



The University of Texas at Austin

The Eyes of Texas History Committee Report

March 9, 2021

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An Open Letter to President Hartzell and the University of Texas Community

Dear President Hartzell and Members of the Longhorn Nation,

With humility, we submit to you the product of our collective work, The Eyes of Texas History Committee Report. From the announcement of our committee on October 6, 2020, to late February, our collective endeavored to research, analyze, and collect data to respond to the four charges issued to us.

Before acknowledging one of the most impactful, memorable and inspiring committees, I must first recognize that our work would not have been possible without the voice, courage and action of our students, especially our student-athletes. No words can express our committee's pride in their love for our university as well as their deep desire to effect positive long-term change. They learned and we learned from them. They taught us to stand up for what matters; they taught us that this is not about winning or losing, but finding truth; they taught us that we have a bright future in our society with dynamic, bold leaders emerging on our campus. We salute them and encourage our community to do so as well.

I would like to first thank the staff at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History who undertook the massive task of digitizing archival files. Because of the pandemic, the Briscoe Center was inaccessible and the dedicated staff spent hours scanning and uploading files for our use. The UT Libraries, who maintain archives such as the Cactus Yearbooks, made it possible for us to conduct our research from the earliest days of the university. Additionally, the staff of the Austin History Center provided documents essential to our work.

The work of the committee was adroitly supported by a team of staff members, administrators, and graduate students. Daniel Becton, Janet Griffith, Mariama Nagbe, and John Smart ensured that the committee had access to notes, technology, and other means of support. Their manifest hours devoted to this project allowed us to work to advance meaningfully on a daily basis. Brad Deutser relentlessly supported our work by interviewing hundreds of members of Longhorn Nation, participating in our committee work, and orchestrating many of the products of the committee such as the videos – a truly dedicated Longhorn.

This committee was composed of former students, current students, administrators, faculty members, student athletes, retired administrators, spirit squad members, and communication specialists. Individuals on the committee sacrificed for the good of our university – with members spread across the world, some caring for elderly parents and newborns, and many with full-time careers and family responsibilities. On a weekly, and for many daily basis, this team voluntarily made the time to listen, work, discuss, and conduct research. As a collective, we were supported by the excellent research and investment of time each member brought to our work. The university is fortunate to have these dedicated individuals serving on the committee. I am indebted to them for their grace and hard work.

H. W. Brands	Cloteal Davis Haynes	Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez
Ricky Brown	Yolanda Hall	Victor Sáenz
Don Carleton	Kate Holloway	Cherise Smith
Rick Church	Peniel Joseph	Courtney SoRelle
Quan Cosby	Sharon Justice	Ronnye Vargas Stidvent
Jim Davis	Anagha Kikkeri	Andrew Vo
Logan Eggleston	Jim Nicar	Jenn Wang
Caroline Enriquez	Kyanna Richard	J. B. Bird

This report responds to the charges set forth by President Hartzell: to examine the origins of “The Eyes of Texas,” to analyzing the uses by the university, student organizations, and those beyond the Forty Acres; and to propose ways to educate the community on its history. What became evident to us was how much the institution means to students, alumni, and the larger community. We took this to heart as we conducted our work, knowing that so many were eager to engage with the report.

“The Eyes of Texas” history approximately overlaps with the history of the university. It was written in 1903, instigated by two students who were troubled that their school did not have its own song. The first draft of the song wasn't successful, and their second attempt, debuted at a minstrel show, was the one that captured the attention of the student body. Two years later, the parody song transformed into a solemn hymn on the occasion of President Prather's death. Ever since, the song and its

lyrics have been applied in multiple contexts, with multiple goals: to inspire spirit, to critique leaders, to motivate students, to represent a political perspective.

The history of this institution, the state, and indeed our nation, in many ways, is told through “The Eyes of Texas”: the noble, transcendent moments, as well as those that speak to exclusion and oppression. Our collective charge is to understand, reflect, and digest this chronicle, and strategize how we can in fact meet the challenge of being an institution welcoming and befitting of, in the words of lyricist John Lang Sinclair, “eyes of every hue.”

This report is not a cudgel to settle a debate. Instead, it is a call to accountability. While many school songs are hubristic statements of pride, “The Eyes of Texas” is a song lyrically that reminds the singer that the best is expected, at all times, from this moment to eternity. Our task as a university community – students, staff, faculty, alumni, friends of the university, and the larger community – is to acknowledge our history *in its entirety*, understand where we must do better, and chart a plan of action living up to our espoused values. As Toni Morrison stated, “This culture doesn’t encourage dwelling on, let alone coming to terms with, the truth about the past.” Our challenge is to do this, and our actions must be clear, measurable, and enduring.

Further, we must collectively commit to the work, finding common ground through foundations of respect: reasonable people can come to different conclusions and personal feelings about “The Eyes of Texas.” Traditions do not endure through disrespect, coercion, or threat; indeed, the song is often an entry point for deeper discussions about identity, belonging, and respect. Our community needs to build courageous capacity for these necessary and needed conversations, not just in the circles we inhabit, but also in those less familiar to us – all equally essential parts of the Longhorn Nation.

A last thought is that the news cycle in 2021 suggests that there will be a great deal of attention about the report initially, but over time, this work will fade from the front pages of newspapers and social media. The temptation to rapidly ingest the contents of The Eyes of Texas History Committee and “move on” is a risk; our intent is for this report and the recommendations within to motivate our collective work as an institution and community going forward. The efforts are vast, yet the passion and advocacy in our community to be a university of the first class meet that obligation. With the utmost humility, our committee shares our report with Longhorn Nation and beyond—ready to start a conversation and work that changes the world.

You have my most passionate, unwavering commitment, along with that of Brad, as well as others on our committee, that we will be at the forefront of these challenging conversations, working to bridge divides and create the Longhorn Nation that lives up to the ideals we all dream for our university. The Eyes can and must mean something more than the past, they are the cultural foundation for our future – one where we embrace difference; yearn for truth and understanding; encourage greatness beyond ourselves; be of service to our Longhorn community and society.

UT Alumnus Kenny Jastrow, reflecting on the work of alumni decades ago, said that the rallying cry was “For Texas I Will.” They didn’t say, “For Texas I Will—When Things Get Better.” This report is an impetus for us all to commit to make things better. After all, the eyes of all of Texas and the country are upon us, once again.

For Texas, we will.

Rich Reddick, BA ‘95

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Chair, The Eyes of Texas History Committee

Executive Summary

Key Takeaways

“The Eyes of Texas” Remains Our Alma Mater

President Hartzell stated in July 2020 that “The Eyes of Texas” would remain UT’s alma mater, the UT System Board of Regents supported his decision, and the Eyes of Texas History Committee was created with the sole authority to research and understand the song’s history, as well as institutional and broader historical uses since its inception.

The History of the Song Reflects the History of America

The history of “The Eyes of Texas” mirrors the history of the United States, Texas, The University of Texas at Austin as well as its band and sports teams. This complexity creates an opportunity for continued learning, sharing and understanding.

Facts and Historical Context Matter

Research by the committee has uncovered important facts and historical context, some of which has never been systematically compiled and analyzed until now. These historical facts add complexity and richness to the story of a song that debuted in a racist setting, exceedingly common for the time, but, as the preponderance of research showed, had no racist intent in that it was intended to parody the famous phrases of the university president. However, systemic racial intent existed in the setting and culture where the song debuted. The exclusion of Black students at that time presents an opportunity to think about how they and other communities of color have fought for inclusion and the work that remains to ensure all members of our community feel they belong.

Living Out the Meaning

From its inception, “The Eyes of Texas” has always been a song about *accountability*. Therefore, the spirit and intention of the song compels the university to be transparent about its past and be ever more accountable to the state and its diverse people. In this sense, the work of the committee was a microcosm of what the university should stand for: research, getting to the facts, seeking to understand others’ viewpoints, continuing to learn, courageously confronting and acknowledging our history, and finding ways to strengthen our community going forward.

Controversy

In the summer of 2020, a mass social movement to identify and root out systemic racism swept the United States. As part of this movement, many students, faculty members, staff members and alumni of The University of Texas at Austin raised concerns with issues of social progress on our campus and in our community, issues substantive and symbolic. In the latter category were long-standing concerns over the university’s alma mater, “The Eyes of Texas.” Like the dialogue across the country, diverse university constituents had raw, emotional and heart-wrenching responses. The environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic limited conversation and exacerbated the situation, as people inside and outside the university were forced to process challenging social issues without the benefit of in-person dialogue. Breakdowns in understanding and communication occurred through the politically and socially charged fall with groups feeling attacked and marginalized.

These concerns included the fact that it was debuted in a minstrel show and therefore likely by student singers wearing “blackface”; the belief that the phrase “The eyes of Texas are upon you” was derived from Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, who was thought to have often said “the eyes of the South are upon you”; the claim that lyrics such as “you cannot get away at night or early in the morn” were nostalgic references to slavery; and the belief that the tune itself, lifted from “The Levee Song,” better known as “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad,” constituted a racist trope.

After many weeks of meetings with dozens of groups and individuals, then-interim President Jay Hartzell announced on July 13

a raft of initiatives aimed at making the university a more inclusive environment for all students, faculty and staff. Among the list of initiatives, Hartzell addressed “The Eyes of Texas” controversy, writing:

Own, acknowledge and teach about all aspects of the origins of “The Eyes of Texas” as we continue to sing it moving forward with a redefined vision that unites our community.

“The Eyes of Texas,” in its current form, will continue to be our alma mater. Aspects of its origin, whether previously widely known or unknown, have created a rift in how the song is understood and celebrated, and that must be fixed. It is my belief that we can effectively reclaim and redefine what this song stands for by first owning and acknowledging its history in a way that is open and transparent.

Together, we have the power to define what the Eyes of Texas expect of us, what they demand of us, and what standard they hold us to now. “The Eyes of Texas” should not only unite us, but hold all of us accountable to our institution’s core values. But we first must own the history. Only then can we reimagine its future, and I look forward to partnering with our campus community to do just that.

The UT System Board of Regents supported the decision to keep the song. To begin the process, the president formed the Eyes of Texas History Committee.

To move forward on this issue, the president formed the Eyes of Texas History Committee. The Eyes of Texas History Committee, as it was named, was given four charges:

1. Collect and document the facts of: the origin, the creators’ intent, and the elements of “The Eyes of Texas,” including the lyrics and music.
2. Examine the university’s historical institutional use and performance of “The Eyes of Texas.”
3. Chronicle the historical usage of “The Eyes of Texas” by University of Texas students, staff, faculty and alumni, as well as its usage in broader cultural events, such as film, literature and popular media.
4. Recommend potential communication tactics and or strategies to memorialize the history of “The Eyes of Texas.”

Below is a summary of some of the committee’s most notable findings.

The Lyrics

In 1902, UT student Lewis Johnson, believing UT needed a school song, persuaded fellow student John Lang Sinclair, the university’s poet laureate, to write the lyrics. The result, “The Eyes of Texas,” drew inspiration from a favorite phrase of UT’s then-president William Prather—“the eyes of Texas are upon you.”

Many accounts over the years have stated as fact that the saying “The eyes of Texas are upon you” was inspired by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, who was thought to have often said “the eyes of the South are upon you” as president of Washington College after the Civil War, where Prather had studied. Lee was clearly a beloved figure to Prather, but no primary source has been found connecting the phrase as something that Lee used. The oft-repeated claims that Lee was the inspiration all seem to trace back to a 1938 memoir by retired engineering dean T.U. Taylor. The committee’s research revealed multiple errors in Taylor’s remembrance. What is more, research failed to discover in the records of Washington & Lee University (as Washington College is now called) evidence that Lee *ever* closed an address to the students with the phrase attributed to him by the Taylor account.

Finally on this point, the committee noted numerous examples of the formulation “the eyes of _____ are upon you” around the world and long predating 1903. In the earliest example, the Book of Job declares, “For His eyes are on the ways of a man, and He sees his every step.” Other uses of the line include President George Washington saying “the eyes of the nation are upon you.” Based on the evidence, the committee concluded that there was a very low likelihood that the line originated with Robert E. Lee and was instead a message of encouragement and accountability to the students and faculty at the then-fledgling university.

The Meaning

As poet laureate of the university, Sinclair was precise and intentional with his words. They were not written in a stereotypical dialect that was the style of minstrelsy, and instead, written to purposefully support Prather and his call to the student body.

According to Lewis Johnson's extensive family historical records, the section:

Do not think you can escape them
At night or early in the morn
The eyes of Texas are upon you

is a direct statement to the student body (overwhelmingly white at that time) that the elders of the state and the previous generation are watching them and expecting them to do great things with their education. It also recognizes that students will be students including at night—and cautions them that, while having fun, “the eyes” remain a measure of accountability for all. Sinclair was clear that his words were in absolute support of President Prather's admonition to his students and the reality of how their conduct had a direct reflection on the fledgling university, especially with legislators and local media. In Sinclair's own words from 1931:

“It should be explained that in those days, before the University struck oil, and before the millennium had arrived when the legislature should be composed entirely of University graduates who would pass appropriation bills without a dissenting vote, the conduct of the student body had an immediate relation to the actual budget.

Though others, like Jim Cannon, a member of the Varsity Quartette who first sang “The Eyes” at the Varsity minstrel show, would describe the performance as a “joke,” poking fun at the president for how much he used the phrase, for John Lang Sinclair, it was an earnest endorsement of Prather's admonition to his students during days in which student conduct in the state capital had a direct influence on the university's reputation and budget appropriation.

The committee found no evidence the lyrics were intended to show nostalgia for slavery and instead, found facts that supported the song's message of accountability.

The Tune

Sinclair borrowed a popular melody that most UT students would have already known—“I've Been Working on the Railroad”—and which was simple enough that the others could quickly pick it up. Borrowing melodies, often without attribution, was common in the 19th century. The tune for “The Star-Spangled Banner” came from a British drinking song called “To Anacreon in Heaven.”

“I've Been Working on the Railroad” was also called “The Levee Song.” The origin of that tune is unclear. The central theme of the song might well have come from Franz Von Suppé's 1846 *Poet and Peasant Overture* and can be heard about one minute into the piece. The first publication of “I've Been Working on the Railroad” (music and lyrics) was in 1894.

The Debut

“The Eyes of Texas” was first performed on May 12, 1903. It was one number in a student-organized minstrel show at the Hancock Opera House in downtown Austin. The show was a fundraiser for UT's track team, with performances and musical support by the university's band. The event was chosen to debut the song because the students knew that President Prather was expected to attend the event and his presence was paramount in order to make fun of him.

The minstrel show was perhaps the most popular form of entertainment at the turn of the 20th century and was the forerunner to vaudeville, radio and TV. Our research reveals that the song was intended to affectionately parody President Prather's famous signatory line. That “The Eyes of Texas” was most probably debuted in blackface is a painful reality of the song's

origin. Although it was not written in dialect and was not composed as a minstrel song, we are uncomfortable with this aspect of its history. We believe it is important to fully acknowledge and learn from the university's past.

The song was an immediate hit with students. When President Prather died in office just two years later, it was played as a "reverential hymn," which began to demonstrate the range of emotion the song could express. As early as 1916 it was a part of the Spring Commencement ceremony. Meanwhile the song was quickly becoming a fixture at sporting events.

This marked a sharp change in its usage and understanding. In the months after Prather's memorial service, "The Eyes" rooted itself more deeply into the customs and rituals of campus life, and over the next decade, became an integral part of the identity of the university.

In Politics and as Protest

When President Sidney Mezes invited the entire Legislature to campus for a barbecue in 1911, members were greeted at the old Main Building by more than 600 female students who pinned flowers on their lapels and serenaded them with "The Eyes." The message was subtle but clear: The eyes of the people of Texas were looking to the lawmakers to do what was right and properly fund the state university.

In 1917, after years of strife between Gov. James "Pa" Ferguson and the university administration, students organized a march on the Capitol. It was the first protest demonstration in UT's history. Students paraded from campus to the Capitol, through the rotunda, and then circled the Capitol grounds singing "The Eyes of Texas." In 1944, students again marched on the Capitol singing the song, this time in support of embattled President Homer Rainey. He was accused of hiring a conscientious objector, as well as an allegedly gay professor, and it was further alleged that he wanted to admit African Americans to the university. When he was fired, students held a funeral parade for the death of academic freedom, and "The Eyes of Texas" was played as a dirge.

Gaining Steam

In 1916, years before women cheered in stadiums, just after the kick-off of the UT vs. Rice game, "The Eyes" was heard for the first time sung by both men and women. This was the first time women had any voice in a stadium. As reported by the *Alcalde* alumni magazine, the women, "true to their traditions . . . refrained from cheering, but when the 'eds' (men) rose to the 'Eyes of Texas' the co-eds (women) couldn't sit still and for the first time in University football their well-modulated sopranos joined in with the coarser strains across the gridiron. It was new, and it was fine. And now the women are wondering why they haven't been doing it all the time."

By the 1920s, "The Eyes" was everywhere, fully integrated into campus life and popular throughout the state. In 1918, during World War I, the university published a *Community Song Book* of both Texas and patriotic tunes, which was widely used by elementary schools for singalongs. "The Eyes" was on the first page.

On campus, touring orchestras playing Saturday night dances performed "The Eyes" as the last song of the evening. At football games, the song was elevated to a pre-game tradition. Longhorn fans rose, doffed their hats, and reverently sang "The Eyes" before kick-off. Another important game tradition was also birthed with the student "snake dance" and post game celebration where fans supported the players after the game "and portray true Texas spirit here, because this is done whether we win or lose." This tradition continues today with the singing of "The Eyes of Texas."

In 1930, President Harry Benedict asked faculty members to translate "The Eyes" into numerous languages, including Esperanto.

Beyond UT

The song's popularity propelled it beyond the campus. Schoolchildren across Texas performed it at assemblies and class singalongs. It was heard at birthday parties and weddings and county fairs. Twice, state legislators unsuccessfully tried to make it the state song. The phrase was used by the League of Women Voters during the ratification of the 19th Amendment. It was used to welcome a king and queen to Texas.

From World War II to the present, "The Eyes of Texas" has served as a connection for both alumni and all Texans stationed abroad. Hollywood has used it at least six times to connect characters to Texas. NASA used "The Eyes" as a wake-up alarm for sleeping astronauts during its Gemini, Apollo and Skylab missions, while in 1969, UT graduate Alan Bean took the song, printed on a piece of silk, to the moon and back.

In 1966, farm workers and clergy marched from the Rio Grande Valley to the Capitol in Austin singing "The Eyes of Texas" along the way, again as a protest song about accountability.

At the Spring Commencement in 2000, Barbara Smith Conrad (1937-2017), world renowned mezzo-soprano, led graduates in "The Eyes of Texas." As one of UT's Precursors—the first Black undergraduate students—admitted in 1956, Conrad was encouraged to audition for the leading role in the school production, which she got. But when the lead male role went to a White student, a state legislator objected to the mixed-race couple and pressured the administration to rescind the role, which it did, a move that made national news. Conrad persevered, got her degree, became a renowned opera singer, and was recognized as a Distinguished Alumna in 1985. Her moving 2000 performance, a show of grace toward the university that had wronged her, must be one of the most definitive versions of "The Eyes of Texas."

Select Recommendations

The Eyes of Texas History Committee considered nearly 100 ideas for moving forward with the alma mater in a healing and constructive way, and the full report offers "40 recommendations for the Forty Acres":

- Reinforce to all that our school song will remain, but address the negative historical aspects of the song upfront and include historical context.
- Recognize those students who used their voices and actions in brave ways and who lived up to our slogan of "What starts here changes the world."
- Ensure that the actions from the committee and report are assigned to an individual with oversight and financial authority (such as the Office of the President or Division of Diversity and Community Engagement).
- Teach the history of "The Eyes of Texas" and the university at student orientations.
- Create a fund (with the Texas Exes) for student-athletes to have an active role in leading, learning and directing efforts for positive social change.
- Review the Fan Conduct Standards at all UT events to ensure permanent removal of any fan using hateful, racially directed language.
- Create and publish a comprehensive fact-based history of the song.
- Develop an exceptionally high-quality, interactive, dedicated website with the artifacts, photos, important links, musical variations of "The Eyes of Texas," and video—portraying the history honestly and bravely.
- Develop a campaign that encourages Longhorns to lean into difficult conversations, including race, history and talking across differences.
- Use UT resources to teach our community (and to be a model to others) how to have difficult conversations—using our faculty experts such as the Difficult Dialogues Program and partners such as Brené Brown.)
- Create an institute at UT to study and encourage difficult conversations about controversial and challenging topics including "The Eyes of Texas."
- Develop a course for incoming UT students, including athletes, band, governing council and spirit organizations, providing the history of "The Eyes of Texas," the university, Austin and the path forward, open to faculty and staff as well.

- Arrange meetings, conversations and gatherings of diverse groups of students, faculty, staff, alumni and others connected to the university to share the work and have discussions.
- Create a learning guide on how to “Encourage Challenging Conversations” about “The Eyes of Texas” and the university’s history for leaders of organizations on and off campus.
- Present the history and the facts to Texas Exes chapters across the country.
- Show a brief video at Longhorn football games (as well as other sports).
- Produce a high-quality documentary on “The Eyes,” integration and the history of the university, including the band, football, as well as spirit and traditions organizations, and distribute it to alumni chapters.
- Create a “Traditions Hall” at UT to memorialize the traditions, the history and the understanding of the defining traditions at UT.

It has become clear that without facts and clarity, there will still be potential for division. Even with this report, that divide may remain – but it will be framed by facts grounded in history rather than assumptions and narratives without factual basis. Therefore, these recommendations focus on preserving the report, ensuring its access and protecting its place in our history so current and future generations can have a place to learn, reflect and host challenging conversations about the past, and more important, the future.

Charge 1:

Collect and document the facts of: the origin, the creators' intent, and the elements of "The Eyes of Texas," including the lyrics and music.

The Developing University: Foreshadowing the Eyes of Texas

While the University of Texas was established in 1883, its spirit and traditions developed over time. By 1903, UT was still a fledgling university with approximately 1,500 students, limited financial resources, and a handful of buildings, none of which remains standing. At this time, the students of the university were at the forefront of beginning to directionally forge the university's evolving character and early traditions.

Students adopted chants and yells openly borrowed from other schools, such as the Varsity Yell taken from Philips Exeter Academy with ending changed from P.E.A. to U.T.A.

Hullabaloo! Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray!
Hullabaloo! Hoo-ray! Hoo-ray!
Hoo-RAY! Hoo-RAY!
'Varsity! 'Varsity! U. T. A.!!¹

They adopted the tradition of a yearbook, with the first Cactus published in 1894, celebrating the 20 graduates that year..



The Class of 1894. Two members of the class of note: E. P. Schoch (center), class president, and first faculty member in the Department of Chemical Engineering in 1916, and Manuel Marius Garcia, first Mexican American graduate of UT (bottom left).²



In 1900, after a vote of students, alumni, faculty, orange and white beat out orange and maroon as the official school colors.³ Other traditions were in various stages of formation at that time, often with placeholders borrowed from established universities. Frustrated with singing songs and adopting traditions from other universities, students were in search of unifying symbols that uniquely reflected the spirit of the University of Texas. In 1903, President Prather presented the official university seal to the faculty for adoption, which they approved and adopted two years later. That seal, popular with the students at the time, remains in use today. In 1902, the focus of that frustration was on the absence of a school song.

