led into discussions about the script and how it would be dramatized. This film was coaxed along by the actual happening. There was a dramatic chronology, based on the fact that Conrad was among the first cohort of undergraduates at the University of Texas. Her mother opposed her going to Austin. Next Conrad experienced friction with her voice instructor, Edna Gustafson. With her triumph of being selected for the opera, she seemed on a big rebound. Until . . . she encountered white racists. This made it easier for Wilson. He said he was protecting her by keeping her off the cast!

Dr. Yox mentored a good deal. Verania Leyva, and Jacob Lambie were the most effective submitters of the story. By the end of June we had a draft. By the end of July, the script was frozen for memorization. It consisted of eighty pages and forty-eight scenes.

In July we searched also for leaders and actors. The structure of Honors Northeast helps provide leaders. Through the years, leadership has been bestowed to the most talented, best performing sophomores. However this year, we had a challenges. The first was that one leading honors student did not want to do a film on Texas history at all. He, in fact, was so much in favor of a fictional creation which he and a limited number of other honors students would mastermind, that he left honors and the Webb Society when his idea was spurned. Then there were concerns. How many African-American actors would we need to have? What acts of racism could the film allow? Our problems leaked out. The president of our college became involved. We believe the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People became involved.

But by the end of July, we had compromises all around. One of our foremost Webb/honors students, Courtney Baldwin, was a great help in securing and helping along our three outside African American actors. In fact the chemistry was great after this. The dilemmas that appeared ready to destroy our effort came to a resolution that made our endeavors more memorable.



The “Smith Family” in our Story: Left to Right, Courtney Baldwin playing Jerrie Lee, the mother, Alexis Porter playing Connie, the sister, Mary Lloyd as Barbara Conrad, and Tyrese Rhymes as the father, Conrad Smith.

We met and got organized as before at a local restaurant, and Jo’s Coffeehouse. Sophomore Jordan Whelchel became the Director, Jacob Lambie, the Unit Production Director, Matthew Chambers, and Rhylie Anderson became cinematographers, and Karla Fuentes became the Director of Audiography. We received a particularly big boost this year from the publisher of the *East Texas Journal*, Hudson Old. He took our group shot below after a rehearsal at his establishment, in downtown, Mount Pleasant.



Production Team of *Barbara Conrad* Film at the East Texas Journal, Left to Right: **Mercedes Collins**, Film Scholar and Actress, **Peyton McClendon**, Director of Makeup and Actress, **Rhylie Anderson**, Cinematographer and Actress, **Jacob Lambie**, Film Scholar, Actor, and Unit Production Director, **Courtney Baldwin**, Coordinator, and Actress, **Verania Leyva**, Film Scholar and Actress, **Jordan Whelchel**, Director and Actor, **Karla Fuentes**, Director of Audiography, and Actress, **Dr. Andrew Yox**, Faculty Overseer, **Matthew Chambers**, Cinematographer and Actor, **Miguel Paco**, Producer, **Daniel Landaverde**, Actor, **Tyrese Rhymes**, Actor, and **Hannah Dickson**, Director of Costumes, and Actress. We thank Hudson Old and the staff of the *East Texas Journal* for this photo.

