

Hi, I'm Carlos Campos, and I've been a reporter for TV Montrose for the last few months. Growing up in a large city, although a very closeted city El Paso, Texas, moving to Houston and experiencing TV Motrose has meant a lot to me. I feel very fortunate now that I live in Houston and I met Steve Baker and his lover Russ.

They've personally impacted my life this last Christmas when my parents came into town to visit me. My gayness was never openly discussed. It was just something we never discussed. Although loving and accepting, we just never discussed it.

Steve gave me a tape to show my parents. And with some hesitation, I put it in my VCR, and I sit back. And there was not a sound throughout the show.

Until the end of the show and there was a slight pause, and my dad looked at me and said he was very proud of me. And so Steve, Russ, TV Montrose was, I guess, my official coming out. And for that, I'm very grateful.

Hi, I'm Dan de Leon.

And I'm Suzanne Anderson, and you are watching TV Montrose.

You may already have read in print media that this will be the final episode of TV Montrose.

We had plans to change the name to Out TV Texas and to expand into Dallas. But it's just not going to happen.

And so all of us here at TV Montrose are saddened about the show coming to a final end. But most everything comes to an end at some point in time.

And we want to make tonight's show special for all of you and all of us that have been a part of the 56 weekly episodes.

Tonight, we are bringing you one story that we produced in Galveston about a new gay hotel that became the target of hate by a Baptist minister, the KKK and neo-Nazis.

Now the focus of the story is not what those calling for death to homosexuals. But the focus is with the people, gay and straight, friends and strangers that bonded together in love in the face of open hate.

It is a story about unity and supporting one another as one people, one community. And Suzanne, since you have been a host of the show since the first episode, you have my personal honor to introduce the final story.

Thank you, Dan. Well, let's get to Galveston. We're going to see a very, very special story that Producer Steve Baker and his partner, Russell, as they see the black and white difference between hate and love.

Hi, everybody. It's a beautiful weekend day here in Galveston. You can see behind me the surf looks beautiful. The water's up good. The sun's coming out nice.

Usually, Galveston is a very pleasant and peaceful place to come. This weekend, something's different. What's different? A gay and lesbian owned hotel has opened up. And on the seawall besides tourists and people having a nice time with their friends and families, there's people out here that say that gay and lesbians ought not own a hotel.

Protesters led by Ken Barber of Grace Baptist Church in Galveston arrived in front of Hollywood at Galveston on Friday morning. Despite Barber's promotion that the infamous Fred Phelps of Kansas would join him in this protest, he did not. Far right anti-gay turnout was meager with less than a dozen protesters involved. But though their numbers were small, the signs they carried were large, spouting not the religion of love, but the slogans of hate and hell. Galveston police kept a close eye on the situation and were prepared to intervene if necessary.

Friends of owners, Bob Wilkins and Sherman Hoke, showed their support from the main balcony of the hotel. Saturday morning brought a new and uglier anti-gay crowd of hate. Greeting friends of the hotel that morning was the ultimate symbol of hate, the Nazi swastika carried by a group of Nazi skinheads.

It was a shocking sight to everyone inside the hotel as well as the general population that passed on the seawall. Joining the Nazis was the KKK with its leader in the traditional white sheet and cone hood. It was a surreal picture of what was commonplace in the South in the 1930s, 40s, 50s, and 60s when Black America was a target of such intimidating terror by the Ku Klux Klan. Today, the target of such hate is focused on gay America. Today, specifically, Bob Wilkins and Sherman Hoke of Hollywood at Galveston.

With me now are the two men that started it all off almost a year and a half ago when they bought a very rundown hotel on the seawall. Something that wasn't bringing any revenue for Galveston. It was an eyesore for Galveston, a place where prostitution and drug sales were very commonplace. But today, now the hotel is open and that the hotel has been renovated, there's even more trouble. And we're going to let them explain what's been going on. What has been happening in the past month?

I think it all started about four weeks ago, a local minister here ran an ad in the paper, a letter in the paper telling everybody that the homosexual hotel was going to open up. And he stated in his letter that we were all child molesters and told people to get their children off the beach that we were looking for fresh meat. And he had made all kinds of really bad statements in his letter. And from his letter, I think he was expecting to get support from the people in Galveston on his side. And it totally turned around on him and turned in our favor.

What's it been like for you two since the protesters have shown up here?