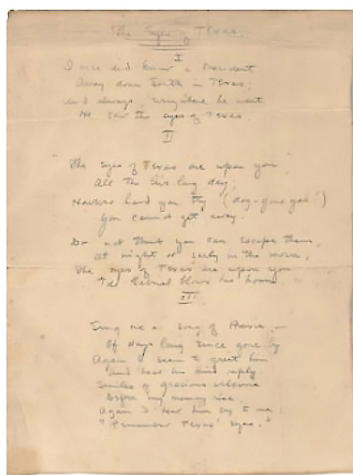
The Originators of the Eyes

In 1902, Lewis Johnson came to the University of Texas as a student with a goal to create a true University of Texas school song to replace the borrowed songs of other universities. He searched the campus to find the right person to write the song. This is where he found John Lang Sinclair. Both Johnson and Sinclair were individuals of modest means. In fact, Johnson spent his early 20s working as a teacher just to earn enough money to attend the University of Texas as a law student.

¹ Texas Exes, "UT Yells," <https://www.texasexes.org/about-us/history-and-traditions/ut-yells>

² Cactus Yearbook, 1894, p. 35.

³ Margaret Berry, *UT Traditions and Nostalgia* (Shoal Creek, 1975), pp. 19-20.



John Lang Sinclair and the original lyrics of "The Eyes of Texas."

Sinclair was, to put it mildly, a very involved student. He was editor-in-chief of the Magazine, literary editor of the Cactus, associate editor of the Calendar and the Texan, member of his dormitory's orchestra, the university band, and the glee club, president of the junior class, class poet, and held the university record for the pole vault.⁴ He was a thoughtful young man, who understood the relation of the university and the impact students had on its standing. Further, through his life he was thought to be "as careful of the feelings of the lowly and the ignorant as of those who were important."⁵

Both men lived at Brackenridge Hall, or "B. Hall," which was the university's first residence hall for men. Opened in 1890, it was intended to provide inexpensive housing for the "poor boys" of the state. The dorm was known as the "citadel of democracy" for the manner in which it was self-run by the students with no social class distinction. This became a place where issues were raised and vigorously debated. B. Hall became a major factor to the development of key institutional elements that still exist, including: "The Eyes of Texas," Longhorn Band, The Texan newspaper, student government, Bevo the longhorn mascot, and other UT traditions.

The Beginning of the Eyes

The words to "The Eyes of Texas" were written by UT student John Lang Sinclair, literary editor of the *Cactus* yearbook and member of the UT Band, at the urging of Lewis Johnson, a fellow student and member of the band and the director of

the university Chorus. Johnson believed that UT, not 20 years old, needed a song its students could sing as proudly as the students of Harvard and Princeton sang their school songs. He enlisted Sinclair to create one.

Sinclair's first attempt converted a nationally known song called "Jolly Students of America" to "Jolly Students of the Varsity"—"Varsity" being a synonym in those days for "University." It was performed in the spring of 1902 at a student talent show.

For we are jolly students of the 'Varsity, the 'Varsity!
We are a merry, merry crew.
We'll show the chief of all policemen who we are
Rah! Rah! Rah!
Down on the Avenue.

The reception was warm, but the song lacked the distinctive Texas identity Johnson was looking for. He talked Sinclair into trying again.

Sinclair then wrote the words to "The Eyes of Texas." His lyrics drew inspiration from a favorite phrase of the president of UT, William Prather – "the Eyes of Texas are upon you." As the university's poet laureate, Sinclair was precise with his words and, of note, it appears that he was intentional with his words and the fact that they were not written in any form of stereotypical dialect, as songs *created* for minstrelsy were, and instead, written to purposefully support Prather and his call to the student body.

He then took a popular melody that many UT students already knew—"I've Been Working on the Railroad"—and which was simple enough that the others could quickly pick it up. Borrowing melodies, often without attribution, was common in the nineteenth century. The tune for "The Star-Spangled Banner" came from a British drinking song called "To Anacreon in Heaven";⁶ "My Country 'Tis of Thee" took its music from the British national anthem, "God Save the Queen/King."⁷

What became "The Eyes of Texas" was first performed in public on May 12, 1903. The melody was borrowed from a song already popular as "I've Been Working on the Railroad," also called "The Levee Song." The origin of that tune is unclear. The central theme of the song might well have come from

4 Austin Statesman, "Eyes of Texas Author May Come to UT Fete," March 5, 1936

5 William Longino, "John Lang Sinclair – A Memorial." *Alcalde*, February 1947, p. 108.

6 Oscar George Sonneck, *The Star Spangled Banner*, 1914, p. 70.

7 Robert J. Branham, Stephen John Hartnett, and Stephen J. Hartnett. *Sweet Freedom's Song: "My country 'tis of thee" and Democracy in America*. Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 141.

Franz Von Suppé's 1846 *Poet and Peasant Overture*.⁸ The first publication of "I've Been Working on the Railroad" (music and lyrics) was in 1894.⁹

The Origin of the Phrase

In a speech on November 15, 1900, to an incoming class of UT medical students, Prather admonished the young men and women to do their very best. "I recall reading an incident during the battle of the Wilderness"—in the Civil War—"at a time when it looked as if the day was lost," he said. "General Robert E. Lee rode up and felt the emergency was upon him. 'What brigade is this?' he asked of the commanding officer, Gen. Gregg. 'The Texas brigade,' was the answer. 'When you strike the enemy, charge them,' said Gen. Lee. 'Texans always move them.' Then taking off his hat, he rode forward and proposed to lead them. General Gregg gave the command: 'Attention, Texas Brigade! Forward! The eyes of General Lee are upon you!' This day, young ladies and gentlemen of the College, I give you your marching orders for the session, 'Forward! The eyes of Texas are upon you!'"¹⁰

This speech was printed in the *University Record* for December 1900. The same story, about the Texas brigade, was remembered by Prather's daughter, Mary Lee Prather Darden, in an article in the *Dallas Morning News* in May 1926, except that she placed her father's remarks in his inaugural speech as UT president, in October 1899.¹¹ The *University Record* for October 1899 printed that speech; in it, as printed, Prather quoted Aristotle, Harvard president Charles Eliot, William Makepeace Thackeray, and the authors of the Texas Declaration of Independence, but he made no mention of Robert E. Lee, and he did not tell the students that "the eyes of Texas" were upon them. Nor did the *Austin Daily Statesman's* transcript of Prather's inaugural address contain any reference to Lee or the eyes of Texas. The confusion about the date of the speech possibly reflects the fact that Prather was merely acting president in 1899, and not made president formally until 1900.

A different version of the origins of Prather's admonition was related in 1938 by Thomas Taylor, retired dean of engineering at UT. In his memoir, *Fifty Years on Forty Acres*, Taylor wrote, "In 1899 William Prather was elected President of the University

of Texas. In his opening address to the student body he closed with the words, 'Students of the University of Texas, the eyes of Texas are upon you.' Later all his speeches closed with those words. These words soon became familiar to the student body and they were always ready to hear them at the close of an address by the President. President Prather explained to Dean Taylor"—the author—"on one occasion that he had paraphrased the words of General Robert E. Lee, President of Washington College at Lexington, Virginia"—where Prather had been a student. "General Lee was in the habit of closing all his addresses to the student body of Washington College with the words, 'Remember that the eyes of the South are upon you.' These words coming from the venerable lips of Robert E. Lee made a profound impression on the student, William L. Prather, and when he was elected President of the University of Texas he followed largely the example of General Robert E. Lee."¹²

Perhaps Prather did tell Taylor a different story than he told the medical students. But this appears unlikely. For there to have been two separate events involving "the eyes" of some person or region, and that separately inspired Prather's "eyes of Texas," seems a stretch. More likely Taylor misremembered.

Further, research has failed to discover in the records of Washington & Lee University (as Washington College is now called) evidence that Lee ever closed an address to the students with the phrase attributed to him by the Taylor account. Absence of evidence, of course, is not proof of absence. But if the phrase was as common with Lee as Taylor asserted, one would expect *some* supporting evidence.

Lee *did* employ a phrase very much like that in the earlier version, about the Texas brigade, in an order to his troops on September 9, 1861. "The eyes of the country are upon you," he told his men, referring to the Confederacy. "The safety of your homes and the lives of all you hold dear depend upon your courage and exertions."¹³

It bears noting that the "eyes of . . ." formulation had a long history before either Lee or Prather got to it. The Book of Job declares, "For His eyes are on the ways of a man, and He sees his every step."¹⁴ General George Washington (Lee's hero), told his soldiers in the Continental Army, "The eyes of all our countrymen are now upon us."¹⁵ Washington used the phrase

8 *Ibid.*

9 William E. Studwell, *The Americana Song Reader*. Haworth Press, 1997, p. 34.

10 *The University Record*, December 1900, p. 384.

11 *Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 1926.

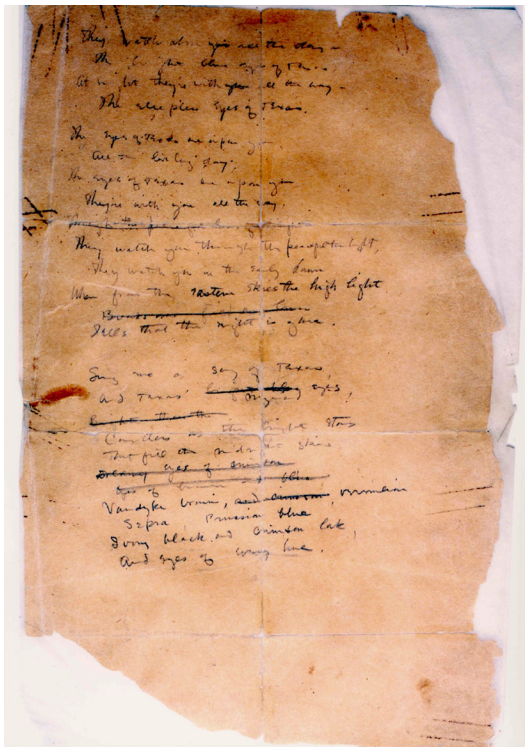
12 Thomas U. Taylor, *Fifty Years on Forty Acres*, University of Virginia Press, 1938, p. 232.

13 Robert E. Lee, Special Order #7, 1861.

14 Job, 34: 21.

15 George Washington, General Orders, July 2, 1776.

dozens of times in orders and correspondence. Sometimes he felt the scrutiny himself. "To have the eyes of the whole Continent fixed with anxious expectation of hearing of some great event, and to be restrained in every military operation for want of the necessary means of carrying it out, is not very pleasing," he wrote to John Hancock at a trying moment of the Revolutionary War. John Adams picked up the locution. As president he told the Senate, "The eyes of the world are upon you."¹⁶ Adams's vanity was tickled by a letter from a worried constituent declaring, "Perhaps no person from the days of Noah, down to the present time, had ever a more important trust committed to his charge.... The eyes of the world are turned to you."¹⁷ William Henry Harrison, during the War of 1812, told his troops, "Remember that the eyes of your country are upon you."¹⁸ In Texas history, Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels launched the settlement of what he hoped would be a new Germany in the Texas Hill Country, with the words, "The eyes of all Germany—no, the eyes of all Europe—are fixed on us and our undertaking."¹⁹



The original lyrics of *The Eyes of Texas*, written on brown paper from Bosche's Laundry.²⁰

The Lyrics

Whatever the inspiration for Prather's "eyes of Texas" formulation, he was very proud of it. The printed record of his medical school address says it elicited "great applause." He repeated it often—so often that the students made fun of him and it behind his back, until Sinclair decided to write it into his song. His hook was "The eyes of Texas are upon you," which he paired to "all the livelong day" from "I've Been Working on the Railroad." This would start the chorus. He filled out the rest of the chorus, and the verses, with multiple images of Texas eyes.

They watch above you all the day
The bright blue eyes of Texas.
At midnight they're with you all the way
The sleepless eyes of Texas.

Chorus

The eyes of Texas are upon you
All the livelong day.
The eyes of Texas are upon you
They're with you all the way.
They watch you through the peaceful night
They watch you in the early dawn
When from the eastern skies the high light
Tells that the night is gone.

Sing me a song of Texas
And Texas' myriad eyes
Countless as the bright stars
That fill the midnight skies.

Vandyke brown, vermillion
Sepia, Prussian blue
Ivory black and crimson lac
And eyes of every hue.²¹

¹⁶ John Adams, From John Adams to United States Senate, 21 April 1879.

¹⁷ Adams, "Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams," 1797, <https://bit.ly/3tVyJC6>

¹⁸ Samuel J. Burr, *The Life and Times of William Henry Harrison*, p. 198.

¹⁹ Don Walden, "'The Eyes of Texas' Want You to Build Community," *The Alcalde*, March 2000, p. 72.

²⁰ Jim Nicar, "The Eyes of Texas," *UT History Corner*, <https://jimnicar.com/ut-traditions/the-eyes-of-texas/>

²¹ Texas Exes, "The Eyes"

Not long after this, Sinclair and Johnson discovered an opportunity to unveil the new song, at a fundraising event Prather was certain to attend.²² Sinclair revised the lyrics to sharpen the joke against the university president.

I once did know a president
Away down south in Texas
And always everywhere he went
He saw the eyes of Texas

Chorus

The eyes of Texas are upon you
All the livelong day
The eyes of Texas are upon you
You cannot get away
Do not think you can escape them
At night or early in the morn
The eyes of Texas are upon you
Till Gabriel blows his horn

Sing me a song of Prexy
Of days long since gone by
Again I seem to greet him
And hear his kind reply

Smiles of gracious welcome
Before my memory rise
Again I hear him say to me
“Remember Texas’ eyes”²³

This version of the song appears to have also been performed on Colonel Prather’s lawn by students shortly after its debut. From Lewis Johnson’s family records, Johnson penned the following explaining this performance in protest of a decision from the president.

Like the recent student demonstration in Rome against the powers opposition to the Mussolini war on Ethiopia, a student protest was organized and a demonstrative march made to the Colonel’s residence where the “Eyes of Texas” was sung in defiance. Based on these tilts with Prexy, the author composed another set of verses as a further and more directly applied joke on Prexy, but mellowed with kindness and thoughtfulness.²⁴

Lyrical Intent and Definition

Over the years, questions have been raised about the author’s intent and definition around several key words and phrases. While there was some level of activism on college campuses even in the early 1900s, there is little understanding around Sinclair’s intention or any proof of his desire to make any statement of inclusivity when he expresses:

Vandyke brown, vermillion
Sepia, Prussian blue
Ivory black and crimson lac
And eyes of every hue.

Further, the reference to Gabriel blows his horn is directly linked to archangel Gabriel. Gabriel’s blowing of his horn signifies the Rapture, which is in essence, “until the end of time.”

And, according to Johnson’s extensive family historical records, the section:

Do not think you can escape them
At night or early in the morn
The eyes of Texas are upon you

is a direct statement to the student body (overwhelmingly white at that time) that the elders of the state and the previous generation are watching them and expecting them to do great things with their education. It also recognizes that students will be students including at night – and cautions them, again, that while having fun the Eyes remain a measure of accountability for all. Sinclair was clear that his words were in absolute support of “Prexy” Prather’s admonition to his students and the reality of how their conduct had a direct reflection on the fledgling university, especially with legislators and local media.

From Johnson’s family records, Lewis Johnson penned his view of private schools’ view of state schools.

Allegations were general that the scientific faculty was composed of infidels and the political science faculty of socialists: that immorality reigned on campus and drunkenness was rampant. These false accusations touched Col. Prather deeply for they were wholly unjust. He was very sensitive of the fair name of the school and grew militant when called to defend it.²⁵

22 Kathryn Cochran, “‘Eyes of Texas’ Considered Joke When Introduced,” *Daily Texan*, November 30, 1922, p. 6.

23 Joshua D’Agostino and Erin Morgan, “Did You Know,” *Daily Texan*, April 18, 1998, p. 4.

24 Diane Boddy, personal communication, March 6, 2021.

25 *Ibid.*

First Public Performance and Minstrelsy in the Time

The fundraiser was a minstrel show at the Hancock Opera House on Sixth Street in Austin, just west of Congress Avenue.²⁶ The Hancock hosted live performances of various kinds: musical concerts, vaudeville shows, stage plays, and minstrel shows. In 1896 it had screened the first motion picture seen in Austin. Eventually it would become a regular movie house: the Capitol Theater.²⁷



The Hancock Opera House, circa 1900, at 112-14 West Sixth Street.

The May 1903 show was a benefit for the UT track team, and President Prather did attend. The song was performed by the Varsity Quartet of the UT Glee Club. Prather took Sinclair's song and the joke it contained in good humor, to the delight of the audience, which demanded an encore.²⁸

Soon the song, stripped to its chorus, was being played by the UT Band and sung around campus. President Prather enjoyed the song and quoted its lyrics at UT commencement. When he suddenly died in 1905, it was sung at his funeral, by permission of his family.²⁹



Advertisement in the May 11, 1903 Austin Statesman for the Varsity Minstrel show on May 12.

At the time of the song's premiere, and for decades afterward, the fact that it debuted at a minstrel show occasioned little comment. But eventually this became an issue, and a question was asked: Were the singers who performed the song wearing blackface?

The answer is: Most probably, yes.

The surviving contemporary accounts don't allow a direct, definitive answer. Neither the printed program for the show nor reviews afterward identified cast members as specifically wearing blackface or not. No photographs from the show have been found.

Yet a brief review of the history of the minstrel show as a genre can offer guidance. The following summary accompanies the American Minstrel Show Collection in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the Princeton University Library:

During the 1840s the show was divided into two parts. The first concentrated largely upon the urban Black dandy, the second on the southern plantation slave. Both featured stereotyped caricatures rather than genuine depictions of Blacks, and were usually demeaning. By the 1850s, however, Black elements had been reduced and moved to the concluding section of a three-part show. Music of the "genteel" tradition now prevailed in the first section, where popular and sentimental ballads of the day and polished minstrel songs supplanted



²⁶ Kaitlin Wells, "Secrets in the Eyes of Texas," *Burnt Orange*, Spring 2009, p. 9. <http://links.utexas.edu/bjrxwyo>

²⁷ Cinema Treasures, "Capitol Theater." <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/25381>

²⁸ *Austin Statesman*, "Varsity Glee Club Delights Audience," May 5, 1903, p. 8.

²⁹ Berry, *UT Austin Traditions and Nostalgia*, p. 10.

Colored People, and Bob Cole, a prolific lyricist. “My Castle on the Nile,” written in 1901, satirized the pretensions of newly rich industrialists who built big mansions in exclusive watering holes; the song’s narrator’s roots ran much deeper, into Africa, where his castle was on the Nile. The song was sung that evening by one of the “Bones” characters.

<div> <div>  </div> <div> <div>PROGRAM</div> </div> <div>  </div> </div>		<div> <div>2</div> </div>	<div> <div>Introduction of Mezza Cagg and Graham.</div> </div>
<div> <div>STAFF.</div> </div>			
General Manager.....	F. Homer Curtis.		
Stage Manager.....	Fritts G. Latham.		
Musical Director.....	Paul Jennings.		
Avail. Director.....	Leah Johnson.		
<div> <div>INTERACTORS, F. HOMER CURTIS</div> </div>			
<div> <div>Conductors.</div> </div>			
<div> <div>YANBON</div> </div>		<div> <div>MENES</div> </div>	
Mr. Frank Latham.....	Mr. H. C. Harris		
Mr. Edna Cagg.....	Mr. Murray Graham		
Mr. Stucka.....	Mr. Camp		
Mr. Maywick.....	Mr. Johnson		
<div> <div>Circle Men.</div> </div>			
Mr. R. P. Handing.....	Mr. R. Golden		
Mr. J. R. Cannon.....	Mr. A. C. Jander		
Mr. Robert Richie.....	Mr. W. D. Smith		
Mr. Lewis Johnson.....	Mr. Sam Newton		
Mr. F. H. Kivellin.....	Mr. R. A. Porter		
Mr. J. C. Ballin.....	Mr. G. W. Burkitt		
<div> <div>Soloists.</div> </div>			
Mr. Lewis Johnson.....	Master Lucas Bacon		
<div> <div>PART I</div> </div>			
Overtime.....	"Varsity Band		
Opening Chorus.....	"Oh, The Lovely Girls."		
<div> <div>Introduction of Mezza Latham and Harris</div> </div>			
<div> <div>Chorus.....</div> </div>			
Song—"The Castle on the Hill".....	"Old Kentucky Home."		
Selection.....	"Varsity Quartette"		
Solo.....	Mr. Harris		
Song—"I Must Be Here a Dreaming".....	Mr. Latham		
Solo—"I'll".....	Master Bacon		
		<div> <div>Introduction of Mezza Cagg and Graham.</div> </div>	
<div> <div>Solo—"I Love You 'Til Death Do Us Part"</div> </div>		<div> <div>Mr. John A. Sing—"The Farewell Song".....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mr. Cagg</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Chorus—"Goodbye Loving March".....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mezza Porter and Willard</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Song—"I'll Be Right At Your Feet"</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mr. Graham</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Grand Finale—"Oh, The Lovely Girls"</div> </div>	<div> <div>Company</div> </div>
		<div> <div>PART II</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>LATHAM, BURKITT AND LATHAM</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>In their clever sketch</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>"The Eccentric Mr. Gilchrist"</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>CAST</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>Mr. Lawrence Lumen and the H. M. Theatre New</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>York.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mr. Geo. Burkitt</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Two Razors.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mezza Pitts and Frank Latham</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Scene—Room in Lumen's House with an office</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>Time—The present.</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>GLIO.</div> </div>	
		<div> <div>Corner Solo.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mr. Walter Stevens</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Horizontal Bar.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mezza Hagggett, Briggs and Curtis</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Varsity Quartette.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Mezza Kivellin, Potts, Smith and Johnson</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Selection.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Varsity Mandolin Club</div> </div>
		<div> <div>A Confidential Chat with.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Murray Graham</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Tumbling.....</div> </div>	<div> <div>Team</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Team Work singles.</div> </div>	<div> <div>Team Work doubles.</div> </div>
		<div> <div>Combinations</div> </div>	<div> <div>High Diving</div> </div>

Other acts almost certainly were. A standard feature of the minstrel show was the comic duo of “Mr. Tambo” and “Mr. Bones.”³¹ The former played tambourine, the latter clappers (“bones”), and both told jokes and sang songs. Both wore blackface and costumes featuring brightly colored swallow-tail coats. The May 12 program identified eight performers as “Comedians,” divided equally between “Tambos” and “Bones.”³²

As for “The Eyes of Texas,” it was performed by the “Varsity Quartette,” identified in the program as consisting of “Messrs. Kivelin, Bolin, Smith and Johnson.” Kivelin, Bolin and Smith were also listed as Circle Men. Johnson was one of the Bones characters.³⁶ All were presumably in blackface. (The Austin Daily Statesman’s review of the show listed the quartet as Cannon, Bolin, Porter and Smith. Cannon and Porter were also Circle Men; so, whoever composed the quartet, all presumably were in blackface.)³⁷ Also in blackface, as one of the Tambos, was John Sinclair, who accompanied the quartet for the song. Although “The Eyes of Texas” was not in the minstrel tradition, beyond being played for laughs, it seems very unlikely that the five would have removed their makeup for this one song.

