

An Open Letter to the Superintendent and Certain Members of the East Ramapo School District Board “Shame On You”

America has always prided itself on providing an education for every child. This simple but elegant concept has been the backbone of our nation for generations. This sacred responsibility has been handed down from the founding fathers to all future generations of Americans. We have been entrusted to carry on this tradition, and to care for and to educate all children regardless of race, color, or creed.

Let me remind certain members of the East Ramapo School Board that we are a nation of immigrants. I am the grandson of immigrants, and immigrants have made this country a “shining beacon”, and a beautiful “mosaic” for the world to admire.

Certain members on the East Ramapo School Board, have sadly lost sight of this sacred American trust.

***As a thirty-five year resident of East Ramapo, with first hand knowledge of teachers and administrators who have devoted their professional careers to teaching the current generation of the children of immigrants, and as a proud parent whose three sons went through the East Ramapo School District, I say “Shame On You!”, for exploiting and twisting the system for your own interests and benefits. Your children, who by your choice, primarily attend Yeshivas (private religious schools), and to add insult to injury, you further abuse the system, by taking actions as a Board that diverts public funds to support the costs associated with sending your children to private schools.

***The Board now has taken action to settle cases with parents who wish to have their “identified” children sent to private religious schools. “Shame On You”! In addition, as a Board of Education (the majority from the private, religious school community), you have allowed funds to go to private, religious schools without regard to issues of health and safety, issues of comparative secular education programs being offered, and issues of separating children by gender for religious purposes. All of these matters bring into question the legitimacy of disbursement of funds to any of the schools that do not adhere to regulation and law pertaining to these issues. And finally, your action as a majority of the Board, has been focused on only one matter: the reduction of taxes without regard to the negative impact it has and will continue to play on the education of the children of East Ramapo.

Before many of you start thinking that the author of this letter is anti-Semitic, let me set the record straight in the clearest possible terms; “I am not”. I am a proud Jew, I am the son of a Rabbi, a product of a Yeshiva education through High School, a member of several synagogues around the world, and a major donor to Jewish schools in Israel, and Jewish organizations and charities in the United States. Many of you have lost your way!

***Like me, you have chosen to live in this community where we are able to practice our religion, and just as we expect others to honor and respect us as Jews, we must reciprocate with the same honor and respect in deed, and not mere words. As Americans, we have been blessed with the inalienable rights to practice and educate our children in accordance with our religious beliefs, but certainly not at the expense of others in the community that have the same rights, and are no less important than our children. As Jews, we are all responsible to treat each child with the same respect, dignity, and support that we all expect. Remember, we too were once “strangers in a strange land”.

***I wish to thank those members of the School Board who have not lost their compass, and who have tried to bring balance and fair mindedness to an otherwise self-serving Board. My thanks to Mr. Stephen Price, Ms. Mimi Calhoun, and Ms. Suzanne Young-Mercer.

***To our School Superintendent, Dr. Oustatcher: It is time for you to stand up for all of the children! You know better than most, what has been happening in East Ramapo, not the least of which has been focused on the closing of schools with limited or no input from the public. “SHAME ON ALL OF YOU”! I urge you to modify your behavior in accordance with your responsibilities to every member of the community.

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**Robert H. Book, a concerned citizen says,
“On Behalf of all of the dedicated parents and children who do not have a
real voice with the East Ramapo School District Board”**