

Exclusive Police Gazette Interview: Tarik Abdelazim

To finally score an interview with Tarik Abdelazim our man was put through seemingly endless steps and stages before he was allowed to meet his subject face to face. Numerous intermediaries and false locations were used, and as he got close to the final destination a canvas bag was placed over his head to prevent his seeing the exact location of the Abdelazim's lair. (See photo on page 4.) Tarik can't be too careful. And neither can we. Our interviewer's name is being withheld to protect him and his family in the event something in his dispatch raises Abdelazim's ire.

Our man politely refused the hookah offered him as he sat down, and the interview began:

NPG: Say your name, please.

TA: Sure. Tarik Abdelazim.

For those of us who have problems pronouncing your name could you give us a memory peg?

As the mayor is infamous for at his inauguration speech at the Broome County Forum, he said "I'm really excited about my deputy mayor. I know a lot of people have had problems pronouncing his name, so here's this: Imagine you stepped in tar and you screamed 'ick!' And I still haven't come up with something for the last name.

There's four syllables, so that's a problem right there.

Ab-del-a-zim.

With the emphasis on the second syllable?

Yeah. It's almost like you could treat it like it's Italian: Ab-DEL-a-zim.

Let's get to some questions that are on the minds of many Broome County voters. First, are you a terrorist?

I was actually going to joke and ask that question. It's a serious question, so it needs a serious answer.

If this is a serious question and it's the first one, this is going to be a troubling interview. I was actually really startled when that was the first comment made by Bijoy Datta, Preston's campaign manager, after we filed our first campaign-finance report. His comment was "We're startled to see multiple contributions from unknown foreign sources." We all knew what that was. We knew that they would try to play on my family's heritage and name. We just didn't think they'd be so blunt about it. Just for the record it was two college friends who gave a total of \$250. So, no, I am not the secret leader of the cell of Al Qaeda in Broome.

That was my second question. But would you be telling the truth if you said "no"?

I would be telling the truth; the answer would be no.

What is your heritage exactly?

My father is from Syria. He came over under some challenging conditions. It was an authoritarian regime then. It was actually the father of the Assad we know today. As soon as he finished his medical schooling he left his country, came here to America. Continued studying at the Cleveland Clinic, which is a premier cardiac care center in the world. He learned his trade there as a cardiologist, came to the Binghamton/Johnson City area to basically start and build up an entire cardiac-care unit here in the area.

Were you born here?

Born and raised here. Four years in Vestal and then the remainder of my time growing up on the south side of Binghamton.

If you're elected, will the first thing you do be to seek a warrant for the arrest of Debbie Preston and have her prosecuted under the RICO Act for criminal conspiracy?

I was not familiar with that. If you have more information I'd love to hear it.

Seeing as it's not a well kept secret that she's a member of the Republican Party, and as we all know the Republican Party is a crime organization (see editorial on page 2), the RICO Act has worked very well against the Mafia. So it should be able to work against Republicans.

I'll have to bring you in as my sheriff.

Let's say, for example, you get into office and find that half the financial records for the previous 12 months have mysteriously disappeared. You're not going to do anything?

We'll see. Certainly if we find any wrongdoing we'll pursue. But I think she hasn't had time to do anything too egregious. It's a lot of smoke-and-mirror politics. There's a lot of distractions; a lot of dishonesty. But that's kind of run of the mill for a general campaign season. Tactics I don't engage in at all. People say "So you're taking a run at office to become a politician." I say "No. It's my first run at office, but I'm still a public servant."

What led you to want to become a public servant?

First, I got involved in the hospitality industry in San Francisco and managed a hotel for a year and a half. Had some private sector jobs after that. Then went back to school for my masters at New

York University in arts and humanities, an interdisciplinary program covering politics and ecology. Went over to Poland to teach English for a year. And I think I'm one of the folks in the younger generation who realized that the world is really messed up. We have serious economic crises, energy crises, environmental crises. And I realized that all of the alternatives and solutions are going to have to emerge from the local or regional level. Washington is not going to be a part of the solution.

Why is that?

One is because our campaign finance laws are completely outdated and they allow for extreme corruption. I would say Democrats and Republicans. You know, I'm not the kind of guy that's all party loyalty and the Democrats can do no wrong. They're all complicit. They're bought and sold by their campaign donors, by their corporate masters. And so policy is never written to solve the problems that we've seen in our communities.

What's the difference at the local level? What's something that you can do?

A couple of things. Just in regards to energy efficiency, which is going to be a big part of my economic plan. After eight months of probably the nation's most innovative statewide energy-efficiency policy, the Southern Tier is number one in the state. That's due in part to what we've been doing in Binghamton. We can do that in the county if the county executive brings that kind of focus on that priority. So my goal is to help 5,000 home owners and small-business owners carry out energy-efficiency improvements in the first five years. I was selected to serve on the energy work-group for the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council, which is part of the governor's initiative for regional economic planning. There's an incredible economic and new market opportunity for our farmers. I want to give them a choice. Do you have to lease your land to gas companies that come with a lot of risk? Or would you like to lease it to a new biomass-plant owner who says "I need this many acres of switchgrass produced?"

What's your opinion on the whole fracking thing?

Personally, I'm not for it. I was part of the group that was very outspoken in opposition to the county lease deal. With any extractive industry you're going to have risks and benefits; you're

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Deputy County Executive Bijoy Datta Is a Compassionless Racist Psychopath

By His
Best Friend

Paul Juser



Bijoy Datta."

I tell you, Abdelazim could not have hit the nail harder. Datta is a compassionless psychopath that should never be given a taste of power. I met Bijoy when he was mohawked, carrying equipment for several bands he played in. I can't repeat in decent society the names we've called each other across crowded rooms. These sweaty punk rockers with greasy hair and once-black clothes are only happy when they're angry, and they love nothing more than a good racist joke. Datta was Senator Libous's press liaison, and the only right-winger in attendance, so the kids were happy to dislike him for any reason they could. In addition to being a virulent racist, Datta is a horrible singer.

I myself asked him to run a mayoral campaign for me, but he was convinced Joe Merrill could easily unseat the Party Mayor. The decorated Democrat war-hero went running down the street screaming for mercy and withdrew from the race the first time he encountered one of Mayor Ryan's drunken lunch rages. I myself swore I could never take the campaign seriously, so Datta declined

and assembled Debbie Preston's County Exec campaign instead. Clearly I should be Mayor of Binghamton right now. I won't go snooping about on my friends, but I'm certain Preston pays better than I would.

Abdelazim is a second generation Binghamton native, whose father restarted my own grandmother's heart on multiple occasions, so I must admit I'm biased. However, I will not let my long-time friendship with Datta color my views in his favor. I've never voted for Bijoy, even during his Libous days, but only because I do know him so well. At weddings, we are regulated to the back corner of the balcony, as the most likely to misbehave. Rightly so, but to our credit we didn't flip our table over the edge, no matter how much of a constant embarrassment we were for our ladies. Antics like this are rare these days. Bijoy is a father if two, so no more kamikaze trips across the country for July 4th fireworks over the Pacific. California to North Carolina in 49 hours is possible, but I don't recommend it.

But for the occasional holiday party, these

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Recently I had the privilege to sit down with Deputy County Exec Bijoy Datta over lunch to answer allegations of racism. Tarik Abdelazim played the card when news broke his campaign fund accepted nearly \$250 in contributions from foreign nationals. This is fine for a potential President of the United States of America, but when you get down to the battle for Broome County that kind of behavior is unacceptable. Abdelazim claimed he was singled out for his funny last name. Datta responded, "My name is