Retrospective evidence corroborates this, at least regarding Sinclair. *The Daily Texan* for December 3, 1931, published excerpts of an interview with “a man who was at the

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university when the song was first sung,” as the article’s author described him. This otherwise unidentified person apparently attended the 1903 show. Describing Sinclair as “a bear with a banjo”—evidently meant as a compliment—he said further of Sinclair, “He came out on the stage that night of the minstrel show with his face grotesquely blackened and his gaudy, ill-fitting, negroesque clothes, and sang his comic composition, ‘The Eyes of Texas,’ in the same serious, sepulchral tones that Dr. Prather was accustomed to use.”³⁸

The author of the article apparently shared these comments with Sinclair, who responded, about the song, “It was sung by a quartet, of which I was not a member, although it is possible that all of us on the stage were to come in on the chorus, the only part of the song which has survived. My place was farthest from the center of the stage, and all I had to do was give prearranged answers to such questions as were put to me. If I had a banjo, it was just given to me to hold for the occasion; if I was ‘a bear with a banjo,’ as the clipping says, it was in a literal, not a figurative sense. I will admit that my face may have been grotesquely blackened, but am pained at the reference to my gaudy and ill-fitting, negroesque clothes, which were probably the only ones I possessed.”³⁹

John Lang Sinclair, the Eyes of Texas and the Times

Though others, like Jim Cannon, a member of the “Varsity Quartette” who first sang “The Eyes” at the Varsity minstrel show, would describe the performance as a “joke,” for John Lang Sinclair, it was an earnest endorsement of “Prexy” Prather’s admonition to his students. In his own words from 1931:

It should be explained that in those days, before the university struck oil,⁴⁰ and before the millennium had arrived when the legislature should be composed entirely of University graduates who would pass appropriation bills without a dissenting vote, the conduct of the student body had an immediate relation to the actual budget. If, on the morning after a football game, Congress Avenue resembled the wake of a tornado and the front page of the Austin Statesman was filled with references to ‘hoodlums’

and ‘police,’ the legislature would not understand that Thomas Watt Gregory⁴¹ himself had authorized us to ‘go down and bust Congress Avenue wide open.’⁴²

Prather’s exhortation to students to always be mindful of how their conduct reflected on the fledgling university, then, was at the forefront of Sinclair’s mind, as a motivation for the song modeled after the “upright” Colonel Prather with whom he was in “full sympathy.”

According to Sinclair’s widow, Sinclair had writer’s block and could not come up with lyrics for the song. “So one night glee club men marched into his room in “B” Hall (which stand precariously, yet), handed him cigarettes and locked him⁴³ in with an ultimatum – the song or else! “And in the wee hours out came Mr. Sinclair and “The Eyes of Texas.”

He was very surprised about it. And he was always very humble. He never would let anyone make any money out of the song, although he was approached many times with proposals to have it marketed. “The students of the university made the song, he always said.”⁴⁴

Sinclair originally settled in San Antonio after UT but suffered financial problems and ended up relocating to New York with only a few dollars to his name. He worked at Prentice-Hall Publishing, moving up to become editor, and then started a tax service company. At the time of his passing, his classmate William Longino wrote:

John Lang Sinclair was always, instinctively, as careful of the feelings of the lowly and the ignorant as of those who were important. He was as considerate of the Negroes who worked for him as he was of anybody else. Last summer he sent for a colored man who had worked for him in San Antonio 35 years ago – Richard Smith by name. Richard was and is a great teller of tales – one of the best, Mrs. Sinclair tells me. John Lang made records of many of them, enjoying the long talks with Richard about the San Antonio days.⁴⁵

38 Muriel Telfer, “‘Eyes of Texas’ Had Humble Origin in Black-Face,” *Daily Texan*, December 3, 1931, p. 1.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Santa Rita Oil Well #1 struck oil on May 28, 1923 in Reagan County in West Texas. It was the first discovery of oil in West Texas and the first return on university lands. On August 24 of that year, a deposit of \$516.53 was made into the Permanent University Fund. In 2019, the PUF was valued at \$24,380,600,000. (2019 PUF Audited Statement.)

41 Thomas Watt Gregory (1861-1933) was an 1885 graduate of UT Law School, served as a regent of the University of Texas, and served as Attorney General of the United States from 1914 to 1919. He was also the namesake of Gregory Gymnasium.

42 *The Alcalde*, December 1931.

43 One variant of this story has Sinclair “stripped down to his BVDs.”

44 *Texan*, p. 8

45 William Longino, “John Lang Sinclair – A Memorial,” *Alcalde*, February 1947, p. 108.



Sinclair and "teller of tales," Richard Smith, in 1946.⁴⁶

Early Diversity and the university

The origins of "The Eyes of Texas" may appear to have occurred in an entirely white campus environment. However, this is not the case. Manuel Marius Garcia, of Rio Grande City in South Texas, was the first Mexican American graduate of UT in 1894, 11 years after the university's opening. A prominent member of the class of 1894, he served on the editorial staff of the *Cactus* yearbook.⁴⁷ An early attempt at racial integration occurred in 1885, when an African American man applied for admission to the university.⁴⁸ His application was denied on the basis of his race, 11 years before the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case which established the constitutionality of the "separate but equal" doctrine in American public life.

Manuel Marius Garcia,

B. A., 94; M. A., 98; Assistant Cashier Merchants State Bank & Trust Co.; lang. master, San Antonio Acad., 94-98, 02-04; supervisor, Spanish dept., San Antonio Public Schools, 04-12; Ranchman, 12-16. 1201 Lincoln St. and 710 Market St., Laredo, Texas.

However, Black people lived in Austin in communities such as Wheatville, founded by freedman James Wheat in 1869. Wheatville's boundaries were the present-day 24th, 26th, Leon, and San Gabriel Streets, and this community had a role in securing the university's location in Austin.⁴⁹ Reverend Jacob Fontaine, who organized five churches, lived at 2400 San Gabriel and published the *Gold Dollar* newspaper in the building next door, the first Black newspaper in Austin.⁵⁰ His advocacy for Black people to vote for Austin as the site of the new state university during the 1881 election has been noted in historical records.



The Reverend Jacob Fontaine Gold Dollar Building in 2021 at 2402 San Gabriel. It is presently surrounded by a student residence.

With its proximity to the new University, Black people appear to have worked at the university from its earliest days. One of these workers was Henry Reeves (1871-1916).⁵¹ Originally assigned to work as a custodian in the old main building

46 "A Song for Texas," *Houston Chronicle Magazine*, April 27, 1947.

47 Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Teresa Garcia, Teresa, *Historical Perspectives on Latino Access to Higher Education, 1848-1990* (2003).

48 Gregory J. Vincent, Virginia A. Cumberbatch, and Leslie A. Blair, *As We Saw It: The Story of Integration at The University of Texas at Austin*, University of Texas Press, 2018, p. 8.

49 Austin History Center. "Just Outside Austin: Wheatville." <http://www.austinlibrary.com/ahc/outside/wheatville.htm>

50 Edmund T. Gordon, "The Gold Dollar Building and Black Erasure," *The End of Austin* (2020). <https://endofaustin.com/2020/11/21/the-gold-dollar-building-and-black-erasure/>

51 Chris Wimmer, "The Good Doctor: The Story of the Most Famous Longhorn of the Early Years," *The Banner-Press* (October 12, 2017). http://www.brenhambanner.com/brenham360/the-good-doctor-the-story-of-the-most-famous-longhorn-of-the-early-years/article_f5dd5b5f-ec1a-59c8-9b0f-e0ea3d38a0f4.html

in 1894, Reeves started to work in the nascent athletics department as a trainer, but soon became a vital support to the teams. E. M. Overshiner, who played center for the varsity in 1899, remarked upon Reeves in 1915: "I must not close without saying a word for 'Doc' Henry, our negro helper, who was always there with the sponge and water to quench our thirst, the liniment and bandages to assuage our wounds, and whose ministrations I consider were indispensable to our success."⁵²



Henry "Doc" Reeves.

Reeves died of a stroke in 1916, and the announcement in the *Alcalde* invited responses from former students. Ben Dyer remarked, "When I saw notice of his death in yesterday's news I said to my wife, 'It will not be the same at the university now. I cannot take the same interest in going back. It wouldn't be the same to go around to the old gym and not find Henry there. And it would be worse to think he would not be there at all.' Henry was the one thing we could tie to in an athletic way. He was the one institution which remained unchanged. Coaches came and went, managers had their days and teams their seasons, but Henry was immutable. And now the immutable has felt the touch of mutation. I am sorry." James Hart wrote "He was faithful, kind, honest. He was loyal, tender, appreciative. Many of us, thinking of the negro's simple, helpful, dutiful life, may truthfully say of him, 'You were a better man than I am, Henry Reeves.'"⁵³

The comments are difficult to read, reflecting the norms of Jim Crow Texas and the subjugation of African Americans and Latinos in the 1910s – it should be noted that in the years the *Alcalde* covers (1915-1916), 10 African Americans, two Whites, and 26 Mexican Americans were lynched in Texas.⁵⁴ Henry

Reeves' presence, and central role in the life of UT Athletics, is particularly noteworthy, given the time of his work.

The research leads us to surmise that intent of "The Eyes of Texas" was not overtly racist. However, it is similarly clear that the cultural milieu that produced it was. And the fact that the song was, for decades, sung and revered on a segregated campus has, understandably, blurred the lines between intent and historical and contemporary impact. This complicates its understanding and explains how different people experienced the song in vastly different ways.

A University and its Song

"The Eyes of Texas," like the UT band and football team – and for that matter the university itself – was birthed in time that a modern perspective views as a challenging time in the history of the United States and Texas. The era of the song's creation marked a time of transition for the university with its identity continuing to develop and with symbols created to further define and differentiate UT from other universities across the state and country. From its origins and first performance, the song has continued to evolve, including its iconic nine notes that often stand on their own, and never has remained static. The music, itself, has changed and has been orchestrated into countless renditions, performed by diverse bands and groups over the past century plus. So, too, has its usage morphed – from its original creation as a potential school song, to its public debut poking fun at the president as the concluding musical number at a minstrel show, to a reverential hymn at President Prather's funeral, to its use as a song in protests and campus movements, a message of accountability, adoption across the state as well as inspiration across the nation and globe. Most recently, its history has again been questioned with the social and racial reckoning across the United States, including the University of Texas, with the facts around the song's intent, broad historical as well as institutional uses and origin not clearly understood and requiring clarity.

⁵² *Alcalde*, Vol. 4. (1916), p. 500.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ David L. Chapman, *Lynching in Texas* (1973). <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2346/15566/31295000657113.pdf?sequence=1>

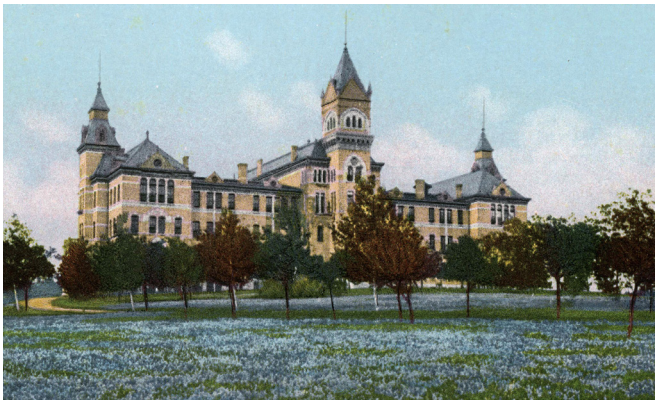
Charge 2:

Examine the university's historical institutional use and performance of "The Eyes of Texas."

Charge 3:

Chronicle the historical usage of "The Eyes of Texas" by University of Texas students, staff, faculty and alumni, as well as its usage in broader cultural events, such as film, literature and popular media.

Debut of "The Eyes of Texas" and Its Popularity



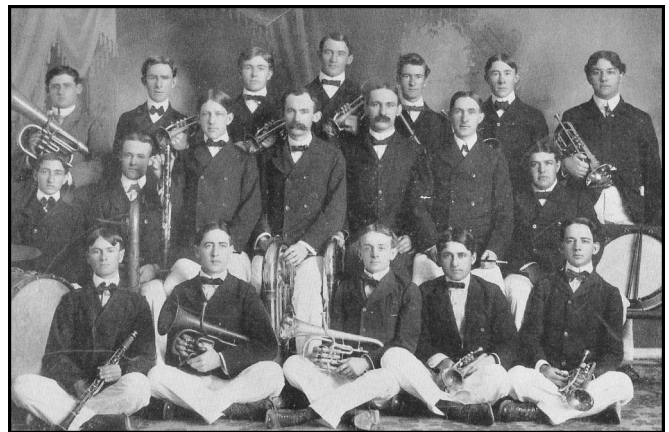
The university's Victorian-Gothic old Main Building in springtime, surrounded by Texas bluebonnets.

"The Eyes of Texas" was decidedly the hit of the program, according to the glowing review offered by the *Austin Statesman* the following morning. "It was a superior show," gushed the *Statesman*, "Never has there been seen here such a wonderful display of talent by an amateur organization . . . As for Sinclair's song, 'The Eyes of Texas are Upon You,' it must be said that the words were taking and that the singing . . . was really extraordinary."⁵⁵

The song began to inhabit the campus almost immediately. The 16-member University Band, dressed in orange and white caps, black jackets, and white pants, learned "The Eyes" within a week, in time for its next Promenade Concert.

For years, the perimeter of the Forty Acres was defined by a dirt path, dusty in the hot Texas summer, but a quagmire in

wet weather. "Our noble campus is floating in a shoreless sea of mud," wrote Dr. Thomas Fitzhugh, a professor of Latin, who asked the citizens of Austin for help. Thanks to contributions by local businesses, a 15-foot-wide gravel walkway, along with rows of hackberry trees, was installed around the edge of the campus in 1901. Fitzhugh dubbed it the "Peripatos" after the shaded pathways Aristotle used to lecture at his school in Athens. Students shortened the name to the "Perip." The walk was popular with the university and townsfolk alike as a place to meet friends or dates, or for an evening stroll. "Let's make the Perip," became part of UT's vernacular.⁵⁶



On a Saturday evening in March 1902, the Perip became a new venue for the University Band. The first of a series of Promenade Concerts around the walk became an overnight success. "This promises to be the most popular entertainment ever provided for 'Varsity people,'" declared the *Texan*. Starting

⁵⁵ *Austin Statesman*, May 13, 1903

⁵⁶ *The Ranger* (student publication), January 1, March 2, June 1, and September 28, 1898

around 8:00pm, the band strolled along the Perip, stopped at designated spots, and played a variety of waltzes, schottisches, and new marches by a popular composer named Sousa. A crowd followed along, and at times sang or danced to the music. By the spring of 1903, when the weather was warm and pleasant, attendance grew to more than 1,500 onlookers. By adding “The Eyes” into the program, the band greatly increased the exposure and, in turn, the popularity of the song.⁵⁷

President Prather took the jest all in stride. For the next several months, if he were crossing the campus at night, “a group of students, recognizing the tall figure in the semi-darkness, would begin to hum, ‘The Eyes of Texas.’” Prather later chuckled, “I at least know they are some of my boys.” At the 1903 Spring Commencement ceremony on June 10th, Prather turned the joke back on the students. As the *Statesman* reported, “The president made a tremendous hit yesterday when he closed his adieu to the graduates with the morsel, ‘And now, young ladies and gentlemen, in the words of your own poet, remember that the eyes of Texas are upon you.’ This sally was received tumultuously by the great body of men and women present. Various groups of students gave the president a rousing ‘nine rahs.’”⁵⁸

Two weeks later, Prather’s daughter Fannie wrote to John Lang Sinclair for a copy of the lyrics. “Papa thinks the little song you composed . . . so extremely clever, and wants to have a copy of the words. . . Papa goes East in a few days and wants to take his song with him.”⁵⁹

The Early Momentum of “The Eyes of Texas”

The summer break did nothing to slow the momentum of “The Eyes,” which continued to find its way into more University gatherings. On Thursday evening, November 5, 1903, more than 150 engineering students and faculty, as well as President Prather, gathered at the Driskill Hotel for the department’s annual banquet. The four-hour event boasted “mirth and good cheer galore.” On a page of the banquet’s printed program, though, were the complete lyrics to “The Eyes,” which was sung among the engineers’ other songs and yells. The tune was to become a staple at future banquets, and later described by the engineers as a “sacred anthem.”⁶⁰

The following day, a Friday night pep rally was held in the auditorium of the old Main Building as a buildup to the Texas vs. Vanderbilt football game. Lyrics to “The Eyes” were published in the Austin newspaper, and the song was sung at both the rally and the Saturday afternoon game. It wasn’t yet, though, part of a pre-game tradition.⁶¹

On Thanksgiving 1903, the university and the A&M College of Texas squared off for their annual football bout at Clark Field in Austin. The Texan reported that the afternoon game began with a series of “ugly fumbles” by both teams, one of them by UT that resulted in an Aggie touchdown. With A&M leading 6 – 0, one of the UT students began to sing “The Eyes,” and soon “hundreds of other voices caught up the thrilling chorus,” as Fannie Prather later recalled. The Aggies wouldn’t score again. Texas won 29 – 6. “Hereafter, the students believed in the potency in the song.”⁶²



A postcard view of the University of Texas campus in 1904. From left: the Woman’s Building residence hall, Chemistry Labs, the old Main Building, newly-opened Engineering Building (present day Gebauer Building), and old B. Hall for men’s residences.

Almost a year later, at 11 a.m. on October 5, 1904, more than 900 students, faculty, staff, and state dignitaries – including Texas Governor Samuel Lanham – gathered in the Old Main auditorium to formally commence the 1904-05 academic year. At the time, the university followed the quarter system, and classes usually began in early October.

To open the proceedings, the Glee Club sang “Hail, University,” a general hymn not specific to Texas. President Prather then rose to speak. “Francis W. Parker, the great teacher, once said: ‘There is but one question in the world – How to make men better; and there is but one answer – Education.’” Prather extolled the virtues of a broad education, emphasized the importance of character, and stressed the need for students to

57 *The Texan*, March 26, April 2, November 5, 1902, and May 27, 1903; University of Texas Record, April 1903, pg. 97-98

58 *Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 1926, *The Austin Statesman*, June 11, 1903

59 Fannie Prather to John Sinclair, June 23, 1903, Eyes of Texas Vertical Files, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History (hereafter cited as DBCAH)

60 *The Texan*, November 10, 1903; November 5, 1903 Engineering Banquet program, Eyes of Texas Vertical Files, DBCAH, *The Daily Texan*, February 15, 1925 (“sacred anthem” quote)

61 *Austin Statesman*, November 6, 1903

62 *The Daily Texan*, December 2, 1903; *Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 1926

focus on the academic tasks at hand. “An earnest, fixed purpose should gleam before you as a polar star.” The president then informed the assembly on the latest additions to the campus, especially the new Engineering Building, which could be seen next door through the east windows of the auditorium. (Today it’s called the Gebauer Building.⁶³) Prather concluded, “Let joy and gladness be in all your work... and let each one strive to make this the most successful year in our history.”

Something was missing.

Though he hadn’t expected to give a speech, Governor Lanham was coaxed into saying a few words. Entirely impromptu, Lanham began, “After listening to the special and interesting talk of President Prather and his views on philosophy, his good advice, and discourses upon other weighty subjects, I felt that he ought to have concluded that address by saying, ‘Young ladies and gentlemen, the eyes of Texas are upon you.’”

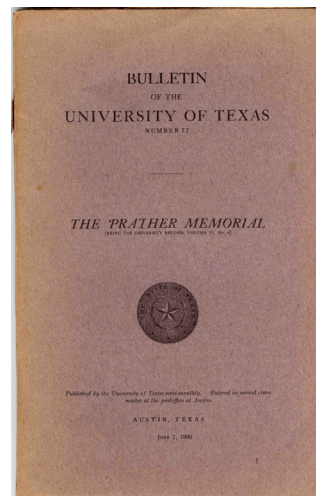
The auditorium erupted into a loud, extended, and standing ovation.⁶⁴

Prather’s Death and the Changing Impact of the Song

PRESIDENT PRATHER DIES VERY SUDDENLY

The news stunned the city. At about 6 a.m. on the morning of July 24, 1905, President Prather died from heart failure at his home. *The Statesman* published a full biography of Prather’s “notable life,” while the faculty at Sam Huston College (today’s Huston-Tillotson University⁶⁵), to whom Prather was to deliver an address later that same morning, unanimously approved a resolution. “We have received the sorrowful intelligence of . . . the death of Colonel W. M. Prather,” the declaration began, “whose broad culture and sympathies were deeply concerned in the general education of all the people of our state . . . We feel a sense of regret over the great loss which our educational system sustains in the death of Colonel Prather.” The Huston faculty cancelled classes for the day to mourn.⁶⁶

The following morning, a funeral service was held at Prather’s home on Nueces Street. Friends, family, students, faculty and alumni had all gathered, and there were far too many mourners to be accommodated at the house. After the service, Prather’s remains were taken to the train station and transported to Waco to be interred at the family cemetery.⁶⁷



Near the end of the fall term, on Tuesday, December 12, 1905, the university held a two-hour memorial service for Prather in the Old Main auditorium. He was lauded by lifelong friends and colleagues, and the eulogies were published in a special issue of *The University of Texas Record*. “He thought that the president should promote the university, that the university should serve the state, and that the students should remember that the state looked to them for leadership,” wrote Professor William Battle. “His reminder ‘the eyes of Texas are upon you’ gave rise to the university song.”⁶⁸

“Although a delicate subject to be mentioned to his bereaved family,” Lewis Johnson later recalled, “close friends ventured to ask if the [“The Eyes”] might be used in the memorial service . . . The family thought it appropriate, reverential and considerate, knowing, as they did, how near to [Prather’s] heart its sentiments were.”

“With bowed heads it was rendered,” Johnson continued. The UT Glee Club performed “The Eyes,” but it wasn’t the same kind of song that was first heard in 1903. To those present, the music “lost its character as a taunting jest” and became a

63 The Dorothy Gebauer Building is the oldest remaining building on The University of Texas campus, and one of the few named after a woman.

64 *Austin Statesman*, October 6, 1904; *The Texan*, October 12, 1904

65 Huston-Tillotson University is Austin’s first institution of higher education (established 1875) and a historically Black university (HBCU), located in East Austin.

66 *Austin Statesman*, July 25, 1905

67 *Austin Statesman*, July 26, 1905

68 *Austin Statesman*, December 17, 1905; *The University of Texas Record*, June 1906; William Battle, “William Lambdin Prather,” *The Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association)

“reverential hymn.” Prather’s message, that Texas looked to the university for its future, was taken to heart.⁶⁹

Becoming Integral to UT’s Identity and Athletics

In the months after Prather’s memorial service, some believed “The Eyes” would quietly disappear into the annals of UT history. Instead, it rooted itself more deeply into the customs and rituals of campus life, and over the next decade, became an integral part of the identity of the university. It was heard at the end-of-the-year banquets for the popular student literary societies, sung at law student gatherings, and as early as 1916 was a part of the Spring Commencement ceremony.



The university’s Yell Book was published from 1899 until World War II. Shown are the covers from the 1912, 1929, and 1940 editions.

Perhaps the most pronounced development was in athletics. By 1906, the tune was included in the annual Yell Book, provided each fall to all students and filled with songs and yells to be used throughout the year. The book was particularly useful for new students, but as content could change from year-to-year, everyone wanted a copy. “Though the song was already present at football rallies and games, it wasn’t long before the tune was heard at baseball, basketball, and track events as well.

Among the 1908 track standouts was Fred Ramsdell, a short distance sprinter, who had qualified for the Olympics trials, held that year in Philadelphia in early June. If Ramsdell succeeded, he would participate in the London Olympic Games in July.

Ramsdell’s fellow students, unable to afford the train ticket and hotel costs for a trip to Philadelphia, took up a collection and raised the needed funds within a few days. On June 6, the

day of the race, the *Austin Statesman* reported, “A number of the students will this morning send a telegram to Ramsdell so that it will reach him shortly before the contest. The telegram will be short, containing the simple words ‘The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You,’ which it is thought will greatly encourage the sprinter in his efforts.” Ramsdell came up just short in the Olympic trials, though he appreciated the telegram.⁷⁰

A second UT track athlete, Rupert Robertson, enrolled as a freshman for the 1915 fall term. Among his classes was English I, in which Robertson had to write a weekly essay. Many of these literary efforts centered on his initial impressions of campus life. Robertson’s essays have all been preserved in the H. J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports.