An emotional roller coaster. It feels very good in one instant, and you feel very bad in another.

I assume that the good part that you're mentioning here would be the support of Galvestonians that have been here at the hotel and writing articles to the newspapers. Is that what you're referring to?

Yes, that's very heartwarming. And sometimes, I get a little teary when I think about it. Sometimes I get a lot teary.

What was it like when you bought this establishment? Why don't you tell us about what it was like the day you signed the papers and it was yours? And fill us in on what's been going on for a year and a half?

Actually, the property had been taken over by the city of Galveston because the property taxes hadn't been paid. So we bought it at an auction. When we got the winning bid, we were barely able to tell them our name. And we went out on the courthouse steps and broke into tears. That was our first cry.

We came directly to the property after purchasing it, and came inside and looked at it. And I think we both looked at each other and said, oh my god, what have we done? Because it was a total mess.

The wondering what have we done after we looked at it more closely, and I think we felt like that everyday since too, like, what have we done?

**STEVE BAKER:** So what in particular were some of the-- how did the renovation begin? What's been done here?

**SHERMAN** We totally rewired. All the electricity had to be redone. A lot of the plumbing had to be redone. The walls had holes knocked in them. The ceilings were falling down. The deck was just hanging on by a thread, so it's all been ripped out and started over again. The swimming pool-- I hate to use the term, but it looked very much like a sewer. It was black, and slimy, and we had no idea what we'd find in the bottom when we got it empty.

**STEVE BAKER:** There's been a lot of press and media written about you, and some of it refer to you as being heroes and very courageous for opening up a gay resort hotel. Do you all feel like you've been that courageous or heroic, or were you just opening a business?

**SHERMAN** We were just opening a business. We hung a rainbow banner on the front of the banister out here, and it just created a big hoopla here. I feel like a hero at all.

**BOB WILKINS:** We came here to open a hotel, and certainly, it's not the first gay resort ever. We get the impression from the newspapers and the media that we were more open and honest about what we were going to do than other people who have opened gay resorts.

**SHERMAN** The first day that Reverend Barber's article came out of the newspaper, Bob and I had barely finished reading the article ourselves when people began knocking on the door. They were ordinary run-of-the-mill people who live on this island who had read the paper earlier than we had that morning and just started coming by with their support, letting us know that the entire island did not feel like this man did and that they were here for us. If there was anything they could do, please let them know.

[ORCHESTRA PLAYING]

**STEVE BAKER:** Other support came from members of the Houston Pride Band that drove in Friday night from Houston and performed several tunes poolside to the light of everyone. Band members felt that coming to the scene of this protest was important to them personally. They wanted Bob and Sherman to know that they were not alone in the fight against hate. It was an emotional and inspirational moment for everyone inside the besieged hotel.

Also in from Houston was a driver with Ron's American limousines that had dropped off other supporters that had heard about what was happening this weekend and felt drawn to be here. The people that gathered here, gay and straight, put the word, unity, into the bigger word, community. Strangers and longtime friends alike gathered here as a real, loving family. New bonds of friendship were born, and long-term love was reaffirmed.

The closeness and love that thrived inside the hotel between a diverse group of people shined brightly against the darkness of hate that stained the sea wall outside. Friends of Bob and Sherman were eager to support them and comment on the situation.

**SHARON** I'm here because I love Bob and Sherman and wanted to help them be successful in this new venture.  
**BUNGARDNER:**

**CURTIS** I'm really proud of them again, and I think this is quite an accomplishment. And I know they're going to make a go of it, and we're here to help them in any way and particularly with moral support.

**JIM GUERRA:** I've known Bob and Sherman for about 10 years, and they're genuine, great people. They are great hosts. They will definitely be a good asset to Galveston.

**WELVEIN** I think they are ideally suited for this job. I feel sincerely good about being here. I love what's happening. It's a wonderful experience, one of the highlights of my life, being involved with it.

**SID CUMMINGS:** One thing that was very heartwarming for Bob and Sherman, and I felt it too, and Melvin, they came from the city, Bay City, and lived there 14 years or so. And it was very supportive, all these people that showed up.

They came in on Thursday and were here all day Thursday, working around everywhere, cleaning, bringing flowers, making flower arrangements, cooking. The whole city showed up. It was very touching, that all these straight people from a small town would come in and support the way they did.

