



SCHOOLED

In addition to his regular course load at New York's Ithaca High School last year, a seventeen-year-old senior named Robert Ochshorn got a hands-on — if somewhat unwelcome — education in First Amendment law.

As editor-in-chief of the school paper, *The Tattler*, Ochshorn published a series of stories critical of the first-year principal, Joseph Wilson, as well as some other controversial pieces — some veering into the realm of poor taste, as even the paper's supporters concede. In January school officials gave editorial control to the paper's faculty adviser, Stephenie Vinch, who promptly killed a cartoon about sex education. A fusillade of memos citing legal precedents passed between Ochshorn and the administration, Vinch resigned, and *The Tattler* was shuttered. End of story. Or so school officials hoped. "The district's strategy was to wait for us troublesome kids to graduate," Ochshorn says.

Ochshorn, though, proved a resilient and resourceful defender of press freedom. With the help of fellow student journalists, he raised \$2,000 — mostly through ad sales and a bandfest — and published three issues of an underground paper called *The Issue*. Then in June, Ochshorn and seven other students sued the school district, charging that their right to free speech and a free press had been trampled.

Wilson declined to comment, citing the lawsuit, which is pending in federal District Court.

For his part, Ochshorn — who spent much of his senior year researching case law — sounds a little weary as he begins his freshman year at Cornell. "I learned so much as editor of the paper," he says, "but I learned a lot more about the inner workings of school districts and student press law."

— Edward B. Colby