



## In the 'Tank' with Steve Aduato



Steve Aduato and Mikie Sherrill on the set of "Think Tank." COURTESY STEVE ADUBATO

**By GWEN OREL**

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You won't hear people talking over one another. Nor will they interrupt the moderator.

And yet, Steve Aduabato's new show, "Think Tank," which premiered on May 11, will address local and sometimes national politics.

The show airs on NJTV and WNET. For times and details, visit [steveadubato.org](http://steveadubato.org).

"I've become increasingly frustrated, along with countless other citizens, about the way we in the media too often 'cover' the political process, particularly on the national level," Aduabato said. National policy affects the state and region on so many levels, he added.

Aduabato, who served in the New Jersey General Assembly in the 1980s, and has a Ph.D. from Rutgers University, is already well known for his show "State of Affairs," a weekly show about state policy making, taped out of NJTV, and his nightly series "One-on-One," taped in NYC, which focuses on the arts and culture. Montclair Film's founder Bob Feinberg was recently on "One-on-One," Aduabato said.

Aduabato's production company, Caucus Educational Corp, is on Midland Avenue in town.

"Think Tank" will be accompanied by "Think Tank, the Podcast," which will repurpose interviews from the show for audio, and a radio program called "The Leadership Hour," based on his 2016 book, "Lessons in leadership."

The idea for "Think Tank" was born of frustration.

Over the years, when Aduabato has contributed to CNN or CNBC as an analyst, they'd ask him was he for or against Trump, a Democrat or a Republican, and ask how to pitch him.

"I'll say, 'This is my point of view.' They'll say, 'We're not sure where that fits,'" he said.

"Instead of complaining about the way we collaboratively cover national politics, the horse race around the presidential race, Trump for or against, I decided to take the bull by the horns and create something that was national in focus in terms of issues.

"People disagree but are not allowed to be disagreeable. There's no name calling. There are honest, difficult conversations about the issues on the national level that affect us here in New Jersey," Aduabato said. "I do not see a lot of programming that falls into that category. I saw a vacuum, and decided to be a leader and take up the charge."

He hopes that "Think Tank" will encourage viewers to think for themselves.

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“I’m a father of four, ages 8 to 26. I often want to talk to my kids about difficult issues, and they’ll say this is what they think, and I’ll ask why,” he said. “Often they’ve seen it on a website.” He hopes “Think Tank” will cause people to consider their opinions. It asks, “Are you sure you’re right?”

The show will cover national issues, but with people from this region, he said. Immigration policy, and what it means for Jersey City. What does it mean when the president says people will be sent to sanctuary cities, and what does it mean to be a sanctuary city? In addition to politicians, he will collaborate with experts from local universities.

“We don’t need someone from Washington to discuss healthcare,” he said.

## SPEAKING HONESTLY

The premiere episode of “Think Tank” featured a segment addressing The Future of the Democratic Party, featuring Montclair’s Brendan Gill, a Democratic strategist, among three others.

One was a Democrat very much to the left, one is more mainstream, and one is more a right-leaning type, Aduato said.

Episode two, which airs on Saturday, May 18, features Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, who lives in and represents Montclair.

“[Sherrill] represents a big section of Montclair, and a portion of America outside of Montclair that leans center and right. I wanted a discussion with her on ‘Think Tank’ about how she balances all that, what she believes, and what is a reflection of her voters,” he said.

Largely, “Think Tank” will be a four-person panel, but sometimes it will be individual interviews. In the second part of the episode with Sherrill, it will also include Holly Schepisi, a Republican Congresswoman in the New Jersey State Legislature.

“I wanted to have two prominent elected officials, one from Congress, the other from the State Legislature. I wanted two women. Their voices are not heard enough. And I wanted to make sure it was two very thoughtful elected officials who would speak honestly about their issues with the standard bearers of their parties,” he said.

Sherrill did not support Nancy Pelosi for Speaker of the House, and she discusses that on the show. Schepisi talks about being a moderate Republican in the Trump party.

Though Sherrill is a Montclair resident, Aduato did not know her. Off camera, the two talked about their kids,

who go to Montclair public schools. On camera, Adubato was impressed with her confidence, and how she said what she believed, not what she thought would play well. "I found that so refreshing," he said.

The show will not always feature names people will have heard of, Adubato said. "But I'm confident you will care about what they are saying, because they are talking about issues and exploring how they impact you in everyday life. That's what matters."