**SHARON** I'm delighted to see the support of the whole community of Galveston. It's been very evident. I've been here for a **BUNGARDNER:** month, and not a day goes by that someone doesn't come in and offer their support. And it's very heartwarming.

**STEVE BAKER:** What impact, if any, have these protesters had on the people of Galveston?

**SUBJECT:** I think absolutely none. The response you get from the people who are driving by, I don't think it's making much difference to them at all. I really don't.

**STEVE BAKER:** In fact, a lot of people are going out of their way to let the other side know their feelings, aren't they?

**SUBJECT:** Exactly.

**SID CUMMINGS:** It's been hard to bite my tongue all weekend long with everybody out there, but considering the source of who's been out in the street, picketing made it a lot easier.

**STEVE BAKER:** In other words, they weren't too credible, were they?

**SID CUMMINGS:** No, they weren't.

**STEVE BAKER:** You seem to be able to smile through all of this. How come?

**WELVEIN** Well, I think that humor takes us through the worst depths of adversities. Smiling will do a lot of good for you.  
**EPSTEIN:**

**GARY NORMAN:** All of this attention that's being brought to Hollywood is very good. It will be good for business, and I doubt that the individuals who are protesting probably could think that far ahead about what they were doing.

**STEVE BAKER:** So what do you see this hotel bringing the community of Galveston?

**JIM GUERRA:** Well, when I first heard that Bob and Sherman were going to be opening this establishment, I was skeptical at first, and especially being the first one of its kind in Galveston. And I think that it's going to be real good for the community. It's about time that finally, people are courageous enough to stand up and do their own thing.

**SID CUMMINGS:** They're just a great couple, and they love to entertain, and this has been a dream of theirs for a long time. The entertaining is what they love to do, and now they got the place to do it.

**STEVE BAKER:** What can guests expect to find here?

**SHERMAN** We have 21 guest rooms here. They've all been newly decorated with that special little touch that we all have.

**HOUCK:** Each room is going to be fashioned after a particular star, in some sense.

We have a swimming pool, but it's heated in the wintertime. We have a hot tub, and we have the Lucille Ball room, which has a grand piano with a piano bar in it. In that room, we'll be serving breakfast in the mornings. And I think we're probably going to do a complimentary cocktail hour in the evenings with beer and wine, and that'll get everybody kicked off ready for a good time at Hollywood.

We'd like to thank everybody who's been out to support us through these last few days and through the entire project. Like I said earlier, thank you is not quite enough to say, but that's the only two words I can come up with right now. And we've gotten through the tough part, and I hope everybody comes out, and sees what we've done, and can feel some of the warmth that we feel from being on Galveston Island.

**BOB WILKINS:** Everybody from the police department to the city officials, my brother, our friends, and the people that we didn't know who stopped by or called to give their support, for us, it's really, really nice, and we thank you very much.

**STEVE BAKER:** We're on the medium, which is city-owned in front of Hollywood at Galveston. However, Bob and Sherman have also renovated it, much like they've done the hotel. They've added in palm trees. They've cleaned up the monument here.

This is just one more benefit to the city of Galveston that this hotel has brought to all the citizens of Galveston. We've had a great time here this weekend. The hosts have been wonderful. And the next time you're coming to Galveston, check out Hollywood at Galveston. You'll never regret it. Everyone's friendly and fun, and you'll leave here having a lot more friends than you ever had. For out TV, I'm Steve Baker.

**SUZANNE:** In January of 1998, our producer, Steve Baker, went to Warner Cable with ideas about starting a gay and lesbian television show, and he wanted to see if they would sell him a time slot on it.

**DAN:** To his surprise, a deal was made by the end of the same day, and TV Montrose was born.

**SUZANNE:** And now it's 15 months later, it's 170 stories later, it's 56 episodes later, and it's time for Steve to end what he'd so easily begun.

**DAN:** So let's join Steve and hear what the show has meant to him.

**STEVE BAKER:** Hi, everyone. For Russ and I, TV Montrose has been the most personally rewarding experience of our lives. It has been a real opportunity in life to have created the show, and in doing so meet so many wonderful people-- gay, straight, Black, white, and as Jason might smartly put it, orange.

The point is the show has made it possible for us to see the entire community, every color in our rainbow symbol, in a way that few outside of media have an opportunity.

