

debated the details of the declaration throughout May and June, finally appointing a drafting committee on June 11, 1776. Thomas Jefferson wrote a draft over several weeks and drafts were reviewed, edited, and edited some more, before approval on July 4. In Texas, it was a different story. The convention opened on March 1 and a drafting committee produced a document literally overnight. George Childress, leader of the committee, may have arrived at the convention with a pre-written rough draft, to make this speed possible.

On March 2, 1836, the convention adopted a declaration and declared Texas' independence (the matter of actual independence would not be settled, of course, until Texas defeated Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto on April 21). If you've never read the Texas Declaration, I encourage you to do so. For a 183-year old document, it's very readable in a modern sense. It's clearly inspired by the U.S. Declaration, but is unique in itself. The Declaration specifies numerous complaints against the Mexican government, from the general to the very specific, some of which were rarely discussed in the province before the revolution.

Among other things, the declaration complains that the Mexican government "has failed to establish any public system of education." In a violent frontier province,

schools had not been a major priority up until that point. As such, some historians view this part of the Declaration as a laundry list of dubious grievances, beefing up a case for independence. I see it as more forward thinking. Childress and the other delegates listed what Texas would need if it was to grow and develop as a free society. They knew that Santa Anna was unlikely to cooperate on those matters, leaving independence as the best recourse. As we see public education constantly debated in the Texas Legislature, with many Texas elected leaders openly hostile to public education, this is particularly striking. Our revolutionary heroes saw public education, financed by "the public domain," as a cornerstone of an ideal society, and something worth fighting and dying for, right along with national security, freedom of arms, absolute freedom of religion, and trial by jury.

Sixty delegates signed on to the Texas Declaration of Independence. Three of those men, Lorenzo de Zavala, Jose Antonio Navarro, and Jose Francisco Ruiz, were native born within the borders of Texas. The rest were immigrants. Interestingly, well over half of the signatories (some estimates place the number as high as 50) had been in Texas less than 6 years. This means they arrived after the infamous Law of April 6, 1830, which barred immigration of Anglos into



**Historic Playoff Run!** The Blackwell High School Lady Hornets basketball team were named area champions on February 21, 2020, after defeating Buena Vista 46 - 31. This win advanced the Lady Hornets to the regional quarterfinals in San Angelo on February 25, where they defeated Water Valley 44 - 37. The Lady Hornets historic playoff run ended on February 28, when they were defeated in the regional semifinals in Abilene against Hermleigh 27 - 43.

Texas. So technically speaking, a large number of the signatories were illegal immigrants under the laws of Mexico.

The personal stories of the men who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, and our other revolutionary heroes, are complicated. Many had checkered pasts, either in Texas or wherever they came from. Some would have inglorious futures. Several would die soon. Others would fail in business or were beset by

bankruptcy, personal problems, or controversy. But this is the real world, not a Disney movie. Heroes are complicated humans, just like you and me, but that makes them heroes no less. In fact, I would argue that a complicated, flawed hero makes heroism seem more attainable to those who might one day have to answer the call themselves, rather than making heroism seem like a task limited to the flawless.

From 1836 to 2020, the story of Texas was, is, and will be

beautiful, ugly, complicated, and contradicting, full of noble-minded people with noble-minded ideals, often struggling to live up to those ideals. We may not always succeed, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't keep trying.

Happy Texas Independence Day. May God bless Texas.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, Texas, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

**VP holds March meeting**

Vision with a Purpose held their monthly meeting on Thursday, March 5, at their headquarters at 701 Austin St. in Robert Lee, at 6 pm. A meal was served.

Plans are being made for the city-wide garage sale to be held Saturday, May 2. Watch for more information. This annual event is open to the community. VP encourages everyone who wants to "garage sale", do it on this date as there will be plenty of sales. A location map will be issued for the event.

This community-minded organization is open to all. If you're interested in improving Robert Lee, please join. All are welcome. The group meets the first Thursday of each month.

**Bronte graduate publishes first book**

Rebecca Joy Wilcox Aidala, a 1987 graduate of Bronte High School, has published her first book, entitled *The Eyrie of West Texas*. *Eyrie* is a compilation of years of research in both the Charlotte Mason Method and best practices in teaching Shakespeare to Pre-K through eighth grade students. She has synthesized her years of teaching Shakespeare and her expertise in Mason's philosophy to argue against mainstream approaches in theater pedagogy. Not only does Rebecca teach literary aspects of Shakespeare,

she edits and directs his works each year, along with other theatrical genres for high school students. She has taught at Ambleside for 16 years and has edited and directed 24 Shakespeare plays in a process-centered style. These include: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Henry VI Part 1*, *Julius Caesar*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello*, and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. This May, she will again direct *Hamlet*. She has also directed in a performance-centered style, launching

Ambleside's annual dinner theatre, which is performed each January at the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts: *Antigone 2018*, *Tartuffe 2019*, *Arsenic and Old Lace 2020*, and *Prometheus Bound* in 2021.

Rebecca has an undergraduate degree in Sociology and minored in Spanish and Criminal Justice, graduating Angelo State University with summa cum laude honors. She attended the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon and received her Master of Arts degree with Merit. Rebecca is an avid researcher of "all things Shakespeare" and has achieved the title of Master Teacher in the Charlotte Mason Method

from Ambleside Schools International and is enrolled in ASI's Master Teacher Training for the posterity of the method. Currently, Rebecca teaches high school humanities and theatre arts at Ambleside School of San Angelo and is an adjunct instructor in English and Theatre Arts for Angelo State University on Ambleside's campus.

Rebecca's text is available on Amazon in Kindle and paperback formats. This summer she will release two more books: a biography of her mom's journey overcoming poverty and a dystopian/apocalyptic novel.

**Conaway invites students to enter art competition**

U.S. Representative Mike Conaway (TX-11) invites high school students from the 11th District of Texas to participate in the 2020 Congressional Art Competition. The deadline to enter is Monday, April 6.

The Congressional Art Competition is an annual competition hosted by congressional districts around the nation. The winning piece will be displayed in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol for one full year, where it will be viewed by distinguished visitors, Members of Congress, and tens of thousands of tourists.

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**I thank everyone for their vote in the Primary Election and ask for your continued support in the November General Election.**

**Wayne McCutchen**

Pd. Pol. Adv. by Wayne McCutchen

*I want to thank you for your vote of confidence and support in the Primary Election.*

**Marty Boyd**

Pd. Pol. Adv. by Marty Boyd

**Thank you for support in the March Primary Election.**

**Billy Williams**

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