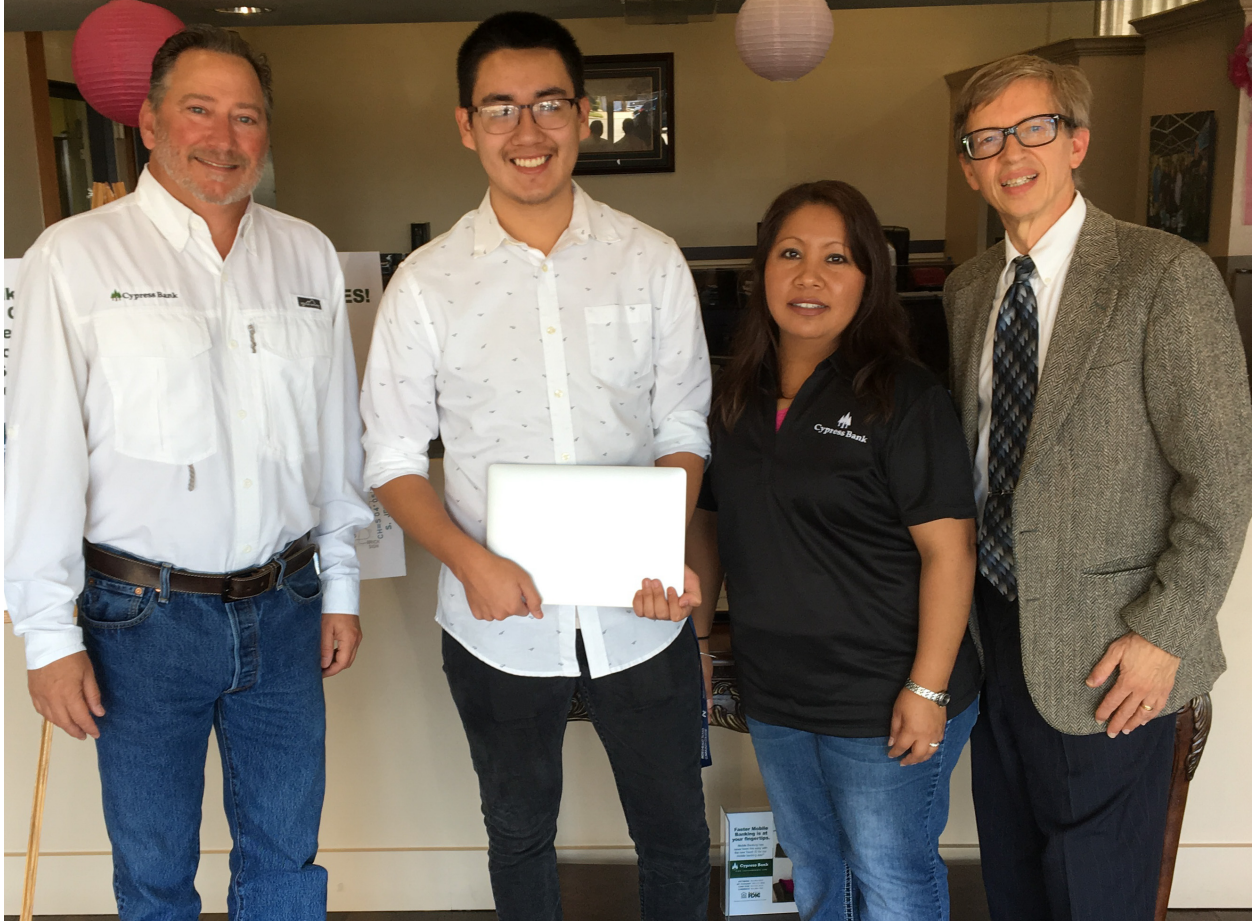
The highlight of our effort was film-week, 13-17 August. The complexity of the film schedule, the filming at our college, and the move to Jefferson are covered below in Appendix B.

One notable part of our film effort this year was an advance in audiography. Winnsboro Valedictorian Karla Fuentes impelled Dr. Yox to purchase a recorder. The Recorder acted as a central receiver and coordinator of the sound.



The Recorder, Poised, Above the Camera at Jefferson's Steamboat House: Verania Leyva as Cinematographer

Miguel Paco, our bright Physics major, received a high end laptop courtesy of Cypress Bank of Mount Pleasant. He became our producer, and worked on the film from the week of filming to 16 January. He provided the Texas History Seminar with an in-class premiere on 13 November of the one-hour film.



Cypress Bank of Mount Pleasant graciously provides Miguel Paco with a Laptop to use while he is a student at NTCC. It was high end MacBook Pro!—with 250 GB of RAM

We presented our Conrad trailer, devised by Paco at the Fall Webb meeting of Nacogdoches, and in Boston at the National Collegiate Honors Council in Boston where we had a special panel on dramatic productions that we shared with Valparaiso University

The full scope of our effort can best be gauged by seeing our film. One can query YouTube: <Pressed but not Crushed: The UT Saga of Barbara Conrad> or consult www.ntcc.edu/honorsfilms

B) Its Purpose:

Mount Pleasant City Attorney, Kerry Wootten esq. had suggested back in 2017 that we attempt Barbara Conrad as a film subject. She was a local girl that sang before the Pope, and Ronald Reagan. She also starred as the famous African-American contralto, Marian Anderson in a 1975 television miniseries on Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. We like it when we can do something suggested by someone like Mr. Wooten, who has attended a few of our film premieres. We believe we help to bestow a certain patriotism to our college and region when we film local stories. We bring people in our community together to discuss something about us.

The Webb Society and its encouragement of student projects has also functioned as a “spaceport,” launching our students into better trajectories. This was a point we made in Boston at the National Collegiate Honors Council. Film work, and film scholarship lead to expertise, and accolades. These statuses down the line have enabled our students to win major national awards like the Leaders of Promise (won by two of our Webb members this past fall—Jordan Whelchel, and Rhylie Anderson), other Coca Cola awards, won this past year by our Alicia Cantrell, and Brenda Godoy, and the Jack Kent Cooke (won also this past year by Alicia Cantrell, and Brenda Godoy).