It saddens us to have to pull the plug on the show, but we have no regrets about starting it last year. We have been close to shutting it down before, and during those times, I felt that if we ended it that that would mean that we had failed. Tonight, with the show all but over, I feel that the only failure would have been had we not started it.

Our stories put positive images of our community on television consistently every Monday night in prime time. Members of our own community saw other parts of the community in ways that only the power of television can do. And maybe some of you out there better understand your brothers and sisters in different subcultures a little better. If so then TV Montrose is not a failure.

We know that the show reached out beyond Montrose and connected others in our unique family that cannot always be in the hood and part of the events. Some were high school kids living at home, and others were too deep in the closet to be seen with the rest of us. We also know that some straight people watched. Parents and friends tuned in to better understand the lives of homosexuals that they care about in their lives. That's not failure.

In the course of making stories, we were blessed to meet many outstanding people, gay and straight. They make many positive contributions that make life better for all of us. They are the volunteers of all sorts that do what they do out of love of their community and are usually the people that we never see doing what they do. To all of you that have made your contributions in your way, thank you.

I want to thank each of our advertisers for the courage and pride to put some of their ad dollars into this unique show. They first saw the value and significance of lesbigay commercial television before calculating a potential return on those ad dollars. That's community spirit and looking to the future. I want to recognize each of our long-term advertisers for their life-giving support of TV Montrose.

Suzanne Anderson Properties and Suzanne's staff have been supportive in many ways. They did more to help keep the show going than just advertise. The gang at Rich's has been outstanding. Rich's was often paid in heavy on lean months and have routinely put up flyers in the club supporting TV Montrose events, even if they were being held at another club. That's class, and thank you guys.

The Texas Triangle was on-board early, and with a half-page ad, kept viewers of TV Montrose informed about what was happening with the show. Molly and Saied at Baba Yega restaurant have also done more than just advertise. If there is one restaurant in Montrose that supports our community every single day, it's Baba Yega.

Larry Lingle at Lobo bookstore also has done more than just advertise. Lobo is Houston's only exclusively gay and lesbian store in Houston and very proud to be so. Lobo is a retailer where the gay dollar is not only welcome, but it's also very appreciated. Rob and Jeff at Rob Schmerler insurance also have done more than just advertise. Both of them believed in the show and also paid in a little heavier at times just to keep us going.

Thank you to all of you for sticking with us as long as you have. I also want to thank Harold Schultz at BankUnited for convincing Bank U to become our first corporate advertiser. I am confident that had it not been for Harold, this would not have happened. Thanks again to all of our advertisers for that extra community effort that you put in in supporting this show. Thank you very much.

There is a lack of unity and infighting that is not always visible, and often, it's deliberately hidden from the public view. Those of you that are involved in the community that are out there everyday making things happen, you know what I'm talking about. There's problems out there that need to be addressed.

There is one last contribution that I hope TV Montrose can achieve. I hope that positive debate in our community can be open between our organizations, businesses, and political leaders to bring our community closer to the kind of unity that we must have to move forward with progress of all kinds and in the next century.

Every one of you out there in the community can help make a difference to help us achieve real progress for equality within society. What can you do? Russ and I want to thank everyone that has believed in us. Making TV Montrose and getting to know so many beautiful and wonderful people out there has truly made Russell and I some of the richest people in Montrose. Thank you.

**SUZANNE:** Besides regular stories about non-profit groups and fundraising events, TV Montrose also regularly aired public service announcements for people.

**DAN:** And also for HRC, the Human Rights Campaign.

**SUZANNE:** Now, no mainstream television station in Houston has ever aired any of these PSAs because of, get this, their controversial content.

**DAN:** Perhaps for the last time on Houston television, here they are.

**NARRATOR:** Some of them will be three times more likely to commit suicide than their friends. There's also a greater chance that someday, some of them will be assaulted, beaten, threatened, harassed, or even murdered just because they may be lesbian or gay. But look at them. They deserve it, don't they? A message brought to you by the parents, families, and friends of lesbians and gays.

**BETTY DEGENERES:** Hello, my name is Betty DeGeneres, and my kid is the greatest. You know her. She's Ellen, and she's gay. For too long, gay Americans have suffered discrimination. As long as our sons and daughters are excluded from the basic protection of law, we must share that burden as a family. So let's not waste one child and let them all reach for the stars.