One essay titled, “University Football Customs,” still provides a remarkable snapshot of a 1915 UT football game. Current Longhorn fans might be surprised to learn that at halftime, instead of a performance by the Varsity Band, male students emptied the stands for a “snake dance,” and ran single-file in a zig-zag, tortured course up and down the length of the field. According to Robertson, it was meant to show enthusiasm and support for the team, and was no doubt a great source of amusement for the women who watched from their seats. At the end of the fourth quarter, “the rooters tumble over the fence below the bleachers, grab the heroes of the game, and carry them from the field upon their shoulders. They portray true Texas spirit here, because this is done whether we win or lose.”

Robertson continued, “Equally as important are the cheers and songs from the stands. When the teams trot out upon the field, the rooters give ‘Rattle-de-thrat,’ and as soon as the game begins, they sing ‘The Eyes of Texas are Upon You.’” Perhaps it was a custom with roots from the 1905 Thanksgiving game, the singing of “The Eyes” just after kick-off may have been for good luck. It had been promoted, though, to be the first song heard at the game.⁷¹

In 1916, Theo Bellmont, the university’s first athletic director, organized a reunion of alumni lettermen known as the “Order of the T” (today’s T-Association). For two days, May 15 and 16, alumni gathered for receptions, rallies, a group photo on Clark Field, and to watch the UT vs. A&M baseball game. The final night, a formal dinner was held at the university Commons,

69 Lewis Johnson, “The Origin of ‘The Eyes of Texas’”, manuscript in possession of Johnson’s decedents

70 *The Texan*, May 28, 1908; *Austin Statesman*, June 6, 1908

71 Rupert Robertson Papers, English I Essays, “Some University Football Customs”, November 23, 1915, H. J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports

letters were awarded to current student-athletes, and the program ended with the singing of “The Eyes.”⁷²

Bellmont also ordered “The Eyes of Texas are upon you” to be painted in the hallway of the university gymnasium - then on the ground floor of Old Main - and declared it to be the first motto of UT Athletics. Teams suited up in the gym before they departed for the athletic field, and the phrase was the last thing they saw on their way out the door.⁷³

Women’s Voices are Heard in The Eyes of Texas

In that same season, UT women (at the time called “co-eds,” short for co-educational student) elected to add their own voices to the song. While the university had admitted female students since it opened in 1883, the social mores of the time greatly restricted social behaviors. Rules required women to be at their residence halls or boarding houses by 10 p.m., all dates were to be chaperoned, and at the library, women were to study at separate tables from the men.

As for football rallies and games, women nationally weren’t allowed to cheer, as it was deemed “unladylike,” a practice that wouldn’t change until the mid-1920s. At rallies held in the Old Main auditorium, the men claimed the floor seats and participated in the yells and songs, while the women generally sat in the upstairs balcony and quietly watched the program.



October 7, 1916: The UT vs. Rice Institute football game at Clark Field in Austin.

On the Saturday afternoon of October 7, 1916, just after the kick-off of the UT vs. Rice Institute (now Rice University) game, “The Eyes” was heard by both men and women. As reported by the *Alcalde* alumni magazine, the women, “true to their traditions . . . refrained from cheering, but when the

‘eds’ rose to the ‘Eyes of Texas’ the co-eds couldn’t sit still and for the first time in University football their well-modulated sopranos joined in with the coarser strains across the gridiron. It was new, and it was fine. And now the women are wondering why they haven’t been doing it all the time.”⁷⁴

“The Eggs of Texas” Demand Accountability

Along with athletics, students found other uses for the song. In early May 1913, the “Great Griffith,” a self-proclaimed master hypnotist, arrived in Austin for a series of shows at the Hancock Opera House. It wasn’t long, however, before it was discovered that Griffith’s talents were less than advertised, and the hypnotized “volunteers” in the shows were frauds. “The students of Old Texas are not naturally hard on shows,” stated the *Texan*, “but if there is anything that makes the wild cat wild it is to be stung by a faker.”

Before the Friday, May 9th performance, some 400 UT students purchased tickets and filled the gallery seats. All had stopped by Charley’s grocery store on Congress Avenue beforehand and purchased at least two eggs. At an appropriate moment in the show, with the Great Griffith and seven, seemingly mesmerized, volunteers on stage, the signal was given and students launched their “hen fruit” towards the performers, all while singing “The eggs of Texas are upon you.” The Great Griffith and his partners quickly evacuated, took the first train out of town, and weren’t seen again.⁷⁵

Legislative Impact

In 1911, University President Sidney Mezes recruited the song for his own purposes. In mid-February, Mezes invited the 32nd Texas Legislature, then in session at the Capitol, to a barbeque lunch on the campus. The event was privately financed by Austin citizens.

The lawmakers arrived Saturday morning, February 18th, along Guadalupe Street, and were promptly greeted by the University Band and more than 1,000 male students who stood shoulder-to-shoulder on either side of the West Walk with cheers and welcoming handshakes for the visitors. At the top of the hill, the legislators were greeted at the old Main Building by more than 600 women “clustered like a great bouquet,” who pinned flowers on the visitors’ lapels and serenaded them with “The Eyes.” The message was subtle but clear: the eyes of the people of Texas were looking to the lawmakers to do what was right and properly fund the state university.

⁷² Invitation to Order of the T Reunion, May 15-16, 1916, UT Memorabilia Collection, Box 4P144, DBCAH

⁷³ *Austin American*, October 6, 1914.

⁷⁴ *Alcalde*, November 1916, pg. 69

⁷⁵ *The Texan*, May 14, 1913; *Austin Statesman*, May 10, 1913, *Alcalde*, June 1913

After a brief presentation in the Old Main auditorium on the needs of the university and a comparison on how higher education was funded in other states, the legislators adjourned to an outdoor barbecue lunch. With beef, mutton, and pork, as well as bread, pickles, and coffee, it was served by the best-educated wait staff in the state: the university faculty.⁷⁶

The Eyes of Texas as a Song of Protest

In 1917, "The Eyes" was used in a new way: as a protest song. After years of strife between Governor James "Pa" Ferguson and the university administration, in part over the governor's desire to hire and fire faculty at will, Ferguson called the Board of Regents to his office on the Monday morning of May 28. The governor demanded the removal of UT President Robert Vinson and five professors, or Ferguson planned to veto the university's legislative appropriation, which might close the campus. "The bats and owls can roost in it for all I care," said the governor. Ferguson's enmity to the university was well known, deeming the UT faculty "butterfly chasers," "day dreamers," and "educated fools"⁷⁷:

He had declared war on the University of Texas, promising "the biggest bear fight that has ever taken place in the history of the state of Texas." Ferguson considered the university an elitist institution that took money away from the "country boys," and gave it to professors, whom he scorned as lazy freeloaders. Ferguson demanded the firing of professors he deemed personally objectionable, saying, "I don't have to give reasons, I am the Governor of Texas."⁷⁸



With a banner that read "University's Future Threatened," UT students prepared to march on the Texas Capitol.

University students, who learned of the meeting in advance through the press, had organized a march on the Capitol. It

was the first protest demonstration in UT's history. Led by the University Band, students paraded from the Forty Acres, south to the Capitol, through the rotunda, and then circled the Capitol grounds. All the while, the governor and regents watched from Ferguson's office window.

"The parade was thoroughly orderly," reported the *Alcalde* alumni magazine. "The governor was especially tantalized and his wrath was likely materially augmented by various particularly beautiful young co-eds, who, as they passed singing 'The Eyes of Texas are Upon You,' smiled sweetly at the governor, and nodded their heads, as if to say, 'You naughty boy!'"⁷⁹

Ferguson was outraged and attempted to veto the appropriation, which launched a summer-long battle between the governor and the alumni association - informally known as the Texas Exes. In August 1917, Ferguson was impeached, in part for his actions against the university.

Texas Suffragists and the Eyes of Texas

The phrase "the eyes of Texas are upon you" moved beyond the campus, potentially spread by former UT students in other contexts, including political. An example of this can be found on a Texas League of Women Voters poster circa 1920.



Poster by Texas League of Women Voters of Georgetown, Texas, around 1920.

76 *The Texan*, February 22, 1911; *Austin Statesman*, February 19, 1911; *The University of Texas Record*, April 1911, pg. 344-346

77 Susan R. Richardson, "Reds, Race, and Research: Homer P. Rainey and the Grand Texas Tradition of Political Interference, 1939-1944," p. 128.

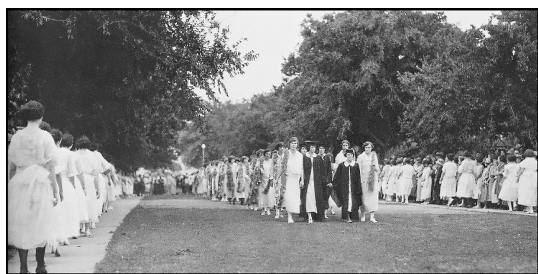
78 Texas State Library and Archives, "James E. 'Pa' Ferguson Campaign Material."

79 *Alcalde*, August 1917

Texas suffragists had worked with UT former students to impeach Governor James E. Ferguson in 1917. Ferguson re-emerged to challenge moderate William Hobby, who secured the support of suffragists by signing a primary suffrage law allowing (white, citizen) Texas women to vote in primaries (but not in general elections). Texas then ratified the 19th Amendment in June 1919, the ninth state and first in the south to vote in favor of the law (despite a state amendment being defeated a month prior). The poll tax was a tactic to disenfranchise Black voters and poor whites; along with the all-white primary, these efforts virtually eliminated Black participation in electoral politics in the state. However, the 19th Amendment invalidated the prior poll tax law, and despite the Texas Legislature's effort to re-write the law to include white women, some Black women actually voted in 1920 and after. Further amendments created barriers for Mexican and German immigrant women to vote.⁸⁰

The Eyes of Texas Become Fully Integrated in Campus Life

By the 1920s, "The Eyes" was everywhere, fully integrated into campus life, and popular throughout the state. In 1918, during World War I, the university published a *Community Song Book* of both Texas and patriotic tunes, which was widely used by elementary schools for singalongs. "The Eyes" was on the first page. On campus, Saturday night all-University dances were held at the Women's Gym, a temporary pinewood structure where the Union Building is today. Touring orchestras played "The Eyes" as the last song of the evening, before students ambled across Guadalupe Street to the cafes along the Drag for a late-night snack. At football games, the song was elevated to a pre-game tradition. Longhorn fans rose, doffed their hats, and reverently sang "The Eyes" before kick-off.⁸¹



The 1923 Bluebonnet Chain ceremony was held on what now is the South Mall.

Among the more colorful 1920s traditions was the Swing Out and Bluebonnet Chain. Organized by Cap and Gown, a women's student organization, the ceremony was inspired by the Daisy Chain rite at Vassar College. It was intended to mark the passing of leadership positions and traditions from the graduating senior class to the juniors. The ceremony's highpoint, held on the mall in front Old Main, was the presentation of a 300-foot-long chain of hand-picked Texas bluebonnets embedded in Spanish moss. As it was transferred from the shoulders of the seniors to the juniors, symbolic of an unbroken chain passed from one generation to the next, all sang "The Eyes." Beginning in the 1930s, artificial bluebonnets were used, and the tradition continued into the early 1960s⁸².

The Eyes of Texas 25th Anniversary Record Released



Sunday morning, May 20, 1928, the University Band - by then renamed the Longhorn Band - and the Glee Club boarded a train for San Antonio. Their destination was a downtown hotel, there to meet with representatives from the Victor Talking Machine Company from Camden, New Jersey.⁸³ A makeshift recording studio had been set up in the hotel's ballroom, and band and chorus spent several hours recording the song for its 25th anniversary. Victor released the record later the same year. Meant to be played on a Victrola, it featured "The Eyes" on one side and "Texas Taps," what has become the "Texas Fight" song, on the other.⁸⁴

The Old Main Tower Chimes

Near the end of the decade, in December 1929, the university announced the donation of a clock and chimes for the Old Main Tower. At first, the donor remained anonymous, described only as a "distinguished and dedicated ex-student," but years later was identified as Albert Sidney Burleson, one of the eight degree recipients from UT's very first class of 1884.

80 Rachel Gunter, "The Eyes of Texas are Upon You: Have You Paid That Poll Tax?" *Not Even Past*, January 20, 2021. <https://notevenpast.org/the-eyes-of-texas-are-upon-you-have-you-paid-that-poll-tax/>

81 *The Daily Texan*, December 7, 1927 and November 30, 1922

82 *The Daily Texan*, May 13, 1932; Margaret Berry, *UT Traditions and Nostalgia* (Shoal Creek, 1975), pg. 71 - 77

83 Coincidentally, Camden is the site of the building that may have inspired the iconic UT Tower: <https://jimnicar.com/tag/camden/>

84 *The Daily Texan*, May 19, 1928



By February 4th, the electric clock, along with 11 bells cast at the Garnier foundry in Paris, France, was installed. The largest bell sounded quarter, half, and three-quarter hour with two, four, and six rings respectively. At the hour, the chimes would play one of four songs: “The Eyes of Texas,” “America,” “Dixie,” and “Will You Come to the Bower,” before the large bell rang the hour.⁸⁵

While the chimes could be set to play automatically or manually, the controls involved a difficult climb into tight spaces in the belfry. Instead, a decision was made to allow the chimes to play the same song for about three months, and then select a different tune, so that all four songs were heard over the course of a year. “The Eyes” was chosen to play first, and was met with wide approval across the campus.

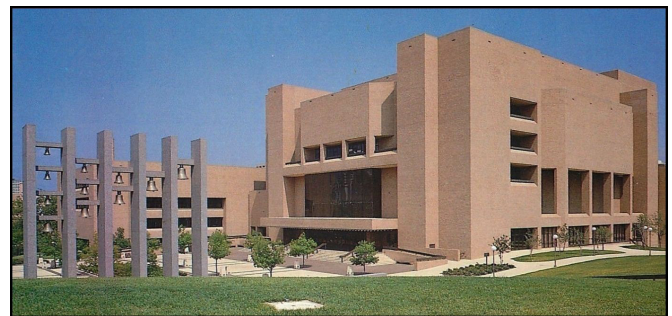


“At last we hear with a swell of pride and college spirit our University song ring out clear and strong from the Main Tower,” wrote philosophy student Frances Stark. “Passing down the campus on the hours, one sees the joyous smiles that appear and spread across the faces of the students . . . and walk with pride, humming the tune softly . . . It is conceivable that the

student, when his time comes to leave the university, that the ‘The Eyes of Texas’ will have become a part of him – something almost tangible – as a key to bring back memories of the hours spent on the campus, and to make him feel the meaning of his membership in the body of Texas exes, and to give him a thrill of pride in this knowledge.⁸⁶

This meant, though, that the song played at every hour, day or night. Eventually, neighbors near the campus “mildly complained at being forced to hear ‘The Eyes of Texas’ booming out at 2 o’clock in the morning.” To make matters more difficult, the ringing mechanism failed regularly. The chimes were silent through the summer of 1930, again played “The Eyes,” off and on, until November, and then were in disrepair for a year. Thereafter, only the large bell rang to mark the hours, and the chimes were reserved for special occasions. The other three songs were heard only rarely.⁸⁷

When Old Main was razed in 1934 to make room for the current Main Building and Tower, the clock and chimes were placed in storage. Decades later, the Burleson Bells were restored to the campus in front of the present Bass Concert Hall.



The Performing Arts Center – today’s Bass Concert Hall – with the restored Burleson Bells, was opened in 1981.

⁸⁵ *The Daily Texan*, May 19, 1928

⁸⁶ *The Daily Texan*, February 20, 1930

⁸⁷ *The Daily Texan*, August 7, 1930, November 8 and December 11, 1931

ESPERANTO

La okuloj de Teksas rigardas vin
La tutan vivon vian;
La okuloj de Teksas regardas vin
Ja nepre kaj por ĉiam.
Ne kredu ke de ili forkuri povas vi,
Je tag' kaj nokt' aŭ ĉiel,
La okuloj de Teksas regardas vin.
Ĝis kornoblovos Gabriel'.
—A. Kenngott.

SPANISH

Os mira Texas, compañeros,
claro todo ve;
os mira Texas, compañeros,
que nada abrigo dé.
¡Fuera ganas de evitarlo!
ni de noche hay modo tal;
os mira Texas, compañeros,
hasta el juicio final.
—Robt. Stephenson.

ITALIAN

Gli occhi di Texas vi son' addosso
Tutt' il giorno intier
Gli occhi di Texas vi son' addosso
Non se ne puo sfuggir
Non potrete mai scansarvi
Di notte o presto nel mattin
Gli occhi di Texas vi son' addosso
Finche Gabriel vi chiamera
—Light D'Albergo.

SWEDISH

Texas ögon vila på dig
hela dagen lång,
Texas ögon vila på dig
och hålla dig i fång.
Tro blott ej du slipper från dem
på natt, vid morgonens gry.
Texas ögon vila på dig
tills Gabriels horn gör gny.
—Lee M. Hollander.

CZECH

Oči Texan jsou na Tobě
vždy přes celý den.
Oči Texan jsou na Tobě
nemůžeš jim utéct.
Nemůžeš, že se jim ztratíš
v naší mal' čarce mrdenn.
Oči Texan jsou na Tobě
až ztravíš Gabriel.
—Edmond Micek.

DANISH

Texas Öjne hviler paa dig,
hele Dagen lang,
Texas Öjne hviler paa dig,
og holder dig i faang.
Tro blot ej du slipper fra dem
i Kvæld eller aarle ved Gry.
Texas Öjne hviler paa dig
till Gabriels Horn rejser Gny.
—Lee M. Hollander.

GERMAN

Ganz Texas richtet seine Augen
Auf dich immerdar,
Ganz Texas richtet seine Augen
Dein Tun ist offenbar
Denk nicht ihnen zu entgehen
In dunkler Nacht, bei Tages Licht—
Ganz Texas richtet seine Augen
Selbst bis zum Weltgericht.
—W. E. Metzenthin.

GREEK

Τεξάσα δ' ὄμματ' εἰσὶν ἐπὶ σε
πάντα ἡμέραν
Τεξάσα δ' ὄμματ' εἰσὶν ἐπὶ σε
ὅσον δ' ἔστιν ἐκφύγῃς.
μὴ δ' ὅταν φέρῃς ἑλπίδα,
μὴ λυτὸς, μὴ καθ' ἡμέραν
Τεξάσα δ' ὄμμα εἰσὶν ἐπὶ σε
ἕως Γαβριὴλ σαρδανίον

—W. J. Battle.

HEBREW

עֵינֵי טֶקְסַס עַלְיךָ
כָּל-יְמֵי הַיּוֹם, כָּל-הַיּוֹם
עֵינֵי טֶקְסַס עַלְיךָ
כִּי חֲסִידֶיךָ
אֵל-תַּדְמֶנּוּ לְהַפְלִיט מִקֶּדֶם
בְּכִלְיָה אוֹ בְּבֶקֶר
עֵינֵי טֶקְסַס עַלְיךָ
עַד כִּי-יִתְקַע הַבְּרִיאָה בְּשׁוֹפָר

H. V. Leon.

In 1930, University President Harry Benedict asked faculty members to translate "The Eyes" into several languages, including Esperanto. The results were published in the Alcalde alumni magazine, and in the 1932 Cactus yearbook.

1930s and the Campus Transformation



In the 1930s, the University of Texas campus was transformed by a multi-million dollar building program, funded in part through oil royalties from University-owned land in West Texas, as well as loans and grants from Depression-era New Deal programs.

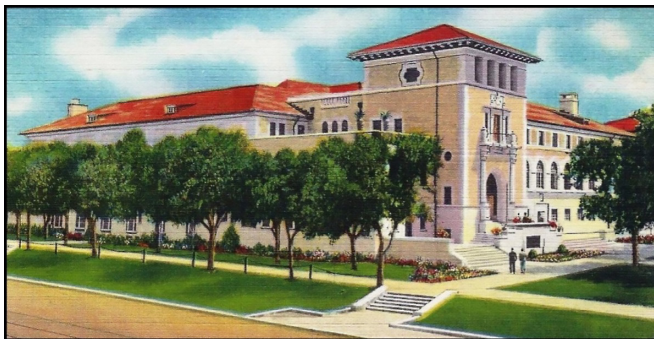
The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s brought the worst and best of times to the University of Texas. Economic hardships impacted every facet of University life. In 1933, legislative reductions in UT's appropriation required the Board of Regents to lower all faculty and staff salaries by 25 percent, while tuition was raised from \$30 to \$50 per year. Most students worked wherever they could; a few dollars might be the difference between dropping out and graduating. New Deal work-study programs through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA) provided jobs at 36 cents per hour, and students were hired on campus as janitors, traffic police, groundskeepers, and office assistants. Despite the added cost, enrollment grew from 5,700 students in 1930 to more than 10,000 by the end of the decade.

The 1930s were also boon years for the university. Oil was discovered on UT owned West Texas lands in 1923, and brought much-needed financial relief in the form of royalties to the Permanent University Fund (PUF). The PUF swelled to more than \$15 million, and in 1930 the regents persuaded Texas voters to approve a constitutional amendment that allowed the university to issue bonds directly from the PUF for a \$6 million building program.

About the same time, the alumni association (informally known as the Texas Exes) launched the Union Project, an ambitious, \$500,000 fundraising campaign to build the Texas Union, Gregory and Anna Hiss gymnasiums, and Hogg Memorial Auditorium. Dedicated alumni weren't deterred by the Depression. Some missed meals in order to save enough for their \$1 a year pledge to the fund.

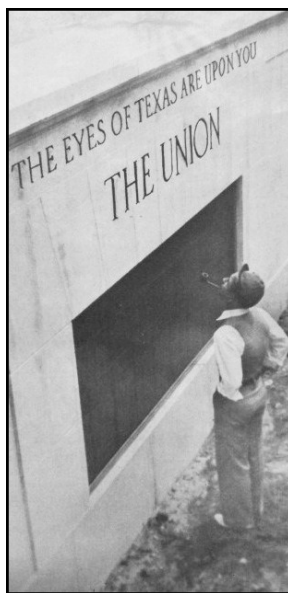
The result was a massive transformation of the campus. As the university celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1933, 14 new buildings had opened or were nearing completion. Along with

the Union Project, there were new facilities for chemistry, business, architecture, geology, physics, and home economics, men's and women's residence halls, and a new Main Building and Tower as the university's central library. All of this activity generated an abundance of construction jobs, which spared Austin from the brunt of the Great Depression.



The Eyes are on the Texas Union

One of the busiest of the new facilities was the Texas Union building, namesake for the Union Project. The hub of campus life and public events, it was purposely placed at the intersection of the West Mall and Guadalupe Street for easy access by both the university community and the city. The Union housed the Commons – the university's cafeteria – offices for student government, men's and women's lounges, a ballroom for Saturday night dances that doubled as a study lounge on weekdays, and the headquarters for the Texas Exes.



Etched into the limestone stairway of the Union's front entry, and darkened with paint to make it easier to read, were Prather's words, "The eyes of Texas are upon you." The placement was symbolic and intentional, and meant to be a reminder to the student and alumni visitors to the building.

In 1936, UT student Elizabeth Keeney wrote about her own impression of the etching for *The Daily Texan*. "Just seven words,

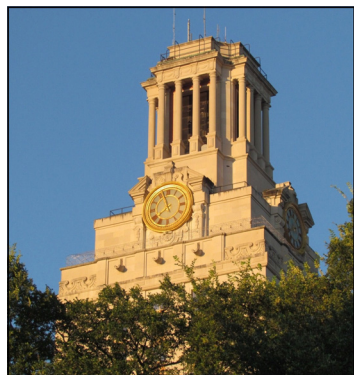
but they are more than just words. They have a very significant meaning, a meaning which every student should realize and think about."