C) Procedures Followed:

Our ideal procedural cycle is this: 1) Receive an idea from the community about what to film. 2) Receive a grant and gifts from the community to film it. 3. Research the story from scratch at a good archive with students dividing up the main aspects of the story. 4. Have the students with Dr. Yox’s help develop a professional script with slug-lines, action-lines, and indented dialogue. 5. Translate the history into something dramatic with as much action as possible to appeal to viewers. 6. Give all students in our Webb Society the chance to act, and

lead various aspects of the film. 7. Travel to a place to film like Jefferson, Texas where we can better appreciate the historical settings of the past. 8. Rise above the technical challenges working with audio and mastering Canon HFG-40 camcorders, and Adobe Premiere software. 9. Select student leaders who can handle not only direction, but the equally arduous challenge of the Unit Production Director, to sequence actors and scenes at the right times, and order. 10. Choose a reliable student producer who can edit the film in the fall semester. 11. Advertise the premiere on radio and in the local press. 12. Stage a local premiere, free of charge; sponsoring a discussion with our film scholars afterward.

With our cycle this last year on the Conrad film, point number 5 proved the most difficult, with director Whelchel ruling that some action scenes were beyond our capability. But the Conrad film, we believe is our best one yet in terms of sound, and bringing untold historical realities to light.

D) Findings:

We found how bureaucratic priorities can have a racist result, even when those involved claim no racist intent. This was one of the fundamental insights of our Unit Production Director, and film scholar, Jacob Lambie.

Verania Leyva took us in another interesting direction. More and more we found that the Mat Hames Documentary had followed the official line of her life as directed by Conrad. Conrad really was the producer of that film in the sense that she shaped what Hames emphasized. We tried to show that Barbara Conrad was not a simple victim of University of Texas racism. She was a perfectionist, who ultimately was able to leverage her misfortunes very successfully.

F) Significance:

We believe the film teaches us that though we have come far as a people in terms of desegregation, there are still many valid complaints that minorities make. The University of Texas leaders in our film such as the Chairman of the Board of Regents, Tom Sealy, President Logan Wilson, and Dean H.Y. McCown, were not racists. Yet they sponsored and committed a blatant act of discrimination to serve other priorities. Our community today likewise features leaders who disclaim a racist intent. But minorities in our community do face serious disadvantages which we should consider.

Thank you for considering our project. Again we urge you to query YouTube <Pressed but Not Crushed, the UT Saga of Barbara Conrad> or consult www.ntcc.edu/honorsfilms. If you have any technical issues, please email ayox@ntcc.edu.

Appendix A: Itinerary for Austin Trip

Research Trip to Dolph Briscoe Center at the University of Texas at Austin, 30 May to 1 June 2018

*It is important that each student bring a valid photo ID, especially, if possible, a Driver's License. The Dolph Briscoe Center will want this. Students should also register on Aeon, the UT Austin library service (www.briscoecenter.org/login) before we depart on Wednesday. You are welcome to bring a laptop, or ask me for one asap that you could use during your time with us. I might be able to get it in time.

4:30 AM, 30 May, Wednesday. Rebecca Mercedes Collins (1000-1790), Verania Leyva Garcia (1000-4089), Peyton McClendon (8300-5167), Jacob Lambie (1000-3019), and Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director, will leave NTCC parking lot, *behind Humanities Building* with a mini-van rented from Enterprise in Mount Pleasant. Dr. Yox will do all the driving.

NTCC Honors will cover all meals, hotel, travel, and entrance fees. Daily per diem is: \$7 for breakfast, \$9 for lunch, and \$14 for dinner.

8:30 AM Starbucks in Belton for Breakfast.

10:30 AM Work on materials of Dolph Briscoe Center relating to Barbara Smith Conrad.

4:30 PM Depart for stay in Fairfield Inn on Reinli Street). The Fairfield Inn has a pool, breakfast, and exercise room. It is owned by Marriott.

Free Time, and Dinner

31 May Thursday

Breakfast at Fairfield Inn, Austin

Ride to Dolph Briscoe and other UT Resources

10- 4:30 Work in Archives, breaking for lunch.

Free Time, and Dinner. We may take a tour of the Texas Capitol, a popular at-night tourist stop.

1 June Friday

Breakfast at Fairfield Inn, Austin

9-10:30 Work in LBJ Library Archives.

12:00 noon – 3:00 PM Perhaps visit Bob Bullock Museum of Texas History on Congress Street, eating there for lunch, or converting on some other opportunity for the film that might arise.

