

Q & A

DOMINIC CARTER

NY1's Top Political Reporter and Anchor of "Inside City Hall"

By Carla Zanoni

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."

The following is an edited transcript of Carter's talk with Our Town and The West Side Spirit about his about his book, his life and the New York of yesterday and today.

Q: What has the reaction been to your book?

A: It has been overwhelmingly positive.

Q: Were you afraid of what people would say—sources, your employer?

A: My premise in journalism is that I try to treat my sources the same way my entire life that I want to be treated. I haven't seen a downside yet. I've received letters from Congressmen on official letterhead, telling me, "We're so happy for you."

You can't even begin to understand the momentum. It's already going national. It's all over the Internet. So, there hasn't been a downside. I'm at the stage in my life where I'm comfortable with myself, finally. If someone wants to look at me differently, in a negative way, then that's on them. I can't control that. I haven't seen any negative reaction.

Q: You project this incredible self-confidence.

A: It's funny, everyone says that and I don't see it. I will say to you—and this is the first time I've really dealt with this in an interview—everyone, and I

mean everyone says that they see this great confidence on television. I don't see it. I just see that I am trying to do my job and I am trying to treat people the way I would like to be treated.

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

A: You have to understand, I've been brainwashed my entire life, but in a positive way. 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 did not 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.

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: You're becoming more vocal about abuse. Did you write your memoir to further awareness about abuse and mental illness?

A: 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 lines, 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.

Q: Do you think this process has 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 OK. 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: Your experience growing up in Harlem and the South Bronx was during a difficult time for both you personally and the city. What's your perspective of the city today?

A: They're dramatically different. The city has prospered in ways that it hadn't in years passed. For example, Harlem. Harlem is now a mainstream community. The South Bronx is headed in that way as well.

For me, on a personal level, it's nice to see that the racial climate is not what it used to be in this city. Those were hard times in the city. But, and this may sound corny, I really love New York City. I've traveled all over the world, every state in America, and nothing comes close to New York City.

Q: You've gotten to interview so many interesting and amazing people; if you could interview anyone today, who would it be?

A: President Bush, simply because of the stature. He is the most powerful person in the world and I find him to be fascinating. You could say whatever you want, pro and con about the president, and I understand that New York is Democratic country, but he is a fascinating politician. And you could say whatever you want, but he got re-elected. You don't reach the levels of success that he has unless you're very, very good. He is a masterful politician, like Bill Clinton.

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.



STYLING: ALYSON SCHWARTZ