Keeney continued, “When the eyes of Texas are cast upon our University, what do they see? What are the eyes of Texas? They are the older and wiser men and women of Texas, who have run the state for many years. They are watching the youth of Texas who are soon to follow in their worthy footsteps and make our proud old state what it will be. It is we who will some day be in charge of Texas’ industry and government. Will we bring it greater prosperity? . . . We are always being watched. Watching and waiting, Texas is depending on us. We are the future.”⁸⁸

The Tower Bells and The Eyes of Texas

Up the hill, a short walk from the Union, stood the new Main Building with its monumental 307-foot-tall Tower. Built to house the university’s central library, the Tower’s practical use was to provide shelf space for the book stacks, but it was also purposely designed to be the seminal icon of the campus. As architect Paul Cret explained: “In a large group of buildings, be it a city, a world fair, or a university, there is always a certain part of the whole which provides the image carried in our memory when we think of the place.” The Tower was meant to be that image.⁸⁹

Installed in the belfry were 17 bells from the Old Meneely Bell Foundry in Watervliet, New York. Like their predecessors in Old Main, the bells marked the quarter hours, though with the Westminster Peal. More important for the neighbors, the bells were silent from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. The rest of the carillon was played manually from a clavier in a room just below the belfry.⁹⁰



At 4 p.m. on the afternoon of May 12, 1937, “The Eyes” rang out from the Tower for the first time. By coincidence, it was the 34th anniversary of the song, but the reason it was played was a somber occasion. Two days before, UT President Harry Benedict died

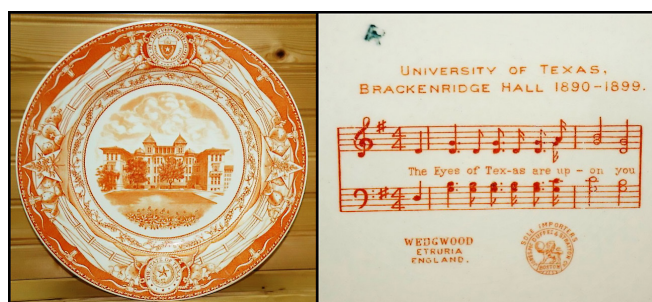
suddenly, and his passing was a shock to the campus. Beloved by everyone, Benedict was the first UT graduate to serve as

its chief executive, and he did so for over 10 years (still the record). He earned degrees from the university and a Ph.D. in astronomy from Harvard. Twice he was elected president of the alumni association. Benedict’s body lay in state in Gregory Gym before the 4 p.m. memorial service, which began with “The Eyes” heard from the Tower.⁹¹

A New Tradition: The Eyes of Texas and the Orange Lighted Tower

Just over a year later, it was a happier celebration. On the evening of Monday, June 6, 1938, Spring Commencement was held on the Main Mall for the first time, moved from the crowded confines of Gregory Gym to more impressive surroundings. The graduates assembled on the West Mall in front of the Union, then paraded over to the Main Mall. While there was not yet a formal policy on the use of the Tower’s floodlights, the top of the Tower glowed orange as the degrees were conferred and the assembly together sang “The Eyes of Texas.”⁹²

Since then, a great many commencements, football rallies, freshman convocations, Texas Independence Day observances, Swing Out programs, and student protests have been held in the same location, with “The Eyes” an integral part of many of them.



In 1936, a series of a dozen plates, produced by the Wedgwood Company in England, featured as series of campus buildings, some that had been on campus for a while (Old Main, Battle Hall, and the stadium

⁸⁸ *The Daily Texan*, February 13, 1936

⁸⁹ Paul Cret, “General Report to Accompany the 1933 Campus Master Plan”

⁹⁰ “New Main Building”, William J. Battle Papers, Box 2K246, DBCAH; Margaret Berry, *Brick by Gold Brick* (LBCo., 1993), pg. 56; A \$168,000 bequest by UT alumna Hedwig Knicker added 39 bells in August 1987.

⁹¹ *The Daily Texan*, May 12 and 13, 1937

⁹² *The Daily Texan*, June 5 and June 7, 1938

National and International Exposure

Through the 1930s, the notoriety of “The Eyes” continued to accelerate, in part because of radio broadcasts from the campus. On March 21, 1936, the Texas Quality Radio Network featured a half-hour concert of the University Glee Club, UT Women’s Chorus, an 18-piece orchestra, and the Longhorn Band. Carried by radio stations from Dallas to San Antonio, and Houston to El Paso, the performance concluded with all of the groups joining in for “The Eyes.”⁹³



International exposure for the song was provided by the 1933 World’s Fair in Chicago. Financial shortages of the Great Depression prevented the construction of individual state exhibit buildings; instead, there was a single Hall of States Pavilion, where 23 states participated. The Texas Exhibit was housed in a 30 × 70 foot room and presented the geography, history, exports, and

progress of the state. At the conclusion of the exhibit, visitors stepped on to a faux balcony to gaze out toward an image of the Texas Capitol, with the phrase, “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” placed above it.⁹⁴

State-wide Popularity

It was described as a “lost steer that needed branding.”

By the mid-1930s, the popularity of “The Eyes” was such that it permeated both the university and the Lone Star State. Not only did students and alumni sing it at athletic events, banquets, and commencements, schoolchildren across Texas performed it at assemblies and class singalongs. The song was heard at birthday parties and weddings and county fairs. Two nationally-popular dance bands -- the Colonial Club and the Hal Kemp Orchestra -- had recorded jazz-swing renditions of the song, and radio star Bill Boyd and his Cowboy Ramblers produced a western-swing version.⁹⁵

The Copyright Controversy and the Official Song of Texas

And yet, for the university, two important details had been left unattended. While the Board of Regents recognized orange and white as UT’s colors in 1900, and approved the design of the University Seal in 1905, “The Eyes” hadn’t been formally declared to be the “official” song. Worse, neither John Lang Sinclair nor Lewis Johnson had bothered to copyright the tune. As the “The Eyes” became better known both within and beyond the state’s borders, it was being more closely associated with Texas rather than with the Forty Acres. There was also no control as to how the song was being used. If the issue were left unaddressed, “The Eyes” might eventually lose its special connection with the university entirely.



Ed Nunnally, from San Angelo, Texas, graduated with a bachelor’s degree in government in the spring of 1935, and continued his studies as a graduate student the next fall. An active member of the International Relations Club and a photographer for

the Cactus yearbook, Nunnally ran for and was elected as one of three graduate student representatives to the Students’ Assembly (today’s Student Government).

Nunnally realized the need to copyright “The Eyes” and approached Charles Zivley⁹⁶, director of the Texas Union, for advice. Together, they contacted the copyright office at the Library of Congress.

“We had nothing to go by,” recalled Nunnally. “People told us it would cost \$50 or more, that it had already been copyrighted, that the song belonged to the state, that it had been in circulation too long, and that there was nothing we could do about it. We had much correspondence then to see about, finding out facts, and working out the correct procedure, since we had started from scratch.”

To Investigate Copyright For ‘Eyes of Texas’

The copyright office responded that since the original version of “The Eyes” had been composed more than 30 years earlier, too much time had elapsed, and the song

93 *The Daily Texan*, March 21, 1936

94 *The Daily Texan*, October 24, 1933; Edward Phillips, “Texas and the World Fairs 1851-1935”, *East Texas Historical Journal*, October 1985

95 Discography of American Historical Recordings adp.library.ucsb.edu

96 The name Zivley will be familiar to many former Texas students. Charles was married to Martha Ann (Robertson) Zivley, who earned two degrees at UT. She became an administrator at the university, and opened the Martha Zivley Typing Service in 1931, a mainstay typing and editing business that operated until 2001, 70 years.

couldn't be claimed by the university. Nunnally, though, wasn't yet ready to give up. At its November 14, 1935 meeting, the Students' Association appointed a three-person Eyes of Texas Copyright Committee with Nunnally as chair.

Nunnally first contacted Lewis Johnson and John Sinclair, the co-authors of the song in 1903. Johnson, then living on the family ranch in Jacksboro, Texas, still had the brown piece of laundry paper on which Sinclair scribbled the first version of "The Eyes" locked in a safe. Sinclair, meanwhile, lived in New York City where he was employed by a tax and investment advisory service. Both gave Nunnally their permission to pursue a copyright for the university.

Because a new version of the song was required in order to file for a copyright, Nunnally's committee decided to replace the first verse of the song currently in use with Sinclair's original version written on the laundry paper:

They watch above you all the day,
The bright blue eyes of Texas.
At midnight they're with you all the way,
The sleepless eyes of Texas.

The second verse and the well-known chorus remained the same as what was sung in 1903. This "hybrid version" was recognized by the copyright office as a new arrangement, and permitted the committee to apply for a copyright. At the December 12 Students' Assembly meeting, Nunnally reported that, once begun, the copyright process would likely take about 10 days. An appropriation of \$3.00 was approved to cover the application cost.⁹⁷

What seemed to be smooth sailing, though, suddenly became choppy. Shortly after he responded to Nunnally's inquiry about the song, Sinclair received a letter from Dr. Lota Spell of Austin, a well-known Texas music authority who was representing Oscar Fox, a former UT Glee Club director. Fox had written his own arrangement of "The Eyes," and wanted to copyright and publish it through C. C. Birchard Company of Boston.

The timing, late in 1935, wasn't accidental. The following year, 1936, would be the 100th anniversary of Texas' Declaration of Independence from Mexico. Texas Centennial observances were already being planned throughout the state, and a published "Centennial Edition" of "The Eyes" would be both popular and lucrative. Spell sought permission to copyright Sinclair's words and offered him a 3 percent royalty on sales.

Sinclair responded on December 21: "I can offer you no cooperation, as it obviously would be improper for me to do anything that might . . . interfere with the unrestricted use of the song by University organizations. As for royalties . . . I would want them to go to [the university], as I would not in any circumstances be willing to commercialize the song for my own financial benefit." Sinclair suggested that Spell contact Nunnally to "arrive at an arrangement agreeable to all concerned."⁹⁸

Just after the New Year, on January 10, 1936, Spell, who was "just trying to assist Mr. Fox," wrote to Nunnally seeking permission to copyright. She added that Fox wanted the 3 percent royalty to benefit both the University Glee Club and the UT Women's Chorus.

After Nunnally spoke with his committee and with Mr. Zivley, he elected to respond to Fox directly on January 13. "It is our purpose," wrote Nunnally, "to tie the song down to the university, where it properly belongs. It was not done with any thought of profit or commercialization, and for that reason, we are not interested . . . We cannot give permission to print at this time."

In the meantime, the students' copyright committee proceeded with their own efforts. Nunnally sent the "hybrid version" of the song to Sinclair for final approval, but received an unexpected response. Sinclair disavowed the first verse as "spurious, and I cannot have my name associated with them in any way. . . . They were apparently written later by someone who attempted to improve upon the original." The verse had been taken directly from the piece of laundry paper in Sinclair's own handwriting, but Nunnally decided not to quibble.

Sinclair also sent along lyrics he'd never shared with anyone. They were meant to eventually replace the second verse because he believed that what had been sung in 1903 was "to be of too limited interest for general use":

For though we may wander, here our hearts remain;
Texas bids us welcome, when we come again.
Still in kind remembrance we hold the days of yore;
And those to come we pledge anew to Texas, evermore.

In the end, Nunnally didn't use these new words, deleted the first verse per Sinclair's request, and on January 28 sent only the chorus and second verse to the copyright office. This version was still eligible for copyright because Sinclair's lyrics

97 Valerie Davis, "The Eyes of Texas", *Alcalde*, May/June 1992, Frances B. Vick, "Our Song", *Alcalde*, March 2003, *The Daily Texan*, December 13, 1935

98 Sinclair to Spell, December 21, 1935, UT System General Council Records, Box 3H111, DBCAH

were placed in a new musical arrangement composed by UT student Virginia Donoho.

Student Hopes To Copyright Song Blasted

Almost three weeks later, on February 17, Nunnally discovered that the “Centennial Edition” of “The Eyes,” authored by Fox and published by the Birchard Company, had just been released.

It was enclosed in an orange and white cover with “Words by John Lang Sinclair” printed near the top. The biographical note incorrectly identified Sinclair as having been an engineering student. Perhaps Fox had acquired his lyrics from an old engineering banquet program.⁹⁹

To further complicate matters, the edition had been copyrighted on January 8, 1936, two days before Spell wrote to Nunnally to request permission. It was “seemingly a case of asking permission for a thing already done!” said Nunnally. While he and the committee were still free to pursue a copyright for their version of the song, University students and alumni were incensed. Sinclair telegraphed that he “would cooperate in prosecution especially if they have printed . . . the erroneous biographical note.” The Associated Press picked up on the story and turned it into a national headline. Texas Senators Tom Connally and Morris Sheppard, both UT graduates, offered their support.¹⁰⁰

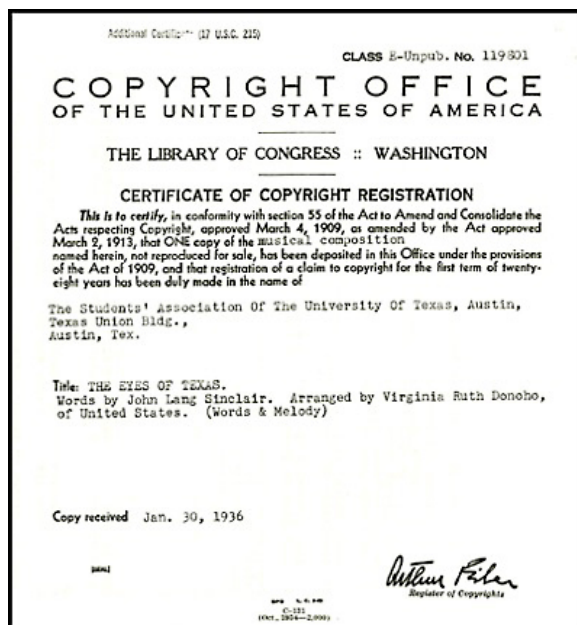
Fox defended himself to the San Antonio Express and argued that copyrighting “The Eyes” was like “finding a steer that had gone astray for 33 years and putting my own brand on it.” Nunnally retorted, “I think that an unbranded steer might well be somebody’s property, and in any case not Fox’s property, unless he had been the rightful owner. Any attempt to use ‘The Eyes of Texas’ for private gain would seem to me in a poor taste, and fundamentally as illegal, as to set up an unlicensed hot dog stand in a public park.”

On February 22, 1936, UT President Harry Benedict sent a letter to Fox that was co-signed by alumni association director John McCurdy, student body president Jenkins Garrett, engineering dean Thomas Taylor, and Texas Attorney General Bill McCraw. The letter was published in newspapers statewide. In response to Fox’s statement that he would “allow” the University of Texas to use his arrangement of the tune, Benedict was direct: “With or without your consent, Texans will continue to sing ‘The Eyes of Texas’ as long as

there are songs. . . Our protest is directed against an obvious attempt to cash in on a sacred tradition, bluntly, a bartering of the university’s honor and reputation. . . . Frankly, sir, we are unable to follow your logic that ‘The Eyes of Texas’ is like a maverick steer, the property of the first to brand it. . . . We urge that you abandon your plans to commercialize ‘The Eyes of Texas,’ withdraw it from the publisher and assign your copyright to the University of Texas.”¹⁰¹

A week later, Gladys Pitcher of the Birchard Company traveled from Boston to Austin to meet personally with President Benedict. She claimed not to know about the students’ copyright efforts until she read about it in the news. After a discussion with Benedict, Pitcher agreed to drop the company’s claim on the song. “In deference to the commendable sentiment for this song on the part of all Texans,” Pitcher wrote in a prepared statement, “the company feels that it is the courteous procedure to withdraw the edition from publication and the market.”

The copyright office formally awarded the University of Texas Students’ Association a 28-year copyright on “The Eyes,” backdated to January 30, 1936, when the application was first received. That summer, at their August 24 meeting, the Board of Regents formally approved a student government constitution amendment that referred to the tune as “the official song of the University of Texas.”¹⁰²



99 *The Daily Texan*, February 19, 1936

100 *The Daily Texan*, February 19 and 20, 1936; *Austin Statesman*, February 20, 1936

101 *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1936

102 UT Board of Regents minutes, August 24, 1936

The Texas Centennial Celebration Across the Country



Above: Texas Centennial poster stamps were popular collectibles.

It was a special date for Texans of all types. On March 2, 1936, only a few days after the meeting between Pitcher and Benedict that resulted in a University copyright for “The Eyes”, Texas marked its 100th anniversary. Alumni-organized celebrations were scheduled throughout the state and across the nation, following a tradition born from a resolution introduced at a 1900 alumni meeting:

“Whenever two ex-students of the university of Texas meet on March Second, Texas Independence Day, they shall break bread together and pay tribute to the founders of the Republic of Texas, who made our education possible.”

Of special note were the Texas Exes banquets in New York City, Washington, D.C., Houston, and Los Angeles, as they were to be part of a special NBC Radio broadcast that would feature brief interviews of notable Texans. The Houston event was held at the Rice Hotel and included special guests: Texas Governor and UT alumnus James Allred, Tennessee Governor Hill McAlister, and Wisconsin Governor Philip La Follette.

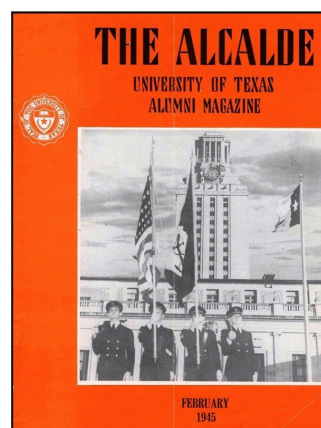
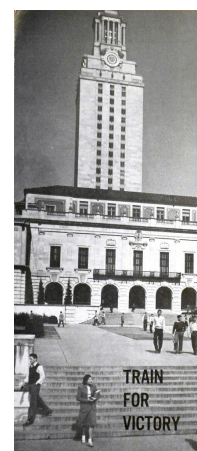
For about 15 minutes, starting at 9:43 p.m. Eastern Time, NBC Radio moved its broadcast from city to city, spending most of the time in Houston. Texas Exes holding banquets in cities and towns everywhere scheduled their celebrations to coincide with the radio show, so that they all could listen together. The highlight of the broadcast was the singing of “The Eyes” in Houston, and as it was live and heard nationally, University alumni from coast-to-coast literally sang the song together.¹⁰³

WWII and The Eyes of Texas

When the United States entered the Second World War in December 1941, the university very quickly reorganized to support the war effort. The academic calendar was compressed to permit additional terms – some as short as three weeks – to allow students to complete more courses sooner and

to graduate in 3 ½ years. Research, especially in natural sciences and engineering, was mostly war-related and classified. A Naval ROTC unit was created and then later absorbed into the Navy’s V-12 program in 1943, which was designed to recruit and prepare officers for service in the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. The V-12 headquarters at the Littlefield Home boasted two anti-aircraft guns on the front lawn and a firing range in the attic. All students were required to attend physical education classes and survival training. Theater students and the university’s Curtain Club entertained soldiers at military bases and hospitals, and the Texas Union created a regulated dating service that matched UT female volunteers with locally-stationed G.I.s.

During the war, an estimated 22,000 University alumni were active in the armed forces, and thousands of UT students interrupted their college pursuits to enlist in military service. Scattered and stationed around the globe, many depended on the *Alcalde* magazine, published by the Texas Exes, to provide information about and to connect with their fellow alumni during wartime. Under a section titled, “The Eyes of Texas,” a substantial portion of each issue was devoted to updates of those engaged in the war and included promotions, recognitions, and accomplishments, as well as lists of the captured, missing, and killed.



Saving a Life in WWII

In addition to the *Alcalde* magazine, “The Eyes” also served as a connection for both University alumni and all Texans stationed abroad, and the song united, inspired, and in at least

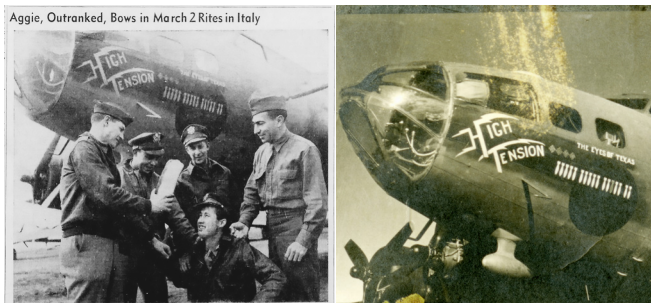
103 *The Daily Texan*, March 1, 1936, *Austin Statesman*, March 2 and 3, 1936

one instance, saved a life. In November 1943 at the Battle of Tarawa in the Pacific, an unidentified wounded Texan had reportedly given up on living through the day when Robert Carney, Jr., a soldier from New York, attempted a rescue. The slightly-built Carney was unable to lift the 200-pound Texan and carry him to safety. While the Texan urged the New Yorker to “go on” and leave him behind, Carney tried a different tactic. He only knew the first line of “The Eyes,” but he began to sing it repeatedly while the Texan slowly and painfully managed to stand. Together, they made it to the Red Cross station.¹⁰⁴

Preserving Texas Exes Tradition

Preserving a longtime Texas Exes tradition, UT alumni, wherever they were, tried to celebrate their state and their University on March 2, Texas Independence Day. Sometimes there were no other alumni – or Texans – nearby, and the situation called for extreme measures. On an unidentified tiny Pacific island in 1943, lone UT graduate Cecil Burney taught his entire battalion to sing and march to “The Eyes” before treating them to coffee and donuts. A year later, University exes stationed at a B-17 bomber base in Italy recruited a Texas Aggie to help “break bread” and celebrate the day in the shade of a bomber named “The Eyes of Texas.”

Aggie, Outranked, Bows in March 2 Rites in Italy



The B-17 Flying Fortress “High Tension,” also known as “The Eyes of Texas.” The phrase can be seen below the window in the upper center of the photo.

Italy was also the scene of a Texas State Party, sponsored by the Red Cross, to which anyone from the Lone Star State was invited. The group reportedly sang “The Eyes” and called it the “national anthem.” A similar gathering in North Africa was attended by more than 150 persons and broadcast on shortwave radio. All joined in to sing “The Eyes” at the end.

A 1944 barbecue in Hawaii attracted 8,000 Texans and friends, and the Army and Navy bands together played the song to welcome Fredericksburg native Admiral Chester Nimitz. The Commander in Chief of the U. S. Pacific Fleet, Nimitz told the assembly, “This gathering proves again that the ties that bind Texans together can be stretched . . . but cannot be broken . . . You can take a man out of Texas, but you can’t take Texas out of the man.” Nimitz concluded his talk, “More than ever, the eyes of Texas are upon you.”¹⁰⁵

The Enemy and the Eyes of Texas

The enemy also seemed to have picked up on the song. Joel McCook, a medical corps officer from Dallas, wrote his family that his company had been ordered to Tunis, Tunisia, and on the way there, stopped by the side of the road to allow a group of German prisoners to pass. “Imagine my surprise when one group . . . sang ‘The Eyes of Texas,’” wrote McCook. “I don’t know where they learned the song, but it was the most inspired singing I have ever heard.”¹⁰⁶

Other Wartime Uses of the Song

For some UT alumni serving in the war, the song was a shared experience that brought back memories of happier times. Ted Dawson, a former UT football player stationed in California, was walking down a San Francisco street when by chance he met up with fellow Longhorn alumni Noble Doss and Spec Sanders, both in the Navy and accompanied by their wives. “Traditional celebration of such an important event,” reported *The Texan*, “consisted of the three ex-football men locking arms and swinging down the thoroughfare lustily singing ‘The Eyes of Texas.’ Amazed Californians stared in wonder at the three who seemed without any sense of self-consciousness. Smiles covered the faces of passers-by and cheers rang out as the Texans were identified.”¹⁰⁷

Wartime Hollywood found use for the song as well. The 1944 film *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* was based on the Doolittle Raid – the first U.S. air operation to strike Imperial Japan – and featured a group of Texas sailors singing “The Eyes” before battle. Additional war-themed films, including the 1951 releases *Flying Leathernecks* and *Go for Broke!* also included the song, but it was always to identify characters connected to Texas, not the university.