Return home at NTCC, stopping for dinner:

9:30 PM return to NTCC Campus

Appendix B: Film Itinerary

Itinerary for Honors-NTCC Jefferson Filming:

Filming the Story of Barbara Smith Conrad, 13-17 August 2018

Honors will cover all meals, lodging, other fees and transportation connected with filming. See p. 3 for house assignments. There will be complimentary beverages on hand during filming. At Jefferson B&Bs please make it a point to eat their breakfasts. They do this very well, and it will give everyone a good meal to start the day.

Aim to have your parts memorized perfectly and fluently. Bring outfits your character could wear on set. Or contact Hannah Dickson (see our group emails) for costume needs. Note that women wore skirts and dresses to campus in the 1950s, and more often in general. Contact Peyton McClendon for makeup needs. Email ayox@ntcc.edu for other questions. Dr. Yox's phone during film week is 903-291-7987. See communications from Unit Production Director, Jacob Lambie, on the sequencing of scenes.

13 August, Monday at NTCC

9:00 AM: Actors should be dressed and camera crew ready to start at the back of the Whatley at NTCC campus. Go in the door by the loading dock. See Jacob Lambie's order of sequencing. Because some members of our camera crew will be in these scenes, and we may have two or so involved in classes, we can always use those who are not actors in a particular scene to observe, learn and use camcorders, booms, and recorder. You can also help the Unit Production Director, Jacob, and Makeup artist, to help actors get ready for upcoming scenes.

To help Miguel with production, we will want to start each scene the same way:

- 1) Roll the camcorders having them fix first on a written scene number.
- 2) Say loudly. Scene _____, "Quiet on the Set." (and when there is quiet).
- 3) "Action!"
- 4) Then clap the clapperboard (this will provide an audio spike that will help editing).
- 5) (Action of scene_____ then unfolds . . .).

12:30 PM or so—Lunch in Humanities 101.

1:30 PM. We resume shooting until we finish the requisite scenes for first day.

14 August, Tuesday at NTCC

9:00 AM. We want to start at this time, and we will probably be in one of the two NTCC dorms, by the Whatley. Stay tuned to emails and texts for sequencing changes, etc.

12:30 PM. Lunch in Humanities 101.

1:30 PM. We resume shooting until we finish the requisite scenes for second day.

Late Afternoon or Evening: Mary departs for room in Delta House B&B of Jefferson. Jacob departs for room in Benefield House.

15 August Wednesday in Jefferson

**Important Notes about Jefferson B&Bs. Do not move Furniture. Only chairs. If you are not a guest at a particular house we are filming at, you are not entitled to their drinks. We will have our own supply of drinks on hand.*

Departures from Honors Office, Humanities 112. What group you are in will depend on Jacob's sequencing. Stay tuned:

8: 30 AM. First group departs from Honors Office in Enterprise Van. Andrew Yox will drive.

10 AM. Filming resumes in Jefferson at Delta or Benefield.

10:45 AM. Second group departs from Honors Office

Lunch on own for group in Jefferson.

1:00 PM. Third and final **group** departs from Honors Office.

2:00 PM. The group is united while filming is going on.

3:00 PM. Beginning of Check-in in Jefferson B&Bs, and break. Here are the Building Assignments below: There is a certain logic behind assignments so please check with Yox before switching. In Jefferson, Yox will provide pickup van service:

Azalea House, 203 E. Dixon St: Cruz, Daniel, Tyrese

Benefield House, 1009 S. Line Street. Jacob, Jordan, Matthew, and Miguel

Carriage House, 401 North Polk Street. Yox.

Delta House, 206 East Delta Street. Courtney, Mary, and Sharkiria

Steamboat House, 114 N. Marshall St. Hannah, Karla, Mercedes, Peyton, Rhylie, Verania.

6PM: Dinner in Jefferson. Probably at Lamache's Italian Restaurant

Probably more filming at night for selected actors.

16 August, Thursday:

Breakfasts 8-9:30 AM. Again, we are paying for the breakfasts, and will go relatively lighter on lunches, so please take advantage of them. They generally are very interesting.

Filming all day with stop for box lunch

6 PM Signature Film Dinner at Austin St. Bistro in Jefferson. We will aim to have a photo afterwards.

17 August, Friday

Breakfasts 8-9:30 AM.

Filming.

11- 12 PM Checkout of B&Bs. Group that remains will stay at the Carriage House.

We will start departing group by group in the early afternoon.

6 PM Dinner. For any group that remains. We will have continued access to the Carriage House, and perhaps any other establishment in Jefferson that might let us finish filming.

Last Group departs for one hour trip to NTCC. Time? When we can¹

¹ Our film is on Youtube. Please query at this site:<Pressed but not Crushed: The UT Saga of Barbara Conrad> to view. Note there is also a short trailer by this name. The film is slightly over an hour in length.