**SUZANNE:** TV Montrose has given me an opportunity to do some media that I really wanted to do without having to worry about memorizing lines, just say how you feel, and what you think, and what's happening. And for me, it's been a very special time.

**DAN:** It's just the camaraderie of everyone on the show. You're someone in the community that I had admired and respected for quite some time, and just to get to hang out with you every week, I'm going to miss those types of things. And the crew, other crew members, Tim Severe, her wackiness, mingling with her, and Steve Baker's dedication, so much that I'm learning from other people involved here in this show.

**SUZANNE:** It has been an incredible opportunity to get to know people on a more personal level. And for me, even though I've always known about most of the organizations, I didn't have as clear a picture of what they did, who they were, what they were about as I have since I've done TV Montrose. And I'm going to miss this going back to my day job.

**DAN:** But thank god we kept them.

**SUZANNE:** Isn't that the truth? Isn't that the truth? It's been fun. I've loved it. I've loved it.

**DAN:** So up next are a few words from TV Montrose's reporter, Jason Vincic, and his feelings about being a part of the show.

**JASON:** If you've never seen TV Montrose, if you're just now tuning in, well, we've got a bit of a surprise for you. This is our last show. And although I'm very sad to see TV Montrose go, lots of good things have come from it. Some of those good things, of course, are meeting the producers, Steve and Russ, who have done a fabulous job putting the show together.

The crew has been very strong. The shows have been very strong. The content is wonderful. We only wish that we could go on, but some things permit us not to. For TV Montrose, I guess my last signoff, I'm Jason Vincic.

**DAN:** I think for most everyone involved in TV Montrose, their time here was very meaningful.

**SUZANNE:** Well, we're nearing the end of the show, but before we go, Steve has a few last comments to make about all the people who have been a part of TV Montrose.

**STEVE BAKER:** The hardest part of ending TV Montrose will be not having the regular opportunities to work with the cast of the show. Russell and I were blessed to attract a real family of quality people that made the show happen every week. Most of our cast had no prior television experience, but they had untapped talent and inner desire to achieve something new in their lives and do it in front of the whole world.

Thank you to all of you for reporting the stories with your hearts into it every single time. Your courage to stand before crowds of people and deliver emotions appropriate for each story is commendable. Thanks for all the times that your spirit gave Russ and I the strength to keep going when everything happening around us was telling us it was time to quit long ago.

Up next is a short music video that's dedicated to all of you. This is in our gratitude for what you've given us personally and for what you've given the entire community. Russell and I are very proud of each of you. Each of you and all of you together are why TV Montrose was a success. Thank you.

[MUSIC - RICHIE HAVENS, "PEACE TRAIN"]

[VOCALIZING]

Now, I've been happy lately thinking about good things to come, and I believe it could be something good has begun. Oh, I'm on the edge of darkness. There rides the peace train. Oh, peace train, take this country. Come on, take me home again.

Oh, I've been smiling lately about good things to come, and I believe it could be something good has begun. Oh, peace train sounding louder. Glide on the peace train, peace train, come on now, peace train. Oh, peace train, holy roller, everyone jump on the peace train. Come on, peace train.

Oh, get your bags together. Go and bring your friends too. Here it comes. It's getting nearer. It soon will be with you. Oh, come and join the living. It's not so far from you, and it's getting nearer. Soon, it will all be true. Oh, peace sounding louder, glide on the peace train. Come on now, peace train, peace train.

I've been crying lately, thinking about the world as it is. Why must we go on hating? Why can't we live in bliss? Because out on the edge of darkness, there rides the peace train. Oh, peace train, take this country. Come on, take me home again. Come on, peace train, come on. I've been smiling lately dreaming about the world as one, and I believe it could be. Something good has come.

**SUZANNE:** On behalf of everyone here at TV Montrose, it's really been a joy to bring this show into your living rooms to show you the people, and the places, and the events in our community.

**DAN:** Sure has, Suzanne, and as I mentioned earlier, it has really been a pleasure to co-host with you every week.

**SUZANNE:** Oh, I loved it, Dan. I really have. It's been a pleasure to be involved with all of the TV Montrose people and the opportunity to really learn so much about the Montrose area and all the people that could be of some of us right here that live here.

**DAN:** I'm Dan de Leon.

**SUZANNE:** And I'm Suzanne Anderson. And for everyone that has ever had a role in making TV Montrose, good night.