104 *The Daily Texan*, March 24, 1944

105 *Amarillo Globe*, May 26, 1944; *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, October 17, 1943; *Austin American-Statesman*, October 15, 1943 and January 17, 1944

106 *The Daily Texan*, August 15, 1943

107 *The Daily Texan*, July 18, 1943



Occasionally, “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” was printed above the *Texan*’s flag, a wartime reminder that others were looking to the university.

Meanwhile, on the university campus, students, faculty, and staff continued to support the war effort. As Austin was deemed dangerously close to the Gulf Coast and within range of enemy bombers, an air raid siren was installed on the top of the Tower and the city was formally placed on a nighttime blackout. From January 25, 1942 until November 1, 1943 – about 19 months – both the Capitol dome and Tower were kept dark. The night the blackout was lifted and lighting of the Tower resumed, students spontaneously began singing “The Eyes.” “The Tower lights came on again,” reported the *Texan*, “turning on a thrill for University students who looked on with a deeper understanding of what ‘The Eyes of Texas.’ means.”¹⁰⁸

President Rainey and Large-Scale Protests Using the Eyes of Texas

Near the end of the war, the university found itself mired in unwanted controversy. For several years, political and philosophical differences between the Board of Regents and popular UT President Homer Rainey had created an uneasy tension on the campus. Historian Susan Richardson described Rainey as “a moderate Democrat,” noting his support for the New Deal, interracial cooperation (not desegregation), and antitrust laws. Rainey had angered the regents from his membership in the Bi-Racial Conference on Negro Education in Texas (BCNET) with W. R. Banks, principal of Prairie View College, which recommended improving Prairie View’s facilities instead of investing in sending Black students to universities outside of Texas.

The BCNET report outraged UT Regent Orville Bullington, who declared that no African American would ever attend the university as long as he was part of the institution, “regardless of what Franklin D., Eleanor, or the Supreme Court says, so long as you have a Board of Regents with as much intestinal fortitude as the present one has.”¹⁰⁹

Rainey made the issue public at a general faculty meeting on October 12, 1944, and cited 16 examples where he thought the regents had acted inappropriately.

At their meeting in Houston on November 1, despite efforts by a delegation from the Texas Exes and student body president Mac Wallace to act as mediators, the regents fired President Rainey late in the evening. The campus was stunned.



Students went to the university Co-op to purchase material to create black arm bands, while Wallace called for a mass meeting on the Main Mall at 10 a.m. the next morning. In a scene very similar to what their predecessors had staged in 1917, the students rallied, marched to the Capitol, demanded that Rainey be reinstated, and sang “The Eyes” in the rotunda.

The following day, November 3, a larger protest march was organized to mark the “death of academic freedom.” Though no parade permit had been issued, the city of Austin officials were largely sympathetic, declared the march a genuine funeral procession and closed streets along a route through downtown. Nearly all of the 7,000 enrolled students participated, following the Longhorn Band, which played a slow version of “The Eyes” as a funeral dirge.¹¹⁰



Above: University students protest the firing of President Homer Rainey, November 3, 1944.

The *Dallas Morning News* commented, “When the demonstrating student body of the University of Texas, grieved over the turn of events at their school, marched on

108 *The Daily Texan*, November 3, 1943

109 Richardson, p. 136.

110 *The Daily Texan*, November 2 – 4, 1944

the Capitol and sang ‘The Eyes of Texas,’ perhaps they had a purpose. To the newcomer in Texas . . . it might have seemed strange, not that they marched, but that they sang that song.”

“It has come to mean more than a song for a school,” continued the *News*, “Through the years it has often opened the clenched fist for a handshake, has moistened the eye when it needed moistening. So it was nothing new when the students marched through the big granite structure with a song.” The State Senate Education Committee investigated the events between Rainey and the Regents in November 1944.¹¹¹ Rainey’s “subversive activities” and judgment in hiring faculty was questioned: he was accused of hiring a conscientious objector, as well as an allegedly gay professor, and it was further alleged that he wanted to admit African Americans to the university.¹¹² The Rainey controversy was to generate national headlines for months and was a challenging time for the university.¹¹³

The Emergence of a Large Research University



As the war ended, the flood of new students to campus began. On June 22, 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, better known as the “G.I. Bill.” With millions of veterans returning home from World War II, and with limited employment and housing opportunities to greet them, the legislation was meant both to ease the transition to civilian life and mitigate the surge of jobseekers on the economy. The bill provided an array of assistance options from which a veteran could choose, including stipends for tuition and living expenses to attend a vocational school or a four-year college or university. A great many G.I.’s elected to begin – or to resume – their college educations, and enrollment skyrocketed nationally. Indeed, in the Army Information Branch’s film “The GI Bill of Rights,” the narrator

exhorts servicemembers to pursue “any kind of education, in any part of the country: high school, trade school, college, university.” As he utters “college,” a familiar tower is shown.¹¹⁴



A still from the Army Information Branch film The GI Bill of Rights.

While the University of Texas had prepared for an influx of veterans, the full effect of the G.I. Bill created something of a campus emergency. Enrollment at the end of the spring 1946 semester was 6,794. Three months later, 17,108 students arrived for fall classes, almost 11,000 of whom were veterans. (By the mid-1950s, over 25,000 World War II vets attended UT.) Some academic departments doubled or tripled in size overnight, while the law school increased ten-fold, from 78 to 797 students.

Sprinting just ahead of the flood of new students, University administrators raced to add 176 full-time teaching positions and revamped the class schedule to run continuously from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Lab classes continued until 11:30 p.m. Additional classroom space was provided by 14 surplus military buildings that were transported to campus from Camp Wallace in Galveston. To ease the demand for housing, eight, two-story Bachelor Officers’ Quarters (“BOQs”) were acquired from Louisiana and placed along San Jacinto Boulevard to serve as additional men’s dorms. To accommodate some of the married students, UT constructed the Brackenridge Apartments on the Brackenridge Tract southwest of campus near Lake Austin. A few years later, in 1949, the university purchased a 475-acre war-era magnesium plant in north Austin that became the J. J. “Jake” Pickle Research Campus. The stage was being set for the emergence of a large research university.

111 Don E. Carleton, *A Breed So Rare: The Life of J. R. Parten, Liberal Texas Oil Man 1896-1992*, Texas State Historical Association, 1998.

112 Richardson, p. 158.

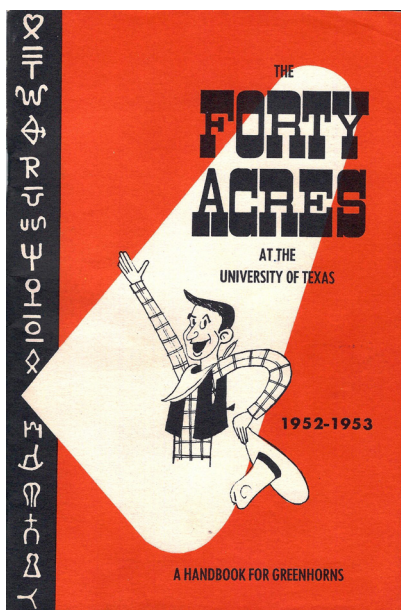
113 *Austin Statesman*, November 8, 1944

114 Army-Navy Screen Magazine #43, “G.I. Bill of Rights,” 1944. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YL4PP2kS-fg>

Eyes on Veterans

Most veteran-students were usually older, and with some married and already starting families. They typically didn't participate in the same student activities as their more traditional 18-to-22-year old counterparts. They did, though, sing "The Eyes" at meetings of the popular Ex-Servicemen Association because it helped them to feel at home and more like civilians. According to one veteran, "I stood in front of the Co-Op and waited for the street light to turn green . . . Crossing the street, I jerked my shoulders back, checked to see if all my pockets were buttoned, set my hat at 180 degrees . . . But alas, four steps across the campus and my pose was shattered – "The Eyes of Texas are Upon You" engraved upon the Union steps, laughing co-eds, and memories of my slouching days . . . overcame me. I cocked my hat on my head, stuffed my hands in my pockets, and slouched my shoulders again."¹¹⁵

The Eyes are Everywhere on Campus, Including as "Blessings"



After World War II, new students learned about campus traditions, including the words to "The Eyes" through handbooks distributed at student orientation. The "Handbooks for Greenhorns" replaced the yell books of decades past.

Despite the interruption of the war, "The Eyes" pervaded the Forty Acres. Athletic events, graduations, fraternity and sorority installations, honor society tap outs, Aqua Carnivals at the Gregory Gym pool, and birthday parties all included "The Eyes." As had been the custom in the 1920s, weekend All-University dances ended with the song. Swing Out ceremonies, now held on the South Mall, continued to use the tune during the passing of the Bluebonnet Chain.

The song was sung in the residence halls as well. "One of the traditions at the [Alice] Littlefield Dormitory," the Texan reported, "is to forgo the blessing before meals on nights when the Longhorns win a football game. Instead of a blessing, they sing 'The Eyes of Texas.'"¹¹⁶

Integration and the university

The end of the war also ushered in efforts to integrate the university. Black Texans learned of the abolition of slavery on June 19, 1865 in Galveston when Major General Gordon Granger issued General Order #3.¹¹⁷ Two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Black Texans were free.

Reconstruction followed, with General George Custer stationed at the Blind Asylum (today known as the Arno Notowny Building¹¹⁸ on the Heman Sweatt campus) and Black Texans slowly attained leadership in the state, such as the election of Senator Matthew Gaines and five other Black senators. The Constitution of 1876 was ratified, which provided for the establishment of the University of Texas and deigned Texas A&M as a branch of the new university. The constitution also mandated separate educational facilities for Black and white youth of the state, with the former evolving into Prairie View A&M University. By the 20th century, Texas, like other southern states, resisted integration by paying tuition for Black students pursuing graduate degrees in other states.

By the 1930s, however, civil rights leaders in the state such as Lulu White, Houston NAACP president, adopted a strategy advocated by Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall – integration. This was a departure from the strategy championed by Houston publisher Charles Wesley, who favored the establishment of the Texas State University for Negroes. White sought out a plaintiff who would meet the qualifications for admission to UT and recruited WWII veteran and postal worker Heman Marion Sweatt, who applied for

¹¹⁵ *The Daily Texan*, March 31, 1944

¹¹⁶ *The Daily Texan*, October 19, 1947

¹¹⁷ Randolph B. Campbell, "The End of Slavery in Texas: A Research Note," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Volume 88, No. 1, pp. 71-80.

¹¹⁸ The Nowotny Building is presently the administrative office of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

admission to the UT School of Law on February 26, 1946. “Admittedly, he possessed every essential qualification for admission, except that of race, upon which ground alone his application was denied.”¹¹⁹

This event set into motion one of the foundational Supreme Court cases, *Sweatt v. Painter*, decided on June 7, 1950.¹²⁰ As *Life* proclaimed in the October 16 issue, “Now, with five other Negroes, Sweatt attends law classes every day.”¹²¹ Regrettably, Sweatt’s health had suffered significantly and he was unable to finish his degree. His fellow pioneering graduate student, John Saunders Chase, was the first Black graduate of UT in 1952.¹²² Undergraduates would follow in the fall of 1956, a group termed “The Precursors.” Among that class was an opera singer from East Texas, Barbara Smith, whose experience would become a defining moment in UT’s history.

The Round-Up Tradition

For many students, the event of the year was Round-Up. Initially created by the Texas Exes in 1930 as a spring homecoming celebration, Round-Up had expanded by the 1950s to include not only class reunions and alumni receptions, but also dances, barbeques, campus exhibits, and an extravagant parade down Guadalupe Street and through downtown. The finale was the Round-Up Revue held at Gregory Gym and the announcement of the University of Texas Sweetheart, chosen from a student-elected group of “Bluebonnet Belles.” The winner, presented with a tiara and roses, took her coronation walk along the stage as the Longhorn Band played “The Eyes.”¹²³

Unofficial State Song and International Serenade

In 1952, a reunion involving some of the “Varsity Quartette” recorded the song in 1952 featuring professors Daniel Penick and E. P. Schoch, as well as Charlton Hall, and Lewis Johnson, who had inspired Sinclair to write “The Eyes.”¹²⁴ By this time “The Eyes” had become an unofficial state song; when King Paul and Queen Frederica of Greece visited Lubbock in 1953, their train was serenaded with the song by well-wishers. The royal couple liked it so much they asked for the lyrics and joined in.¹²⁵

The Eyes of Texas Combines with Hook ‘em Horns



A photographer caught the moment when UT cheerleaders first introduced the “Hook ‘em Horns” hand sign at a football rally on November 11, 1955.

In 1955, “The Eyes” was combined with a new tradition. On November 11, at a Friday night football rally in Gregory Gym, head cheerleader Harley Clark introduced what is now widely-known as the “Hook ‘em Horns” hand signal. Clark was given the idea by fellow student H. K. Pitts, and, without obtaining formal approval, announced that it was the “official” hand sign of the university. At the football game the following day, students began to hold up their “horns,” and by the end of the game, the alumni had joined them. By the time the 1955 football season ended, the hand signal and singing “The Eyes” were inseparable.

Income for The Eyes of Texas Fund

Off campus, use of the song continued, and it was almost always associated with the state of Texas. Although the university had acquired the copyright in 1936, it was difficult to regulate it. Initially, the Students’ Assembly – renamed the Students’ Association – asked not for royalties, but acknowledgement that “The Eyes” was the *alma mater* of the university. Notables such as actress Mary Pickford, bandleader Paul Whiteman, and actor/singer Bing Crosby had all been granted permission, as well as the Ozzie Nelson Orchestra.¹²⁶

119 Almetris M. Duren and Louise Iscoe, *Overcoming: A History of Black Integration at UT*, University of Texas Press, 1979, p. 1; Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Search for Justice: Lawyers in the Civil Rights Revolution, 1950-1975*, University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. 36.

120 Dwonna Goldstone, *Integrating the 40 Acres: The Fifty Year Struggle for Racial Equality at the University of Texas*, University of Georgia Press, 2012, p. 15.

121 “Heman Sweatt’s Victory,” *Life*, October 16, 1950, p. 64.

122 Gary M. Laverne, *Before Brown: Heman Marion Sweatt, Thurgood Marshall, and the Long Road to Justice*, University of Texas Press, 2010, p. 286.

123 *The Daily Texan*, April 5, 1962

124 Russell Tinsley, “50-Year-Old ‘Eyes’ Encore Reunites Original Singers,” *The Daily Texan*, December 2, 1952, p. 1.

125 Kenneth May, “City Greets Greek Royalty,” *Lubbock Evening Journal*, November 18, 1953, p. 13.

126 *San Antonio Express*, April 23, 1936

In summer 1951, UT student Ellis Morris realized the tune was too often being used without credit and potentially in ways that were derogatory to the university. Over the next six months, he revived the inactive Eyes of Texas Copyright Committee and worked with both law students and legal professionals to design a standard contract that could be issued by the Association. The collection of royalties was reconsidered. Given a much larger enrollment, the need for funds for student initiatives had increased significantly, and in 1952 the Eyes of Texas Scholarship Fund was created. Financed through music royalties and film rights, half of the monies were earmarked for scholarships. The Association could use the remainder at its discretion for student activities. The first contribution was \$675 from the Gene Autry western *Night Stage to Galveston*.

The Eyes of Texas Fund enjoyed a regular stream of income for the rest of the decade, especially due to the CBS television show *Tales of Texas Rangers* and films such as *Song in My Heart* and *Lucy Gallant*, starring Jane Wyman and Charlton Heston. Use of “The Eyes” in the 1956 feature film *Giant* generated \$3,000.¹²⁷

In 1959, the Governor’s Office asked that the fee be waived for an upcoming film saga titled *The Alamo* starring John Wayne. It was thought the production would provide a boon to the Texas tourism industry, and the Governor’s Office wanted to remove extra costs and red tape wherever possible. At first, the Students’ Association agreed, but when Wayne learned that the fees would go to the students and to a scholarship, he personally donated \$1,500 to the fund. In acknowledgement, Texas Exes director Jack Maguire made John Wayne a life member of the alumni association, and his name appears on the roll of life members in the Alumni Center.¹²⁸

Among the uses of the Eyes of Texas Fund was a \$275 donation to the Longhorn Band in 1961. It was to help cover travel expenses – especially for “Big Bertha,” the giant bass drum – for their trip to Washington, D.C., and to participate in the Inaugural Parade for President John Kennedy. The band played “The Eyes” as they marched past the presidential review stand.¹²⁹ The song was also played the morning of November 22, 1963, when first lady Jackie Kennedy entered the Hotel Texas ballroom in Fort Worth, tragically before President Kennedy gave his last address.¹³⁰



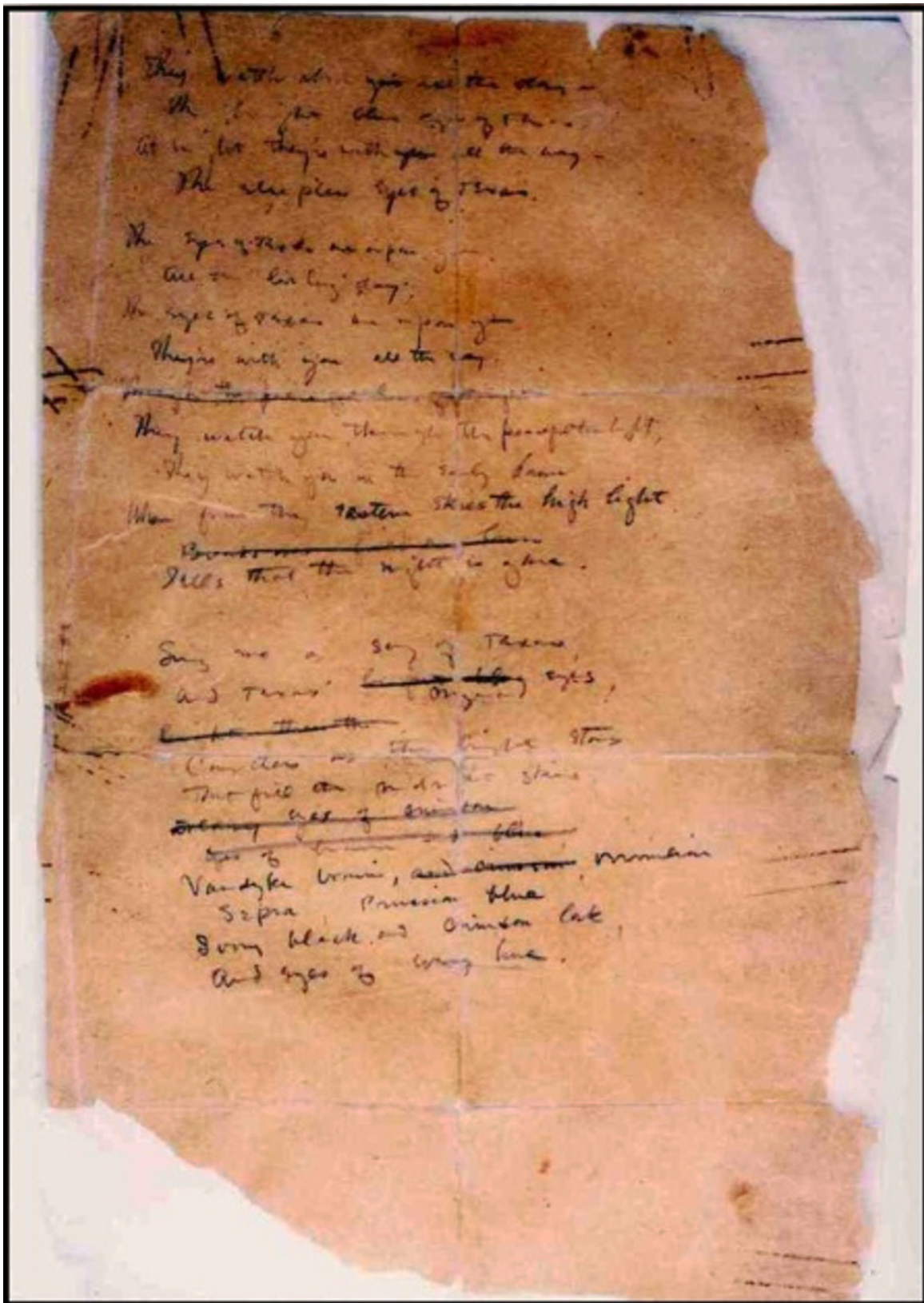
The Longhorn Band participated in the Inaugural Parade for President John Kennedy on January 20, 1961, and played “The Eyes” as it passed in front of the review stand.

127 Valerie Davis, “The Eyes of Texas,” *Alcalde*, May/June 1992, p.14.

128 John Wayne is Life Member #249 of the Texas Exes.

129 *The Daily Texan*, January 11, 1961

130 Jeb Byrne, “The Hours before Dallas: A Recollection by President Kennedy’s Fort Worth Advance Man, Part 3,” 2000. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/summer/jfk-last-day-3.html>



In 1959, following the death of Lewis Johnson, his two sons - James Johnson and Lewis G. Johnson - presented to the Texas Exes the brown scrap of laundry paper on which John Sinclair penned the original words to "The Eyes." It's now displayed in the Alumni Center.

The Eyes of Texas in Popular Media and Film

Through the remainder of the 20th century, “The Eyes” continued to be an ambassador, both in its relation to the university and as a symbol of Texas internationally. However, changes in musical and artistic tastes, as well as upheavals in long-established social mores, altered how the song was used.

Hollywood continued to use “The Eyes” in films to associate characters or places with Texas, but did so less frequently. Elvis Presley sang the song as part of a medley in the 1961 feature *Viva Las Vegas*, and it was heard in the 1966 Blake Edwards comedy *What did you do in the war, daddy?* Roy Orbison and Hank Williams performed the song in the 1980 film *Roadie* and it was heard in the 1983 drama *The Right Stuff*. In addition, the Buddy Morrow Orchestra recorded a jazz version of “The Eyes,” along with similar renditions of other college songs, for its 1965 album *Campus after Dark*.

While the potential income from royalties for the Eyes of Texas Fund diminished, the 28-year copyright on “The Eyes,” first obtained in 1936, was set to expire in 1964. John Sinclair had died in 1947, and despite all efforts, no living heirs were located to renew the copyright claim. As a last resort, Congressman Jake Pickle and Senator John Tower, both UT alumni, attempted to pass a bill through the U.S. Congress that would specifically allow the university to continue its claim on the song. “This may not be a matter of the greatest national concern,” said Pickle, “but it is of paramount importance to the University of Texas . . . I’ll keep my eyes on ‘The Eyes of Texas.’” The Librarian of Congress, however, raised constitutionality issues about the measure, and voiced concerns over setting a precedent. The bill failed, and “The Eyes” lapsed into public domain.¹³¹

Resolution Making The Eyes of Texas the State Song

Around the same time, renewed efforts were made to officially name “The Eyes” as the Texas state song. The first attempt was tried in 1925 by state Sen. True Strong from Dallas, who proposed the song to a legislative committee created to select a state anthem. Strong thought “The Eyes” was emblematic of the history of the state and it was well-known to the public – especially schoolchildren. Clearly, the idea that “The Eyes” represented Texas broadly had gained traction at this time: when Southern Methodist University visited West Point in 1928, their band played the song at the October 6 game. The

SMU yell leader explained: “S.M.U. will be representing the whole state as well as Dallas, and as the Texas University song is representative of the whole state it will be played by the band the same as our song.”¹³² Ultimately, the committee recommended “Texas, Our Texas,” which became the official state song in 1929.¹³³

In 1963, Texas Representative Bill Walker from Cleveland introduced a joint resolution that would replace “Texas, Our Texas” with “The Eyes”:

“WHEREAS, the melody and harmonic structure of ‘The Eyes of Texas’ lends itself to being sung by large gatherings of Texans and its words and melody inspire the dedication and devotion of those who sing and listen toward maintaining and creating a great Texas, be it

“Resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring, that ‘The Eyes of Texas’ be adopted as the State Song of Texas.”

