

Unpacking Longview

*A one-woman show about public school desegregation,
family legacies, and East Texas identity*

written and performed by

Elizabeth M. Melton

contact: elizabethmichaelmelton@gmail.com

What

Unpacking Longview is an anti-racist one-woman play about public school desegregation, family legacies, and East Texas identity. Written and performed by Elizabeth M. Melton, the performance dramatizes Elizabeth's dissertation research, re-presenting interlocutor oral histories, archival research, and reflections of a hometown ethnographer. Elizabeth combines three different performance traditions in this work: oral history performance, autobiography, and camp.

Over the course of the production Elizabeth performs ten excerpts from research interlocutors, including parents, teachers, students, and school administrators who were connected to LISD schools during desegregation. The autobiographic components of the play outline Elizabeth's connection to Longview Independent School District as a Longview High School graduate, daughter and granddaughter of LISD teachers, and the daughter of a well-loved school board member who was posthumously honored with a building named after him. These reflexive moments work to make explicit the advantages afforded to Elizabeth as the daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of successful white property owners.

Finally, these oral histories and autobiographic stories are interrupted by Elizabeth's campy alter-ego, Texas Melt, who is ALL Texas, ALL the time. Texas Melt's interludes shake things up as she yodels, dances with skeletons, and explains what life is really like in East Texas. This performance uses oral histories, Elizabeth's story as a hometown researcher, and the over-the-top Texas Melt to unpack the fragmented history of race relations in East Texas.

Who

Elizabeth M. Melton, the daughter of Mickey and Rebecca Melton, is a 2006 graduate of Longview High School. She attended Texas A&M, graduating Magna Cum Laude with Liberal Arts Honors in 2010 with degrees in English and Theatre Arts. She returned to Texas A&M to complete a Masters in Performance Studies, which is a field that combines theatre and anthropology as a way to better understand, and hopefully improve, our world. She completed her Ph.D. in Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2020.

Production Development

This play has been in development since Fall 2015 when Elizabeth began working on the script in an independent study with her department's artist-in-residence, Joseph Megel. Since that time, she has workshopped readings with university professors, local North Carolina artists, UNC students, and East Texas theatre groups.

The first draft of this production appeared on a UNC stage in November 17-19 of 2016. Last fall Elizabeth partnered with ArtsView Children's Theatre to perform a revised version of the play for audiences in her hometown: Longview, Texas.

For more information visit her website: emmelson.com

In the News

Longview News Journal: Longview Graduate Turns Research into Play About Longview

The above article, written by Jimmie Isaac, was picked up by the Associated Press, appearing in newspapers across the country. These include, but are not limited to: *The Dallas Morning News, The Washington Times, Houston Chronical, Seattle Times.*

Rider

- 1 chair
- 1 table
- 1 projector
- 1 headset microphone (for large venues)
- 1 audio visual system capable of playing digital sound files on cue
- 3 technicians to run lights, sound, and projections
- Minimum of 1 hour set-up and 1 hour breakdown time
- Minimum 2 hour technical rehearsal required before performance
- Stage lighting preferred

Run Time

75 minutes without Q&A. Can be adjusted according to needs.

Space

Minimum of 10ft X 6 ft playing space.

Cost

\$2,000 + travel and lodging costs for one for performance, followed by an optional (encouraged) additional hour of discussion and Q&A.

*Additional \$500/performance + travel costs if technicians are not provided.