

## BACK & FORTH

# Inside Dominic Carter

*His self-published memoir about an abusive childhood on the shelves, the NY1 anchor makes himself the headline*

Dominic Carter has been reporting on the news of the city for nearly 25 years and has been hosting NY1's political talk show "Inside City Hall" for 15. After his mother died six years ago, Carter decided to do some reporting on himself and his family. The result is his book, *No Momma's Boy*. Carter talked with *City Hall* about his book, his life and being a political reporter.

**Q: Journalists aren't usually part of the story. What does it feel like to insert yourself?**

**A:** I was greatly concerned in the beginning. This has been a life long secret that I wouldn't tell anyone. And now all of a sudden, I am willing to tell the whole world, because I am happy and I am free for the first time in my life.

**Q: So how does someone get from your childhood to where you are now?**

**A:** You have to understand, I've been brainwashed my entire life, but in a positive way. As you read in the book, OK, so my mom has problems. I don't know what's going on. I'm a kid I don't know. So, my grandmother steps in to raise me and my aunt steps in. She's always been my maternal figure. They brainwashed me so effectively I honestly didn't know that I was an illegitimate child. I knew that there was no man in my life, but they surrounded me with love. There was poverty, but there was love from the external members of my family.

So, from an early age it was, "You're going to college, you're going to college, you're going to college." I went to college and I realized college was not as hard as I thought it would be. I always thought that guys like me couldn't make it. I get to college and I find out that it's not as hard as I thought it was.

With each step along the way, my confidence has been building. I went from "I don't belong. I don't fit in," to, "I do belong. I do fit in. I can excel and I can be very good."

**Q: How do you prepare to be on the show?**

**A:** The very first thing I do when I get up in the morning is look at the headlines. If something catches my eyes, I read it right then and there. If I don't stop, I'll go have breakfast then go down to my office and then read the papers. And I've got to read everything, because in my business, in terms of a television person, everybody tries to spin you. As a rule of thumb, I try not to listen to spin and leave it to the producers to listen to it. I try to remain isolated and removed from the spin.

I have to know everything that's going on, because in a live situation they could say anything and if I don't know what's going on then they can't be checked.

**Q: And you need to be able to call someone on things....**

**A:** Exactly. And call them on it immediately, because if I don't call them on it immediately I will be greatly criticized, in terms of the blogs. You know, "Oh, Dominic let

this person go by, let that go by."

**Q: How much has that dynamic changed your job?**

**A:** Dramatically. When I started they weren't really around and so the reaction you get would come the next day or after the show, but with the blogs, to a degree, they help keep you honest. I try not to let outside influences affect me, but I do read them. Even when they're critical of me, I'll look at it and ask if this person is raising a good point. Did I really drop the ball here? Was there a bias here? And I'll try to think about it. I really do.

**Q: When you moderated last year's comptroller debate between Alan Hevesi and Chris Callaghan, some people were critical of your moderation. In reading your book, you talk about working to remain objective, but also compassionate toward your sources. Do you feel empathy for your political sources?**

**A:** I definitely felt sympathy for Hevesi. You wouldn't believe that watching the debate, but to be honest with you, I never understood why Hevesi did that debate. Particularly with me. He said during the debate, "Dominic, you're a good journalist, but that's an unfair question." In a million years, I would have never done that debate with me, because we're in a live situation and I'm fair, but I'm thorough.

I felt bad, because I've known Hevesi for 20 years. And he's a good man. What happened in his situation, that's on him. But he's a good man who found himself in a bad situation and needed to be held accountable.

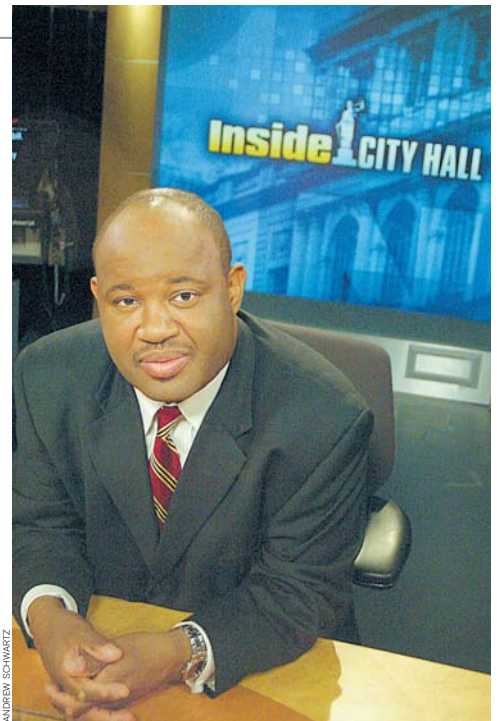
I was a little annoyed with Chris Callaghan, the Republican candidate, because after the debate they had to find a way to spin his weak performance. It was obvious that some consultant told him to say, "Well, I loved that debate between Dominic and Hevesi." The fact that I had to be so aggressive is because he didn't step up to the challenge.

**Q: You had less time to prepare for that one than for the debate between Hillary Clinton and John Spencer. Did that affect the way it went?**

**A:** In the business I am in, the public doesn't really care about your personal situation. But my son suffers from epilepsy and was in the hospital. The day I flew to Rochester for the Hillary debate, my son had been hospitalized the day before. No one knew any of this, but when I came home from Rochester after that Hillary debate, I was spending several nights overnight at the hospital with my son. When you have epilepsy they hook up all these wires on your head. It's a very ugly situation. I was dealing with that situation for Hevesi and Hillary.

**Q: In telling your memoir, do you think that you can further awareness about abuse and mental illness?**

**A:** I found out as a television host, there's a lot of celebrity and attention that's paid to you. I know why society does it, but to me, I frankly don't get it. But it is what it is. I am taking my credibility as a high-profile journalist



and I am saying that these are issues we need to pay attention to. Mental illness, I venture to say, affects every person reading this in one shape or form. We can all be in denial and act like it doesn't, but somewhere along our family liens, mental illness is affecting someone. What happens to the innocent children of mentally ill people? These are things we don't deal with. I could have been murdered. Very simply, I would have never made the papers. I wouldn't be the guy who's here today, questioning the most powerful politicians in the world.

**Q: Has this process brought you further along in forgiving your mother?**

**A:** Yes. If I had known as much as I do now, I would have told her, "It's okay. You were not in full control of what you were doing." So, for so many years I despised my mother. In order to go on living as a human being, I had to forgive her in order to start healing myself, because if I didn't it was going to kill me on an emotional level.

**Q: What has the difference been in covering these different administrations? Has the tenor been different for you?**

**A:** The tenor has been like night and day. You could say whatever you want about Rudy Giuliani, but he was great for my business. And he was great, to a degree, and I can't believe I'm admitting this, for my career. Me and him have had some legendary public battles that have been written about and played on NPR and so on, but I wish him well as a presidential candidate, just as I wish Hillary Clinton well and all of the other ones. But, it's like night and day. We have a businessman in City Hall now. He's not as interested in the media or as interesting a character as Rudy Giuliani was.

**Q: Describe your life today in three words:**

**A:** Fascinating. Exciting. Tremendous. But wait, I have to give you three more: A Dream Come True. That's four words [laughing]. Dream. Come. True. CH

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