Initially, the idea received little pushback in the House. “People just don’t know and don’t recognize the state song when it’s played,” argued Walker, “They do recognize ‘The Eyes of Texas.’” The *El Paso Herald-Post* claimed, “Music store clerks here report,” that for purchases of sheet music for “Texas, Our Texas” and “The Eyes,” “the majority are for ‘The Eyes of Texas.’” Not everyone was happy with the idea. Myra Brewster, president of the Texas Federation of Music Clubs, warned that her organization would “just rise up in arms” if the state song were changed.¹³⁴

Eyes Blindfolded For Time Being

The resolution was referred to the House State Affairs Committee, and then to a three-member subcommittee, where the idea ran

into more opposition. Early in the discussion, Walker offered to withdraw his proposal if any of the subcommittee members could sing one chorus of “Texas, Our Texas.” There were no takers. Walker contended that “‘Texas, Our Texas’ has never sung itself into the hearts of our people.”¹³⁵

There was, though, the question as to whether students and former students of Texas A&M University would ever accept “The Eyes” as the state song. “Do you think the Aggie band can learn to play ‘The Eyes of Texas?’” asked Representative Sam Collins of Newton. After extended debate and a proposed

131 *The Daily Texan*, February 12, 1965

132 Jimmie Lovell, “S.M.U. Football Rooters Borrow ‘Eyes of Texas,’” *The Daily Texan*, October 4, 1928, p. 1.

133 *The Daily Texan*, February 15 and 18, 1925

134 *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 30, 1963, *Baytown Sun*, February 5, 1963

135 *The Daily Texan*, February 5, 1963

amendment to instead select “The Yellow Rose of Texas” as the state song, the resolution died in committee.¹³⁶

The Growing Connection with Men’s and Women’s Athletics



A 1966 football rally at the Texas Union, with “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” engraved in the main entrance.

On campus, “The Eyes” was, more than ever, associated with University Athletics, particularly the football team. The success of Head Coach Darrell Royal’s squads, especially the national title runs in 1963, 1969, and 1970, brought with it many thousands of loyal Longhorn fans. The lyrics of “The Eyes” could be heard before and after football games, and at rallies held in front of the Texas Union, in Gregory Gym, and sometimes at Texas Memorial Stadium, where attendance filled nearly half of the seats. The song was also used by well-wishers at the Austin airport who gathered to see the football team return from an out-of-town game.

With the passage of Title IX in 1971 and the creation of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) the following year, the university began to sponsor competitive women’s sports. Over the next few decades, new women’s programs brought additional fans and more opportunities to sing “The Eyes,” notably with the swimming and diving, volleyball, and basketball teams, which all won conference and national championships.

NASA Wake-Up and Moon Voyage

Off campus, and off planet Earth, NASA used “The Eyes” as a wake-up alarm for sleeping astronauts during its Gemini, Apollo, and Skylab missions, while University graduate Alan

Bean took the song to the moon and back aboard Apollo 12 in November 1969. Bean requested a copy of “The Eyes,” to bring with him, but it had to satisfy the weight and size requirements to be carried aboard the spacecraft. The Travis County Texas Exes worked quickly over three days to have the music and lyrics commercially screen-printed on a piece of lightweight silk that could be folded and rolled up to be no larger than a cigarette. The song made the voyage and was framed and hung at the Alumni Center, but unfortunately has since been lost.¹³⁷



Astronaut Alan Bean as a member of the Apollo 12 crew and a University of Texas student (insert).

Eyes Averted: The Tumultuous 1960s

Unlike their counterparts in the Governor Ferguson and President Rainey controversies of 1917 and 1944, UT students of more recent decades have been reluctant to use “The Eyes” as a protest song. The university’s difficult process to integrate in the 1950s and ‘60s coincided with the national Civil Rights Movement, but song was missing at on-campus protests. The 1961 stand-ins meant to force movie theaters on Guadalupe Street to integrate their audiences, the sit-in protest by 50 African American UT students who spent an hour in the Kinsolving residence hall lounge – at the time off-limits to them – chatting, studying, and playing the piano, and the speak-ins on the Main Mall, where students paused in front of the Main Building during the 10:50 – 11:00 a.m. to collectively recite the inscription, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” to urge the university to integrate its residence hall, none seemed to include singing “The Eyes.”¹³⁸

136 *Baytown Sun*, February 5, 1963

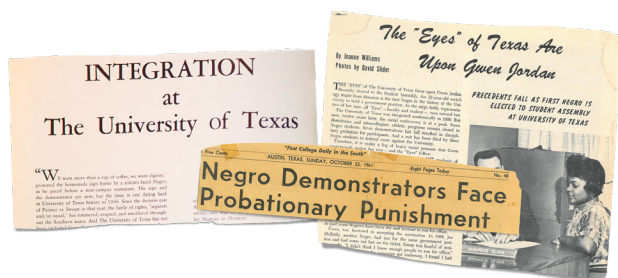
137 *San Antonio Light*, August 27, 1965, *The Daily Texan*, April 30, 1974

138 *The Daily Texan*, December 4, 1960 and January 5, 1961 (Stand-ins), October 19, 1961 (Kinsolving protest), November 1, 1961 (Speak-ins)



University students in November 1961 pause on the Main Mall to read the Main Building's inscription to voice their support for housing integration.

"The Eyes" was used as a metaphor when Gwen Jordan became the first Black student elected to student government in 1962 – a sense of attention, regard, and even pressure as she pioneered in this important role.



Additional concerns were raised about the Texas Cowboys minstrel shows. First performed in 1940 in Hogg Auditorium as a fundraiser to help finance lights for the men's intramural fields, the shows quickly became popular and eventually moved to Gregory Gym to accommodate the crowds. Organized and hosted by the Cowboys, the shows were benefits for various on or off-campus charities, and were more of a University-wide endeavor. Acts were recruited from a variety of student organizations or residence halls. Faculty members were also guest performers, along with at least one dean of students and a director of the Longhorn Band. "The Eyes" was sung at the end of the shows, though in the role of the traditional alma mater and not as one of the acts, as was the case in 1903.¹³⁹

Minstrel show blackface was used by the Cowboys and some of the other entertainers, which began to generate concerns as early as the late 1950s. By the mid-1960s, the complaints grew louder. "The idea of a service organization to help in charity is a worthy one," wrote an unidentified student to the *Texan*. "There is no reason, however, for the Cowboys to simultaneously contribute to charity and promote racial misunderstanding." Because of widespread disapproval of the minstrel show idea and the practice of blackface, the performances were discontinued after 1965.¹⁴⁰

Lack of the Song in 60's and 70's Protests

Along with the Civil Rights Movement, other causes in the 1960s and '70s – Vietnam War demonstrations, the Ecology Movement, and the Equal Rights Amendment among them – also left out "The Eyes." With the university's athletics teams taking a prominent position on the campus stage, as the Civil Rights Movement already had "We Shall Overcome" as its anthem, and with other popular tunes being sung by Vietnam War protesters, "The Eyes" may simply have been deemed inappropriate for the occasion. Rodney Griffin, a member of the Precursors noted that in 1967, among Black student activists "the school song was NOT a focus, the statue of Lee was, under representation or none in all aspects of campus life was... We had our share of student activists carrying signs saying "Bevo Needs Soul," "Orange and White Needs Black."¹⁴¹

In the early 1970's, the racism in the country was also experienced on the campus as well, including the football team. Several players openly questioned whether coaches, including Coach Royal, were racist. As players reflected on this, Julius Whittier shared, "I think Coach Royal knows that racism is wrong. I don't think he wants to be." However, the players agreed that white players showed little prejudice to their Black teammates. As Whittier continued, it was likely because of the "pliability of the youthful mind."¹⁴²

It may also be that, unlike the Ferguson and Rainey controversies, the issues at hand were part of a national movement and not limited to the university. "The Eyes" was heard at a 1975 protest march against the selection of Lorene Rogers as UT's president over the recommendation of a selection committee.¹⁴³

139 *The Daily Texan*, March 17, 1946

140 *The Daily Texan*, May 12, 1965

141 *Daily Texan*, "Before Ethnic Committee: Survey Shows Black Students' Problems," November 21, 1969; Gregory J. Vincent, Virginia A. Cumberbatch, and Leslie A. Blair, *As We Saw It: The Story of Integration at The University of Texas at Austin*, University of Texas Press, 2018; Rodney Griffin, personal communication, March 3, 2021

142 *Austin American-Statesman*, November 15, 1972.

143 *The Daily Texan*, September 22, 1975

In 1972, while not used as a protest, the “Eyes of Texas” and UT Band became central to a goodwill tour to Peru after a devastating earthquake in 1970. The tour was designed to raise money to rebuild two towns destroyed in the earthquake. While the laundry workers in Peru were striking at the time, when they learned the “famous band from Texas” needed uniforms cleaned, they broke the strike and did the job for free. The band played for dignitaries and more than 100,000 Peruvians, including millions of others on television. Peruvians had become extremely familiar with “The Eyes,” so much so that when the band played in the bullring, the crowd rose to its feet and stood at attention. Taylor Belcher, U.S. Ambassador to Peru, later jokingly confided to sponsors of the trip that he was afraid he would no longer hear “The Star Spangled Banner” at official functions. In its place he expected to hear “The Eyes of Texas!” He echoed the remarks of Mayor Eduardo Dibos: “The Band’s presence was the best thing that has happened for U.S.-Peruvian relations in many years.”¹⁴⁴

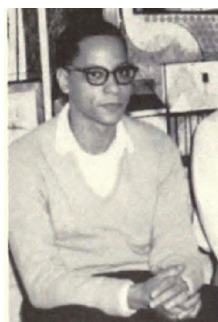
Copyright Controversy: Part II

In the mid-1970s, the university was surprised to learn that an Oregon man held a copyright for “The Eyes.” Wylbert Brown, originally a Fort Worth musician, composed a new set of verses in 1928, filed for a copyright, and had quietly continued to renew it. In November 1986, Arthur Gurwitz, president of the Southern Music Company of San Antonio, negotiated with Brown, then 91-years old, who agreed to assign the copyright to the university, provided he would continue to receive a portion of any royalties until his death. Brown passed in February 1987, and the following November, Gurwitz was honored and thanked for his gift. The university once again holds the copyright to “The Eyes,” which will expire in 2061.¹⁴⁵

Recognition and Reconciliation: John Hargis’ Contributions and His Memorial

“The Eyes” role as a hymn was observed in November 1986, at the passing of UT alumnus John Willis Hargis. While UT was the first predominantly white institution in the South to integrate following the Sweatt case in 1950, administrators did all they could to slow the progress mandated by the Supreme Court. Seven Black students admitted in 1954 one month after the Brown case had their admissions rescinded. Student organizations, including the YMCA-YWCA protested.

At the same time, a scheme was devised to “exclude as many Negro undergraduates as possible” by only admitting students pursuing degrees not offered at Texas Southern or Prairie View, and then requiring applicants to take a year of basic courses before enrolling.¹⁴⁶



One of those students, John Willis Hargis, who had graduated as valedictorian at L. C. Anderson High School in Austin and attended Morehouse College before deciding to transfer, enrolled at Prairie View. Upon the completion of his year at Prairie View, he applied to UT. Hargis had in fact met the requirements as stipulated by the

administration, and he was admitted in June 1955 – even after President Logan Wilson personally tried to dissuade him from doing so.¹⁴⁷

Hargis witnessed one of his early Black classmates suffer a nervous breakdown after one year, but then witnessed the Student Association’s adoption of a resolution of solidarity with Black students in March of 1956. Hargis was joined by 110 Black transfer and first year students in September 1956. As a student, he and classmate Robert Norwood observed that fraternity membership advantaged their white peers, but these organizations were closed to Black students in 1958. They worked to establish what became the Epsilon Iota chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated at UT, although initially administrators refused to recognize the organization. It was known as the Alpha Upsilon Tau Club, “pre-fraternal colony.” The fledging fraternity met in the Union as they could not afford to rent a house.¹⁴⁸

Hargis’ graduation in January 1959 received little attention; there was no ceremony. Hargis worked briefly as an engineer in Austin, then launched his career in the corporate sector with stops in Connecticut (where he was elected president of the New Canaan NAACP) and California. Failing health brought Hargis back to Austin in 1982, where he joined the board of directors of KAZI community radio. Disappointed with the lack of involvement of Black people in UT’s affairs, he worked with community and administrators, becoming the

144 Debbie Stowitts, “DiNino Says Tour Mutually Beneficial,” *Daily Texan*, January 13, 1972, p. 9.

145 Valerie Davis, “The Eyes of Texas,” *Alcalde*, May/June 1992

146 Thomas D. Russell, “‘Keep Negroes Out of Most Classes Where There Are a Large Number of Girls’: The Unseen Power of the Ku Klux Klan and Standardized Testing at The University of Texas, 1899-1999,” *University of Denver Legal Studies Research Paper No. 10-14*, 2010. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1583606

147 Richard B. McCaslin, “Steadfast in His Intent: John W. Hargis and the Integration of the University of Texas at Austin,” 2012.

148 *Ibid*.

first volunteer chairman of the Black Alumni Task Force of the Texas Exes. Though he was ill, Hargis came to work at UT as much as he could, including the day before he died, November 13, 1986.

The University of Texas honored Hargis with a memorial service on November 21, 1986. Friends and onlookers filled Bates Recital Hall in the Performing Arts Center as those who had known Hargis spoke. President Cunningham remembered, "He was committed to improving and strengthening a university that has made his path very difficult."

Reuben R. McDaniel, the chairman of the Faculty Senate and a distinguished member of the faculty of the College of Business, declared, "We saw in John a rare hope that things would improve and things would get better for every Black." The Innervations of Blackness Choir led the audience in singing "We Shall Overcome," followed by "The Eyes of Texas." The fact that the performance of those songs together was "a real watershed" did not go unnoticed.¹⁴⁹

Hargis' contributions to UT were further recognized in 1987 when the Board of Regents waived the five years deceased rule to name the Admissions and Employment Center John W. Hargis Hall on what was then called Little Campus. That August, Little Campus was renamed the Heman M. Sweatt Campus.¹⁵⁰



Thousands of Longhorn fans gather on the Main Mall for the Texas Hex Rally.

1980s and 1990s: Re-Establishing Traditions

With 1980s enrollment topping 40,000 students, there was a growing concern about the need for a closer campus community. One of the responses was the formation of the Spirit and Traditions Board (SATB). Sponsored by the Texas Exes, its membership included representatives from most University spirit and service organizations, as well as the University Residence Hall Association. The SATB sought to find ways to bring students together and connect them more closely with the university and discussed the idea of creating or reclaiming inactive UT traditions.¹⁵¹

One of its successful projects was the Texas Hex Rally, to be held during the week of the annual football game with rival Texas A&M. The rally revived an old tradition, begun in 1940, when Madam Augusta Hipple, a local fortune teller, advised University students to burn red candles as a means of "hexing" the Aggies. The first Texas Hex Rally, held in 1986 on the Main Mall, attracted thousands of Longhorn supporters with red candles. At the appropriate time near the end of the rally, the candles were lit and "The Eyes" played three times: first by a small group of musicians on the Tower observation deck, again from the balcony just above the Main Building's loggia, and a third rendition by the full Longhorn Band and audience. The Texas Hex Rally was a popular event for a quarter-century, until the Texas vs. Texas A&M football game was discontinued.¹⁵²

In 1999, the Texas A&M Aggie Bonfire stack collapsed, which resulted in the deaths of 11 students and one former student.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹⁵⁰ "University of Texas System News Release," Feb. 12-13, 1987.

¹⁵¹ *The Daily Texan*, October 3, 1986

¹⁵² *The Daily Texan*, November 13 and 21, 1986

The Texas Hex Rally was cancelled and replaced with a “Unity Rally.” Orange, maroon, and white ribbons – white placed in the center as the color used by both the university and Texas A&M – were placed on the trees of the South Mall, and mourners from both universities gathered before the Tower to burn white candles and hold a memorial service. “The Eyes” and “The Aggie War Hymn” were sung.¹⁵³

A Historic and Definitive Rendition: Barbara Smith Conrad and the 2000 Commencement



Barbara Smith Conrad (top row, center) with women Precursors. Almetris “Mama” Duren is in the bottom row seated in front of Conrad.

Those who attended the university’s 2000 Spring Commencement witnessed a very special event. Barbara Smith Conrad (1937-2017), operatic mezzo-soprano and world renown diva, led the graduates in “The Eyes.” Aside from the amazing performance, Conrad’s presence and journey to the event were significant. As one of the first Black undergraduate students admitted in the Fall of 1956, Conrad’s singing talent was recognized by faculty and students, and she was encouraged to audition for the leading role in the school production of “Dido and Aeneas.”¹⁵⁴ When the role of Aeneas was awarded to a white male student, Conrad’s accomplishment was soon obscured by controversy – in 1950s Texas, a mixed-race romantic opera escalated to the attention of the state legislature, and Representative Joe Chapman threatened to withhold funding for the university. Chapman, Representative Jerry Sadler, and others applied pressure to President Logan Wilson, and directed Dean E. W. Doty to remove Conrad from the cast.¹⁵⁵

In May 1957, the news of Conrad’s removal from the opera became statewide and national news. By July, international star and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte called Conrad at her dorm, and offered to send her anywhere in the world to continue her studies. After consulting with her father, Conrad recounted her decision.

“The reason for going to the University of Texas at Austin was to get a better education. So this was a dream. And I was not about to have that dream destroyed. So I stayed. Can’t run me out of my home state. Didn’t like the feel of that.”¹⁵⁶

Conrad earned her degree in 1959 and went on to an illustrious international performance career, even portraying another pioneer: Marian Anderson, who was denied the ability to sing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., and instead sang at the Lincoln Memorial, in the television movie “Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years” in 1977. Conrad reconnected with the university, and was honored as a Distinguished Alumna in 1985. The Barbara Smith Conrad Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Fine Arts honors her artistic contributions, and she continued to give back to UT by holding artist residencies and master classes at the Butler School of Music.¹⁵⁷



A decade later, Conrad would be the subject of the award-winning documentary, *When I Rise*, chronicling her life and experiences as one of the first Black undergraduates at UT, her stellar career, and her return to UT as a mentor and teacher. Many of those present at the 2000 Commencement did not know the story behind Conrad’s return, but the good news is

153 *The Daily Texan*, November 19 and 23, 1999

154 Barbara Smith Conrad, “I Had No Reason to Believe Otherwise,” 2012

155 DBCAH, “Barbara Smith Conrad Biography,” 2021 in *The Texas Book Two: More Profiles, History, and Reminiscences of the University*, edited by David Dettmer, University of Texas Press, p. 220. https://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/when_i_rise/barbara_conrad_bio.php

156 Produced by the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, UT-Austin; Mat Hames (Director). *When I Rise*. 2010.

157 “Barbara Smith Conrad Biography.”

that it is explained in detail in *When I Rise*. This performance has to be one of the most definitive versions of “The Eyes.”¹⁵⁸

The Eyes Turn 100: Centennial Recognition



In 2003, the Texas Exes UT Heritage Society celebrated “The Eyes” Centennial. An exhibit on the history of the song was installed on the ground floor of the Main Building, an extended feature on the song, published in the *Alcalde* magazine, was authored by UT alumna and Texas folklorist Fran Vick, and the Board of Regents approved a resolution that reaffirmed “The Eyes” as the official song of the university.

On May 12, 2003, the 100th anniversary of “The Eyes,” a birthday party was hosted at the Alumni Center, complete with birthday cake and ice cream. Austin musician Patricia Vonne was a special guest and concluded her performance with a Spanish version of “The Eyes.” University President Larry Faulkner and the vice president of student affairs both attended. Four members of the UT Men’s Chorus – Derek Deas, Jonathan Rohner, Zack Warren, and Chris Walker, treated the audience to a performance of “We are the Jolly Students,” along with the complete original and parody versions of “The Eyes.” That night, for the first time in the university’s history, the Tower glowed orange with a “100” in the windows.¹⁵⁹

Eyes of Texas Current Usage: Athletics, Alumni and Student Organizations

While the historical framing and understanding of the song are found in many literary and media sources, the members of The Eyes of Texas History Committee believed it important

to understand the perspectives of a diverse group of students, student organizations, as well as alumni who participated in athletics. Further, the Committee provided the opportunity for comments from Longhorn Nation to be considered as part of the study through a one-question survey link.

The Committee surveyed and interviewed a sample of UT athletics alumni from the 1960s to the present. These included a racially diverse group of former players, administrators, and coaching staff. The former student athletes were asked about the meanings, feelings, and associations that surrounded “The Eyes” from their experiences.

These former student athletes reported that the meanings, feelings, and associations with the song were pride, tradition, sense of community, integrity, responsibility, accountability, a sense of legacy, and brotherhood. They also shared that the song represented the state of Texas and traits such as UT and Texas’ size as well as its flagship identity. The former student athletes noted that there was a sense of serving conveyed through “The Eyes” – the university, the previous generations of athletes and students, as well as other stakeholders. Additional areas of emphasis include values of opportunity, unity, and doing the hard things.

Among this group, none was aware of the historical origin of “The Eyes” – the connections to the song and President Prather were unknown to them. Their first experiences of the song were typically as a player, or in some instances, attending games with parents and/or family when they were younger. These former student athletes recall being taught the lyrics of “The Eyes” as first year students, but broadly, did not attach much meaning to it. Instead of being educated about the song, it was adopted as a tradition and bond of trust, passed down from teammates and upper-class students.

In addition, members of The Eyes of Texas History Committee also interviewed and surveyed a sample of 12 student organizations in these categories: Greeks, service organizations, and Athletics. In general, student organizations varied widely in their uses and relationship with “The Eyes.” Most organizations that use the song in a formal manner do not teach their members the history of the song, nor do they instruct members about the meaning of the song. It appears that most students bring their own personal understanding of the song, or they form an understanding of the song during their time at UT. Overall, our investigation found that their relationship to the song is not influenced by membership in their organization. In most organizations, there has not been

158 Barbara Smith Conrad, “The Eyes of Texas,” May 19, 2000. <https://youtu.be/WlbPA6ScKVU>

159 *Alcalde*, March/April and July/August 2003

drastic change in the use or understanding of the song over the history of their organization. The committee did discern a few trends regarding “The Eyes” correlating to the type of organization, however.

Among UT Greek organizations, the committee found that most do not sing “The Eyes of Texas” in a formal manner, except one (Kappa Alpha, which uses it as their unofficial chapter song). Many students sing the song in an unofficial manner at informal events such as date events, tailgates, and parties. None of the organizations surveyed taught their members the words, history, or meaning of the song. Members engage with the song frequently but in contexts outside of their organizations.

Among some UT service organizations, there is a closer relationship with “The Eyes of Texas” through their commitment to serving the university. Most organizations surveyed sing “The Eyes of Texas” in a formal manner including at meetings, community events, and university sponsored events. There are numerous informal uses of the song, and these uses stem from long-standing traditions within the organization. The Spirit Program teaches their members a limited history of the song and requires its members to learn the words to the song, but most members know the words prior to joining.

Orange Jackets formerly sang “The Eyes of Texas” at football games and internal events, but since 2017 have slowly phased it out. By 2019-20, members sang it at football games but were given the option to participate. In Summer 2020, the members decided to stop singing it at football games, thus ending the tradition from the organization entirely.

