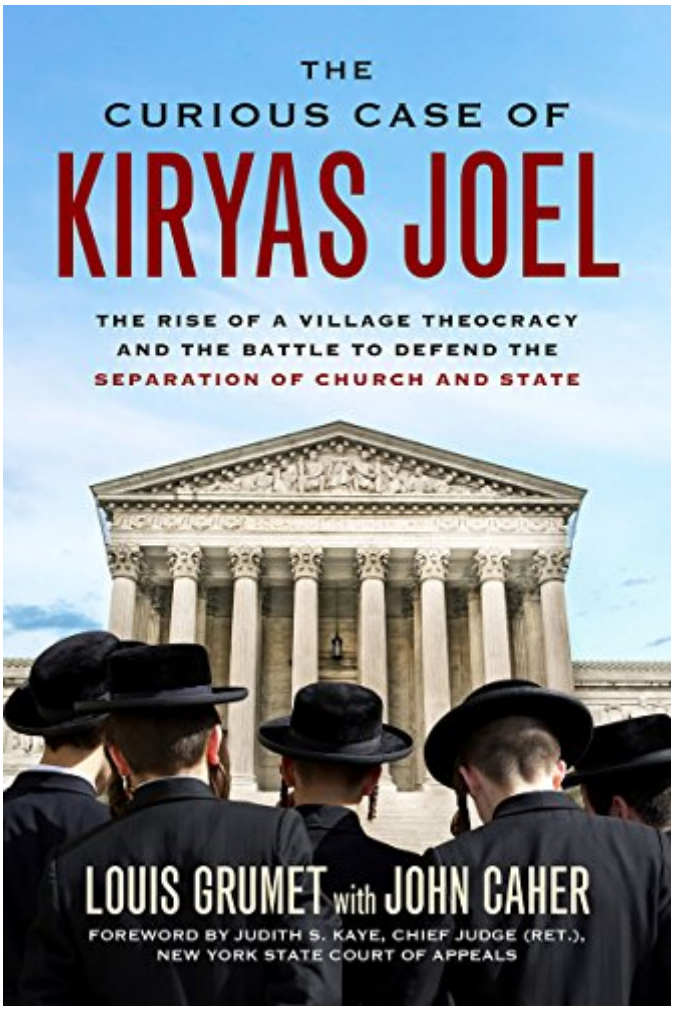
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Curious Case Of Kiryas Joel: The Rise Of A Village Theocracy And The Battle To Defend The Separation Of Church And State



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Synopsis

Twenty years ago, in the middle of the night and on the last day of the legislative session, the New York State Legislature created a publicly funded school district to cater to the interests of a religious sect called the Satmar, an insular group of Hasidic Jews that objects to, among other things, female school bus drivers. The rapidly growing sect had bought land in rural Upstate New York, populated it solely with members of its faction, and created a village called Kiryas Joel that exerted extraordinary political pressure over both political parties. Marking the first time in American history that a governmental unit was established for a religious group, the legislature's action prompted years of litigation that eventually went to the US Supreme Court.As today's Supreme Court signals its willingness to view a religious viewpoint like any other speech and accord it equal protection, the 1994 case, Board of Education of Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet, stands as the most important legal precedent in the fight to uphold the separation of church and state. In The Curious Case of Kiryas Joel, plaintiff Louis Grumet opens a window onto the Satmar Hasidic community, where language, customs, and dress have led to estrangement from and clashes with neighboring communities, and details the inside story of his fight for the First Amendment and against New York's most powerful politicians.Informed by numerous interviews with key figures such as Governor George Pataki, media accounts, court transcripts, and more, The Curious Case of Kiryas Joel not only tantalizes with a peek at cynical power politics driven by votes and Supreme Court justice squabbling and negotiation; it also provides an important demonstration of how a small, insular, and politically savvy religious group can grasp legal and political power. This storyÃ¢â ¬â •a blend of politics, religion, cultural clashes, and constitutional tensionÃ¢â ¬â •is an object lesson in the ongoing debate over freedom of versus freedom from religion.

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Customer Reviews

Powerful reporting from a first hand insider and adversary that treats with utmost respect his enemies. Gives them the first and more important opinion not being afraid of his own standing - at times you come around even to have sympathy for the subjects he so vehemently dedicated his life to fight.But in the end of the day you see both sides of this humanistic struggle that is affecting us more and more because the Satmar Hasidim are by the day getting bigger and more powerful and democracy which politicians are depended on the block vote cannot deal with it as we see in this beautiful told story that the courts are serving the society not the other way around.

I used to work in this community in their health care center. How their community works and how they get so many perks from local politicians has always fascinated me. It’s sad what is allowed to happen within our government for the sake of votes. This books shows an accurate picture of the local corruption in the New York government. The writers did a great job opening my eyes even more.

This is an excellent recounting of a particular case regarding special education services for children in the village of Kiryas Joel in New York State after the village won the legal right to be a separate school district.This right was challenged successfully as violating the US Constitution, and the book brilliantly explains the legal issues, the different legal, political and ideological principles involved, and the motivation of each of the players including the NYS Governor and assorted Supreme Court justices.It is sympathetic to all sides, clear in its writing and powerfully committed to the First Amendment.

This book combines the best of political writing and a cogent argument for separation of Church and State. Grumet and Caher catch the essence of the founding fathers' hopes and dreams for the new republic. I learned a great deal about some of the most famous (and infamous) New York politicians of the 20th century and even more about the New York political system. I am saddedned by the fact that Governor Mario Cuomo failed to show leadership in Church State issue. I urge people to read the book and draw their own conclusions.

The Author provides illuminating revelations, insights and analysis regarding a village theocracy's political influence, contributions, and block voting; the support garnered from the from prominent New York elected officials; mock oral argument sessions for a non-profit attorneyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s first appearance before the US Supreme Court; the oral arguments and briefs, including those by religious organizations and other groups as friends of the court; the importance of press coverage for the litigation; relevant case law and precedents on the First AmendmentÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Establishment Clause and Freedom of Religion, all the way back to the Letters of Jefferson and Madison; and, court decisions by Judges in the New York State Courts and the Opinions issued in by the US Supreme Court in this litigation spanning a period of 10 years.The background information on the litigation, and actual events that led up to it, are fascinating.

A great book detailing the people and proceedings behind this First Amendment case. I happened to have known and have met one of the attorneys for Kiryas Joel, Nat Lewin. Although I disagreed with his position in this case, he is a brilliant attorney and the book gave him his proper due. I also knew that Gov. Mario Cuomo and later GOP Governor George Pataki were working to aid Kiryas Joel for political reasons. The book is a very interesting read, and discusses the various ramifications of First Amendment Establishment and Free-Exercise law in religious cases.

This was a well written book describing what happens when the people we elect stop following the constitution and a group of people who don't believe in our government know how to game the system. Understand this is not about religion.

As a political junkie and someone who was working for the NYS Assembly while this was going on I found the book fascinating. Good reading and especially interesting for lawyers and those who are concerned about the separation of Church and State which should be all of us in my opinion!

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