

# EXHIBIT 9

**The New York Times**<https://nyti.ms/1kldCTA>

N.Y. / REGION

# A School Board That Overlooks Its Obligation to Students

Gotham

By MICHAEL POWELL    APRIL 7, 2014

SPRING VALLEY, N.Y. — A principal leans across the table at a pizza parlor and, with whispered intensity, totals up the damage done to the East Ramapo Central School District in recent years.

She has lost assistant principals, social workers, art teachers. Bilingual classes? Please. If she is lucky, she can find a Creole speaker for Haitian students.

Kindergarten class size has jumped to 28 children from 20. Fourth-grade classes hover at 32 children. Sky's the limit in high school.

Middle school athletics? Cut. East Ramapo's award-winning band leader? Laid off. And state mandates for bilingual and special education?

She tries to disguise her incredulity. "We're not even close to the state-mandated services," she says. "I feel like I'm watching a disaster descend on our children."

East Ramapo is not simply another tale of insufficient funds leaving a poor district marooned. This is a cautionary tale of communal politics and secular political leaders who lack the means or the courage to confront it. Years ago, the Hasidic Jews of Brooklyn — the Satmar, the Bobover and other sects — began their migration here.

Their intent was to recreate the shtetls of Eastern Europe in the leafy precincts of Rockland County. Now 19,000 Hasidic children here attend yeshivas while about 11,000 or so black, Latino and Haitian children attend the once well-integrated public schools.

Voting in disciplined blocs, ultra-Orthodox Jewish residents elected leaders to the school board. An Orthodox-dominated board ensured that the community's geometric expansion would be accompanied by copious tax dollars for textbooks and school buses.

(The state Education Department has ruled that the district could not use public dollars to place disabled Orthodox children in Yiddish-speaking yeshivas when less restrictive public classrooms were available. The school board is appealing.)

Public education became an afterthought. Schools were closed and sold off or rented to yeshivas, at sweet discounts. (An appraiser was indicted last year, accused of taking a handsome bribe for a low appraisal.)

Oscar Cohen, white-haired, Jewish and a local resident in his eighth decade, has rallied the opposition, including secular Jews, Central Americans and blacks, among them Betty Carmand, who will gather at a news conference on Tuesday to call for state action. He acknowledges their conundrum: The forms of democracy have perpetrated what looks a lot like injustice.

He tried to talk with the ultra-Orthodox school board. "Early on I figured we needed trust," he said. "We had a few meetings and they essentially said, 'We have the power and you don't.' "

Dissent became another flashpoint. After blacks, Latinos and secular Jews complained loudly, perhaps rudely, at public meetings last year, the board chairman

at the time, Daniel Schwartz, peered dourly at the audience.

“It’s become apparent to the board that there is a group of miscreants in the community,” he said.

From now on the board, he said, will allow comment only at meeting’s end, often past midnight. “It pains me greatly to have to treat the community like errant children,” he said. “But people in his community have chosen the tune and the piper will be paid.”

An ultra-Orthodox developer, Yehuda Weissmandl, recently took over as chairman of the board. He is more circumspect. In an interview, he blamed poor state education funding formulas and said he wished well for every child, “white, purple or green.”

To blame the ultra-Orthodox, he says, treads into anti-Semitism. This is a well-honed move. Board members often invoke the names of concentration camps.

Of late, non-ultra-Orthodox Jewish leaders have offered a retort. Rabbi Adam Baldachin of the Montebello Jewish Center spoke of attending yeshivas and public schools. Always, he said, his parents were “proud taxpayers.”

“As Americans, the ultra-Orthodox have the right to dominate the school board,” he said. “But we have a moral responsibility in a democracy to educate all of our children.”

As Ms. Carmand, a parent of three East Ramapo students, put it: “This is not Jew against black. This is about children getting ignored.”

Electoral democracy has left no obvious exit door here for the victims.

It’s not enough for state leaders to occasionally censure the school board. There’s a deeper obligation to the students.

“It’s like the education laws don’t apply here,” that principal says. “We need state leaders to come here and lead.”

***Correction: April 10, 2014***

*The Gotham column on Tuesday, about efforts by Hasidic leaders in Rockland County, N.Y., to use the electoral process to reshape the finances of the East Ramapo Central School District, misstated the given name of a former chairman of the school board. He is Daniel Schwartz, not David. And a picture caption in some editions misspelled, in some copies, the given name of a student in the district. He is Sebastian Leak, not Sebastin.*

Email: [powellm@nytimes.com](mailto:powellm@nytimes.com)

Twitter: @powellnyt

A version of this article appears in print on April 8, 2014, on Page A18 of the New York edition with the headline: A School Board That Overlooks Its Obligation to Students.

---

© 2017 The New York Times Company