

## Farouk Samaroo

### Politician, Soldier, Consultant!

**F**arouk Samaroo is a fascinating personality. He has been active in the New York community in different capacities. He was at one time a consultant for different political campaigns in New York.

When we met in 2005 Farouk was a firebrand. He was the campaign manager of Albert Baldeo who ran for a seat in District 28 in Queens, New York. But Farouk's interest went much deeper. He served his country in the military braving the uncertainties of war and emerging at the end stronger and with a renewed sense of confidence. More recently Farouk served as an advisor to the People's Progressive Party (PPP/C) in Guyana in the 2015 elections.

Farouk Samaroo was born in Kildonan in the Berbice area in Guyana. His mom is Farida and his dad is Permashwar Samaroo. He also has a sister Felicia and two brothers Michael and Jaden. Farouk spent the first eight years of his life in Berbice. He recalls going to nursery school and Kildonan Primary School and his favorite subjects at the time was reading. He was ranked in the top two in class.

In October 1990 Farouk took a life-changing journey. He boarded a plane for New York to join his family. They lived in Richmond Hill and Farouk attended PS 82 in Jamaica after which he went to Queens Gateway Secondary School. He recalls having to cope with a different culture and this proved challenging at times. Farouk says that there 'was a great culture shock coming from the rural areas of Guyana to a city like New York. But after a while I was able to adjust like many other migrants.'

Farouk's interest in

politics began at an early age. He ran for office in the student body when he was twelve and was elected president. In 1996 he was accepted as an intern to Congressman Floyd Flake and this further spurred his interest in politics. Farouk graduated from High School early and went to pursue studies in Political Science at St. John's University in New York. After two years there he went to work as a legislative aide in the State Assembly.

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between political theory and the actual functioning of the government. He also got a first hand look at the dysfunction in Albany and the power of the lobbyists to drive legislation.

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tion of minorities, he added. The local Richmond Hill community would remember Farouk as the campaign manager to the Albert Baldeo campaign. The candidate did not win but it did provide Farouk with valuable lessons for the future. He ran the campaign for Shirley Senator Huntley and she won the seat. Farouk was able to stave off a number of challenges and Ms. Huntley

Ireland. His unit was the Third Brigade of the Infantry Division. Farouk landed in Afghanistan in 2008 with his Division and the excitement was tinged with caution. After a period of 'hurrying up and wait' it was time to get busy. The Infantry arrived at Bagram, a sprawling airfield and within an hour they were summoned to a parade for a fallen soldier. It was a chilling moment that brought home

move on with his life. He enrolled at St. John's University and completed his degree in Political Science. Farouk currently works as a political consultant for different organizations. His interests took him to Guyana where he met with various officials. He said that a year ago the political parties knew that there would be a one-seat difference in the elections.

Farouk supported the PPP/C and is disappointed that it did not win but he says that the PPP has to do business differently. "Their campaign apparatus was incompetent and it looked as if they were trying to lose the elections. They believed in their own propaganda but in their private polls they did not muster 50 per cent," Farouk says. He sees hard work ahead for the PPP/C and recommends a restructure of the Party and he suggests that the Party must be in the mood to reform



Farouk at Fort Hood, Texas upon his return from deployment to Afghanistan.



Farouk Samaroo in Jalalabad, Afghanistan in 2009. He was in the 1st Battalion of the 6th Field Artillery Regiment.

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realities of war. Farouk said that, 'the full gravity of being in war zone came home to me and I thought that we stood a very good chance of being killed. We found that getting shot was the least of our worries. The problem was getting blown up as there was no hope of return.'

Farouk said that he was there to do his job in spite of fear. The US forces had a major role to play in Afghanistan because while it fought off insurgents it had to rebuild the country as well. Farouk was privy to see how the war was fought and to help in the formulation of policies. It dawned on him that he was the only Guyanese in his brigade of 3,400 persons. Farouk served in Afghanistan for a year and he describes his experience as fantastic and as a profession that everyone should join.

When he returned to the United States Farouk was selected for promotion to the officer corps and that was a high honor. He spent five years in the Army and decided to

itself.

Farouk has been influenced by a number of thinkers. At the top of his list is his former High School teacher Newton Rennie. According to Farouk, "Rennie showed me the importance of morality in politics." The others included Niccolo Machiavelli whose 'virtu' stressed the importance of service to the state. Another of Farouk's heroes is Lucius Cincinnatus who became a dictator in Rome in 458 BC but returned to his farm after defeating rival tribes. Cincinnatus is seen as a model of simplicity and civic virtue.

Farouk would like to study law in the future and to participate in the reformation of the PPP/C. He loves to read biographies and advises the young people to stay true to their beliefs. Farouk Samaroo has a lot more to offer and we wish him well in his future endeavors.