All the athletic organizations interviewed stated that they sing “The Eyes of Texas” before and after competitions, seeing it as a way to bring the fans and athletes together. These groups do not have substantial informal uses of the song. No organization surveyed, except football, teaches the words to the song. Furthermore, none of the organizations we spoke to has taught its members the history of the song or discussed the meaning of the song, prior to the summer of 2020.

Societal, Political and Racial Unrest

While the history of the song has been documented over the years in articles and books, the social norms of the past have not provided ample opportunity for understanding, discussion or clarity around the song or its history. In several classes at UT, variations and interpretations of the history of “The Eyes of Texas” are included in the curriculum.

After the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the ensuing protests around the country and world, a group of student athletes in the football program -- angry, distraught and committed to action – thoughtfully prepared a list of demands for the university to consider to address racial injustice and systemic racism that has always been prevalent in our country as the racism that has historically plagued our campus. The students were joined in support by members of Longhorn Band as well as student government and other organizations. The list of demands included:

Campus Actions

- The renaming of buildings
 - Robert Lee Moore Hall
 - Painter Hall
 - Littlefield Hall
 - To include the patio café and fountain
 - James Hogg Auditorium
 - To include the permanent removal of the James Hogg Statue
- The replacement of statues with more diverse statues on campus designed by artist/sculptors who are people of color
- The inclusion of modules for incoming freshmen discussion about the history of racism on campus (ex. Texas Cowboys) and providing racial injustice awareness
- An outreach program for inner cities (Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio)

Athletics Actions

- More diversity in The Hall of Fame to include:
 - Permanent Black athletic history exhibit
- The UT Athletics Department to donate .5% of their annual earnings to Black organizations and the BLM movement
- The renaming of an area of the stadium after Julius Whittier, the first Black football player at UT

Changes regarding the entire Black community at UT

- The replacement of “The Eyes of Texas” with a new song without racist undertones
 - Lifting the requirement of athletes to sing the song

University President Jay Hartzell (interim president at the time) responded on June 15, 2020 with a commitment to “listen closely – and then to work with the entire community to develop a plan to move the university forward.” The president scheduled “extensive conversations with students, including leaders of Black student organizations and student athletes, as well as other community members to hear their concerns and ideas directly.”

The outcome was a direct response to the student athletes and the community's concerns in a July 13, 2020 email:

"These efforts fall into two categories. First: doing more to recruit, attract, retain and support even more talented and diverse students, staff members and faculty members who can change the world. And second: reconsidering how to best reflect our values, both in the symbols and names on our campus, and the openness with which we tell our history.

Every action we take must support the people who make UT such a special place and must fulfill our mission to teach, learn and discover.

To recruit, attract, retain and support talented and diverse students, faculty and staff, we will:

- Work with a group of students, faculty, staff and alumni to **allocate a multimillion-dollar investment from Athletics' revenue** to worthy university programs—whether on or off campus – that work to recruit, attract, retain and support Black students. We expect that our investments will include at a minimum:
- **Expanding our presence** and outreach in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and elsewhere to better recruit outstanding high school students from underrepresented groups. We will raise additional funds to establish more private scholarships specifically dedicated to recruiting students such as those 1,900 Black students who were accepted here and chose to go elsewhere.
- Providing significant new resources to **expand programs that provide transformative opportunities for future Black leaders**, including some of the outstanding work already being done within the university.
- In conjunction with the Texas Exes, and expanding and using Texas Athletics' 4Ever Texas program, **launch an effort to improve our students' ability to position themselves for post-graduation success**. This will maximize the impact of our vast alumni network and corporate relationships.
- Adopt a university-wide **plan to recruit, develop and retain world-class faculty members** who bring more diversity to our research and teaching missions. This plan has been in the works for more than a year under the leadership of Vice Provost for Diversity Ted Gordon and includes new funding for research and scholarship.
- Refocus and sharpen the implementation of our **Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (UDIAP)**,

which was released in 2017. We will regularly signal our priorities, commitment and progress toward measurable goals through a refreshed and better-communicated plan, overseen by Vice President Leonard Moore.

- **Expand the UT Austin Police Oversight Committee** to include more community members and a broader range of students, have it meet more frequently, and broaden its mission to oversee student and community engagement, communications and the exploration of creative approaches to community policing, on-campus safety and wellness issues.

The second set of actions addresses issues related to our campus and its symbols. After listening to many constituents, I've based these decisions on our role as an institution of higher education that is designed to teach and enable discovery. In doing so, I've relied upon the input I've received from our students, faculty, staff and alumni, and the work to date of our Campus Contextualization Committee, chaired by Vice President Leonard Moore.

I have weighed the effects that specific individuals or symbols have made on our university; how they fit with our values today; and the opportunities we have to use the stories surrounding these individuals and symbols to educate, to learn, and ultimately, to move us closer together as a community.

To ensure that we recognize and learn from our history and reflect our values through our campus symbols, we will:

- **Rename the Robert L. Moore Building** as the Physics, Math and Astronomy Building and provide historical explanations within the building about why past university leaders chose to name the space for Professor Moore.
- **Honor Heman M. Sweatt** in additional ways: by creating the Heman M. Sweatt Entrance to T.S. Painter Hall as the main entrance on 24th Street; placing a statue of Mr. Sweatt near the entrance; and then reimagining, redesigning and rededicating a major space in the building as an exhibit and gathering place where we will tell the story of the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Sweatt v. Painter*. This will recognize Mr. Sweatt's courage and leadership in changing the world through the 1950 case that he won, allowing him and other Black students to attend UT. This will also place Painter Hall within the context of our university's resistance to integration under T.S. Painter's presidency,

and ultimately to the *Sweatt* decision's crucial role in integrating public education.

- **Honor the Precursors**, the first Black undergraduates to attend The University of Texas at Austin, by commissioning a new monument on the East Mall. This will be the central feature of a larger space dedicated to the pioneering students and faculty members who helped move the university toward becoming more inclusive.
- **Erect a statue for Julius Whittier**, the Longhorns' first Black football letterman, at DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium.
- At the suggestion of the Jamail family, **rename Joe Jamail Field** at the stadium in honor of Texas' two great Heisman Trophy winners, **Earl Campbell and Ricky Williams**, two Longhorn legends with a record of commitment to the university.
- **Educate our community and visitors about the history and context of many of the names that remain**, such as the Littlefield Fountain, the statue of Gov. Jim Hogg, the Belo Center and the pedestals on which a series of statues stood until 2017. Building on the work done by the Campus Contextualization Committee, this education may take the form of plaques and a website that our community and visitors can easily access from their phones.
- **Own, acknowledge and teach about all aspects of the origins of "The Eyes of Texas" as we continue to sing it moving forward with a redefined vision that unites our community.**

"The Eyes of Texas," in its current form, will continue to be our alma mater. Aspects of its origin, whether previously widely known or unknown, have created a rift in how the song is understood and celebrated, and that must be fixed. It is my belief that we can effectively reclaim and redefine what this song stands for by first owning and acknowledging its history in a way that is open and transparent.

Together, we have the power to define what the Eyes of Texas expect of us, what they demand of us, and what standard they hold us to now. "The Eyes of Texas" should not only unite us, but hold all of us accountable to our institution's core values. But we first must own the history. Only then can we reimagine its future, and I look forward to partnering with our campus community to do just that.

These are the actions we will take together. They represent the continued evolution of our university,

which has been taking place for 137 years and will carry forward for generations to come."

Further, President Hartzell and his leadership engaged in extensive small group and individual heartfelt conversations with hundreds of people over the following months to ensure deeper understanding and human connection across diverse university constituencies. These personal conversations took place while The Eyes of Texas History Committee undertook its important research, deliberation and understanding to produce its report and recommended strategies to memorialize the history of "The Eyes of Texas" and help to ensure the university continues its commitment to long-term, sustainable social change on the campus and in the community.

Timeline of Milestones

- 1903:** “The Eyes of Texas” is debuted on May 12, 1903, at a minstrel show organized to raise money for UT’s track team. This was not an institutional use.
- President Prather’s commencement address ends with “The Eyes of Texas are upon you. Till Gabriel blows his horn.”
- The song is sung spontaneously by the UT student section at the Thanksgiving Day Texas vs A&M game after the Longhorns win. Tradition of staying on the field “win or lose” to celebrate the heroes of the game is born.
- 1904:** At an assembly to commence the 1904-05 academic year, President Prather left out his famous phrase. Governor Lanham spoke immediately afterward and commented, “I felt [Prather] ought to have concluded his address with, ‘young ladies and gentlemen, the eyes of Texas are upon you.’”
- 1905:** President Prather died unexpectedly early in the morning of July 24, 1905. The song was sung at his memorial service in the auditorium of Old Main, and it’s there that it evolved into an “anthem.”
- 1908:** “The Eyes of Texas” is first printed in *The Cactus* (p. 308).
- 1911:** First usage of “The Eyes” for a legislative function as students welcome state legislators to campus and serenade them.
- 1913:** Students protesting a bad performance by a hypnotist created “The Eggs of Texas” by chasing the performer out of the arena with eggs.
- 1915:** Rupert Robertson in his, “Some University Football Customs,” states “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” is sung at the kick-off of football games.
- 1916:** Women sing the song and have a voice for the first time at a football game.
- 1917:** In May, “The Eyes of Texas” plays while students march in protest of Gov. James Ferguson’s veto of the UT budget.
- 1918:** “The Eyes of Texas” is first published in the UT Community Songbook.
- 1920:** “The Eyes of Texas” is used as part of promotional materials for the women’s suffragist movement. The song is fully integrated into all parts of university life.
- 1925:** The first attempt is made to make it the state song.
- 1928:** First known recordings of “The Eyes” and “Taps” – San Antonio, on RCA Victor record label
- The SMU band performs “The Eyes of Texas” in a game against West Point, with the belief that the song belonged to the state of Texas.
- 1930:** The university administration selects it as one of the songs played on the new carillon bells. President H. Y. Benedict had it translated into 10 languages.
- 1933:** World’s Fair in Chicago, Visitors to the Texas Exhibit stepped onto a faux balcony to gaze out toward an image of the Texas Capitol with the phrase “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” above it.
- 1935:** In a letter written to music arranger and publisher Oscar Fox (a UT grad) who controlled the copyright, President H. Y. Benedict referred to the song as a “sacred tradition” related to UT’s “honor and reputation.”

- 1936:** Texas Union opens with the words “The Eyes of Texas are Upon You” etched in the building.
- The Longhorn Band performs the song in Madison Square Garden and the White House during its Texas Centennial concert tour. NBC Radio plays the song on national radio.
- The Student Assembly copyrights the words and the arrangement and holds the copyright 28 years.
- 1940:** “The Eyes of Texas” is sung as an alma mater after the Cowboy Minstrel show.
- 1941:** During World War II, The Alcalde publishes a special “Eyes of Texas” section in each issue focused on those Texans captured, missing or killed in the war.
- 1943:** In the Battle of Tarawa, a New Yorker refuses to leave a wounded Texan serviceman and sings the first line of the “Eyes of Texas” to give him strength to get to safety.
- 1943:** Spontaneous campus singing of “The Eyes of Texas” begins as the war-time blackout is lifted over Austin.
- 1944:** “The Eyes of Texas” is sung at gatherings across the world to commemorate Texas Independence with events in North Africa (150 people), Hawaii (8,000) and Italy, where it was treated like the national anthem. Admiral Nimitz speaks to troops and ends his remarks with “The eyes of Texas are upon you.” German prisoners in Tunisia are overheard singing “The Eyes of Texas” while marching.
- Some 5,000 students protesting President Homer Rainey’s firing sing “The Eyes of Texas” in the rotunda at the Capitol. Nearly the full student body, using “The Eyes of Texas” as a “funeral dirge” protest the “death of academic freedom.”
- 1947:** The Tower bells chime “The Eyes of Texas” on the hour of John Sinclair’s burial.
- 1951:** The Eyes of Texas Scholarship Fund is established with royalties from the song.
- 1954:** The Longhorn Band records it on “Songs of UT” album.
- 1955:** Hook ‘em Horns hand sign is introduced and paired with “The Eyes of Texas.”
- 1961:** The Longhorn Band performs song at JFK’s inaugural parade.
- 1963:** Another attempt is made to make this the state song.
- 1964:** U.S. Congress discusses the song’s copyright and how “central” it is to the state of Texas.
- 1965:** The Longhorn Band performs song at LBJ’s inaugural parade.
- 1966:** Mexican American farmworkers and clergy march from the Rio Grande Valley to the Capitol in Austin singing “The Eyes of Texas.”
- 1969:** The song is transported to the moon. It is also used as wake-up songs for Gemini, Apollo and Skylab missions.
- 1967:** The Longhorn Band records it on album of traditional songs and again in 1969.
- 1972:** After a Peruvian earthquake, the band performs for hundreds of thousands of Peruvians and includes “The Eyes of Texas.”
- 1974:** The Longhorn Band performs “The Eyes” at Super Bowl halftime in Houston.
- 1975:** “The Eyes of Texas” is sung as part of a protest against the appointment of Lorene Rogers as UT president, over the recommendations of a campus-wide selection committee.
- 1978:** The Longhorn Band records “The Eyes” for album of traditional songs.

1981: The Longhorn Band performs the song in Ronald Reagan's inaugural parade.

1986: Arthur Gurwitz, president of Southern Music Company in San Antonio, re-secures copyright of the song for UT Austin.

The Hex Rally tradition is introduced prior to the University of Texas versus Texas A&M football game with the song performed three times.

The song is performed at the funeral of John Hargis, a Precursor and first volunteer chairman of the Black Alumni Task Force of the Texas Exes, with "We Shall Overcome" followed by "The Eyes of Texas."

1999: The University of Texas and Texas A&M host Unity Rally after the Bonfire stack collapse tragedy by singing "The Eyes" and "The Aggie War Hymn."

1999-present: Longhorn Band performs "The Eyes" for Black Alumni Network Legacy Banquet.

2000: Alumna opera star Barbara Smith Conrad performs the song at Spring Commencement. Innervisions Gospel Choir (established 1974 as first Black non-Greek organization) performs a version of "The Eyes of Texas." Innervisions Gospel Choir performs a version of the song at "Gone to Texas" over a number of years.

2001: Longhorn Band performs the song in George W. Bush inaugural parade.

2003: In honor of the song's centennial, the University of Texas System Board of Regents reaffirms "The Eyes of Texas" as the university's official song.

2012: The University of Texas purchases the publication rights to the song from Southern Music Company.

2015: Longhorn Alumni Band performs it in New Year's Day parade in London, England.

2016: The Mariachi Paredes de Tejastitlan performs the "The Eyes."

2019: Longhorn Alumni Band performs it at the 75th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France.

NBC's Late Night with Jimmy Fallon is broadcast from The University of Texas at Austin. During the week, rapper Gucci Mane performs a trap version of "The Eyes of Texas."

2020: May 25, George Floyd is killed by Minneapolis police, leading to worldwide protests of police brutality against Black Americans.

Summer 2020: Some UT student-athletes request that the university discontinue the song's use.

July 2020: President Hartzell responds to student-athlete requests with campus changes, however, he confirmed "The Eyes" will remain the alma mater and stated his commitment to conduct a thorough study of the complete history of the song from The Eyes of Texas History Committee.

October 2020-February 2021: The Eyes of Texas History Committee researches, studies and collaborates on its report responding to the President's 4 charges.

Current: Dallas Texas Exes Chapter plays "The Eyes of Texas" at the end of their meetings. (email interview with Carl Tippen, a member of the Dallas Texas Exes Chapter January 12, 2021)

2021: The Eyes of Texas History Committee presents its report to Longhorn Nation for deeper understanding and extensive dialogue in March.

Charge 4:

Recommend potential communication tactics and/or strategies to memorialize the history of “The Eyes of Texas.”

Charge 4 presents the committee and the university an opportunity to ensure that the countless hours of research, dialogue, deliberation and understanding are appropriately understood and memorialized. Our work has made clear the importance of fact and equally, the importance of respectful dialogue, even when people view the facts through fundamentally different lenses. We understand and expect reasonable, thoughtful people to view our work and arrive at different conclusions. That, we believe, is where the conversation must begin. It is our hope that this report provides the framework for healthy discussion and ongoing understanding.

The work of this committee is important because, we hope, it will be a catalyst for conversation and an opportunity for our community to come together on challenging conversations, particularly about the history of our state, our University and our most cherished traditions.

The committee considered nearly 100 ideas to include in this section. Below, we have identified a number of ideas that we, as a committee, believe are not only appropriate based on our charge, but important for the administration to consider and to implement. We understand that while the history of our University, our band, our athletic program and our alma mater will not change, the university can effect positive change by acting on the recommendations in this report while continuing to address any inequities that exist in our university community and its culture.

Through our conversations, it has become clear that without facts and clarity, there will still be potential for division. Even with this report, that divide may remain – but it will be framed by facts grounded in history, rather than assumptions and narratives without factual basis. Thus, the core of our findings in this charge focus on preserving the report, ensuring its access and protecting its place in our history so our current and future generations can have a place to learn, reflect and host challenging conversations about the past, and more important, the future. We humbly present 40 recommendations for the Forty Acres in response to Charge 4.

Accountability

1. Ensure that the actions from the committee and report are assigned to an individual with oversight and financial

authority (like the Office of the President or Division of Diversity and Community Engagement).

2. Consider the development of an “Eyes of Accountability” Committee to ensure compliance as well as continued support for positive social change.

Students

3. Recognize the students who used their voices and actions in brave ways and who lived up to our motto of “What Starts Here Changes the World.”
4. Continue allowing students to choose if they want to sing the song.
5. Educate students through student activities and groups.
6. Teach the history of “The Eyes” and the university at student orientations.
7. Create a fund (with Texas Exes) for student-athletes to have an active role in leading, learning and directing efforts for positive social change.

Culture

8. Use “The Eyes” to define the university’s shared expectations of the Longhorn community:
Embrace differences in others;
Yearn for deeper understanding;
Encourage greatness beyond self;
Service to the greater Longhorn community and society.
9. Address the university culture to ensure clear definition of what it means to be a Longhorn.
10. Review the Fan Conduct Standards at all UT events to ensure permanent removal for any fan using racially directed language.
11. Honor and contextualize Black history, and the history of all historically underrepresented communities, at UT.

Publishing

12. Reinforce to all that our school song will remain – so address the negativity of the song up front and then go about educating people on the historical context.

13. Create and publish a comprehensive fact-based history of the song.
14. Offer a complete history to the UT community.

Website

15. Develop an exceptionally high-quality, interactive, dedicated website with the artifacts, photos, important links, musical variations of “The Eyes,” and video – portraying the history honestly and bravely.
16. Update the Texas Exes webpage to talk about the entire history of “The Eyes.”

Education

17. Educate the faculty and staff – not only students – about the history of the song and the university.
18. Develop a campaign that encourages Longhorns to lean into difficult conversations, including race, history and talking across difference.
19. Use UT resources to teach our community (and to be a model to others) how to have difficult conversations – using our faculty experts, like the Difficult Dialogues Program and partners like Brené Brown.
20. Develop additional curriculum around social change, with potential funding mechanisms for students to actively make a difference through the class.
21. Create an institute at UT to study and encourage difficult conversations about controversial and challenging topics, including “The Eyes of Texas.”
22. Develop an official course for incoming UT students, including all athletes, band, governing council and spirit organizations, providing the history of “The Eyes of Texas,” the university, Austin and the pathway forward. This course should be open to faculty and staff as well.

Presentations

23. Arrange meetings, conversations, gatherings of diverse groups of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and others connected to the university to share the work and have discussions.
24. Work directly with Black Alumni Network, Black Ex-Students of Texas (BEST) and Precursors to present the work and get input on how best to share the information with others.

25. Provide educational opportunities to parents/guardians of students as well as student athletes, band members, and other ambassadors of the university to teach the history of the song and university.
26. Create a learning guide on how to “Encourage Challenging Conversations” on the Eyes of Texas and the university’s history for leaders of organizations on and off campus.
27. Present the history and the facts to Texas Exes Chapters across the country.
28. Show a brief video at Longhorn football games (as well as other sports).

Videos

29. Create multiple videos or docuseries on the history of “The Eyes” and its usage over time.
30. Develop a video with members of the committee sharing their understanding of the committee’s findings and work.
31. Create educational videos to play for all incoming students, including at Gone to Texas, to learn about the history and to learn how to productively engage with others.
32. Produce a piece for Longhorn Network, which can also be used on the website, YouTube, the Harry Ransom Center and other places.
33. Produce a high-quality documentary on “The Eyes,” integration and the history of the university, including the band, football, as well as spirit and traditions organizations, and distribute to alumni chapters.

Music

34. Consider adding an additional pause before or after, or in a version of the song to create a brief moment for personal and collective reflection.
35. Follow the tradition of previous presidents by creating special orchestration of “The Eyes” with your version composed or performed by a Black musician.

Display

36. Devote a section in The Frank Denius Family University of Texas Athletics Hall of Fame at DKR to showcase the things the committee learned.

37. Create a “Traditions Hall” at UT to memorialize the traditions, the history and the understanding of the defining traditions at UT.
38. Create an exhibit in the Alumni Center to talk about the history of “The Eyes of Texas” and the ways we have and continue to move forward.
39. Build a statue of Julius Whittier or Henry “Doc” Reeves in the student section of DKR to reinforce that there will always be a place at UT for them and to serve as inspiration for those who are not made to feel as if they belong.
40. Display the Committee’s historical document at the Briscoe Center.

There are a host of ideas that may or may not pertain directly to “The Eyes of Texas,” that while not included in the report as direct recommendations of the committee, were important to the discussion and various members of the committee.

- *Ensure continued progress on social issues and creating a welcoming environment at UT for all students*
- *Implementing broad and bold change to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)*
- *Continue to diversify our student body and faculty*
- *Leverage the university’s alumni to build and support a more robust mentoring network and approach for students of color, as well as all students*
- *Place continued emphasis and understanding of what it means to be a Longhorn*
- *Be more committed to Austin and its history*
- *Texas Exes to fund multiple scholarships to recruit Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) band members*
- *Support athletes/teams with additional learning and leadership opportunities, including programs like College Athletes for Respect and Equality (CARE), which provide unique learning through experiences with apartheid, the Holocaust and other genocides in history.*
- *Texas Exes to create a fund for the band and LHBlacks to be able to identify band/music programs in underserved schools in need of equipment and support in order to develop and increase the number of members of color in the UT band*
- *The university to properly fund the band so that the student bandmembers are not asked to pay for uniforms and other essential items*
- *Texas Exes to create a fund to support the children of faculty and staff – especially Black and Latino – to ensure they have the funds to attend the university and increase faculty retention*
- *Create training module for unconscious bias, diversity/inclusion for faculty and staff (similar to sexual harassment training/FERPA training)*
- *Increase university funding for centralized recruitment scholarships awarded by admissions*
- *Increase recruitment budget for admissions to increase the university’s reach for potential students*
- *Increase money for Black student recruitment and scholarships – through the university and outside funds*
- *Intentionally recruit scholars and administrators who can leverage their expertise, knowledge and research concerning “The Eyes” and related ephemera*
- *Understand the challenges of students (predominantly Black and Brown) who live on Riverside and other areas that have limited access to university support, especially in times of crisis*
- *Promote the many positive things the university has done and continues to do in the fight against racism and injustice.*

One of the unanimous agreements lies in our committee’s deep belief in the university and our continued hope for demonstrated progress on social issues that affect our country, university and world. We love this university and hope that our work is a catalyst for important change and yet another proof point of what starts here changes the world.

The eyes of our university, our state and our country are watching our collective actions.

Additional audio, stories and video at
eyesoftexas.utexas.edu

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Errata

Page 48

A previous version of this report incorrectly stated that the Orange Jackets sing “The Eyes.” This has been corrected.

Page 6, 22, 23, 33

Throughout the report, we replaced “ladies” and “co-eds” with “women” and “female” to reflect parallel treatment of male students as “men.”