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Child-sex abuse victim says Brooklyn Jewish group covered up case

BY MICHAEL O'KEEFFE

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Manny Waks, CEO of Kol-Voz, says he was abused as a child and wants "accountability" as he lobbies for the Child Victims Act to pass.
(JEFFERSON SIEGEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

Manny Waks says he was sexually abused as a child in Melbourne, Australia, by a member of the Brooklyn-based Chabad-Lubavitch sect.

And like many other victims around the globe, the activist says, he's been unable to get justice from the organization because of New York's statute of limitations. Under New York State law, survivors have to file lawsuits by their 23rd birthday.

Waks, the founder of a group called Kol v'Oz that combats sexual abuse in the Jewish community, wants the Melbourne community where he grew up — and thousands of other Chabad-Lubavitch institutions around the world — to implement programs to detect and prevent sexual abuse. But the Chabad-Lubavitch leadership has refused to push those institutions to take steps to hold predators responsible.

He fears the organization will continue to ignore the danger without the leverage provided by lawsuits.

[Assembly plans on taking up bill for abuse victims 'next week'](#)

“It seems Chabad International has adopted the same misguided approach as Melbourne’s Yeshivah Centre,” Waks added, referring to the group that serves the Australian city’s Orthodox Jewish community that was founded by emissaries of now-deceased Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the sect’s longtime Brooklyn leader. “Ignore the scandal and hope it all just goes away.”



Waks, 40, is in New York to lobby for reforms to the statute of limitations on child sex abuse cases. The legislative session ends this week.

Rabbi Mendel Sharfstein, the director of operations at Chabad International's Crown Heights headquarters, did not respond to requests for comment.

Waks was 11 when he says he was first molested by a man named Velvel Serebryanski, the son of an important Australian rabbi who now lives in Brooklyn. Waks says he was also abused by David Cyprys, the Yeshivah Centre head of security.

He filed a police report against Serebryanski and Cyprys in 1996. Waks said the cops told him they could not pursue charges against Serebryanski because the alleged pedophile had moved to the United States. Waks said police told him there was not enough evidence to pursue a case against Cyprys.

Manny Waks, now 40, could not press charges against his child abuser due to the statute of limitations. (HANDOUT)

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Manny Waks reports child sex abuse cases and doesn't receive help from Chabad-Lubavivh leadership. (MINT PICTURES/IDENTITY FILMS)

Other victims accused Cyprys of sexual abuse; armed with additional evidence, authorities filed criminal charges against him. Cyprys is

serving an eight-year sentence in an Australian prison for sexually abusing Waks and other children.

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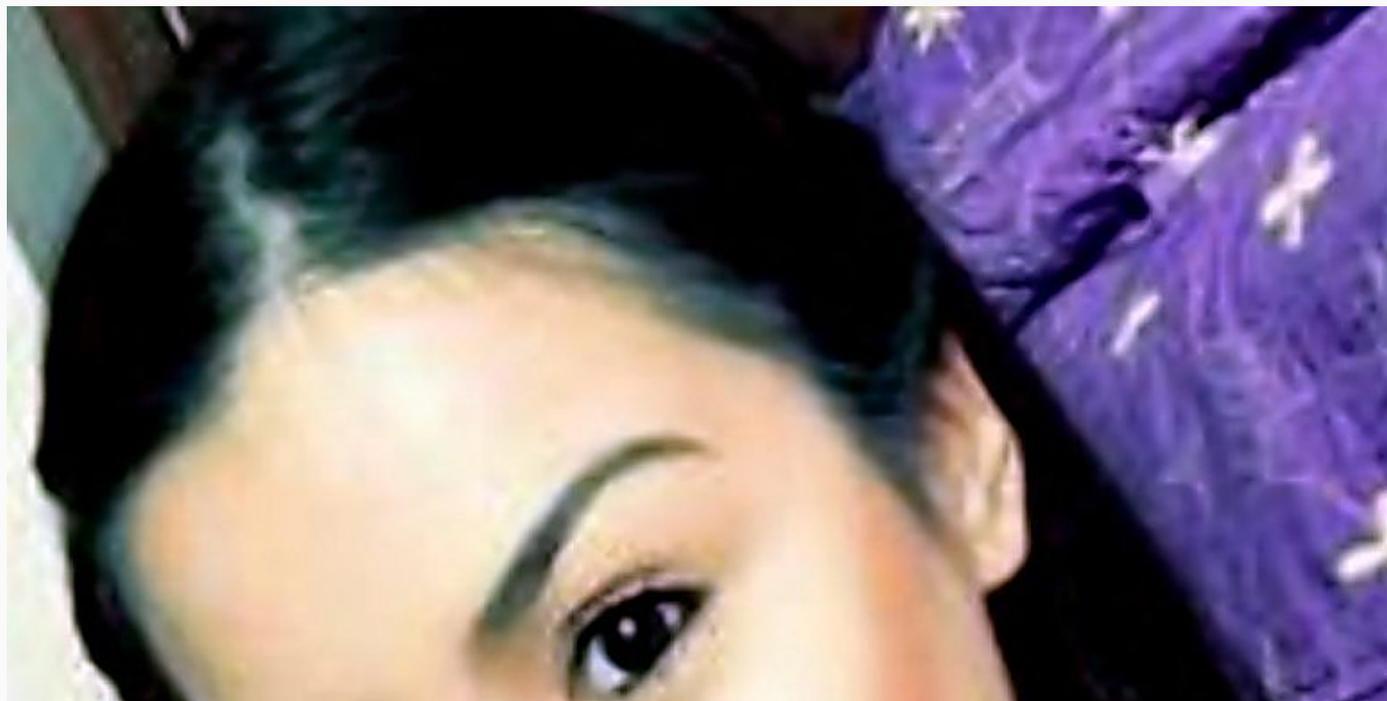
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Waks said statute of limitations reform would allow him to make the Brooklyn-based sect responsible for ignoring and covering up sex abuse.

“This isn’t about money,” Waks said. “It is about accountability.”

A bill was introduced in the Assembly late Tuesday that — in an unlikely philosophical alliance — drew immediate criticism from advocates and the Catholic Church. The bill starts the five-year window for criminal charges of sexual abuse at age 23, up from 18. Civil claims of child sexual abuse would need to be brought by the victim’s 28th birthday, up from 23.

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The bill would also treat public and private institutions the same by doing away with a requirement that someone victimized at a public institution, like a school, file a notice of intent to sue within 90 days of

the incident.

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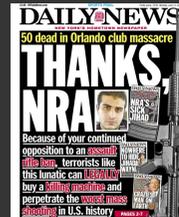
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