

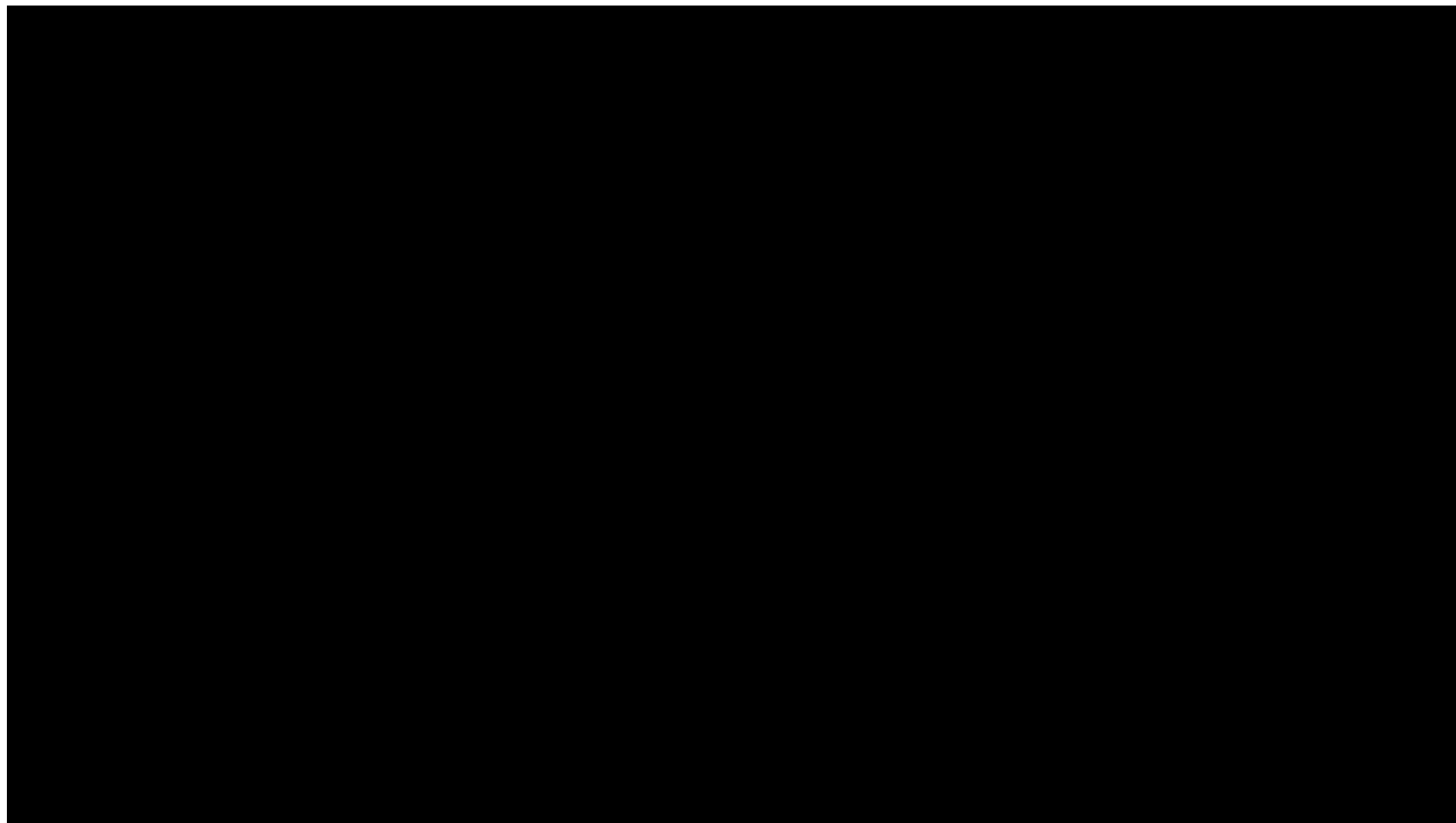
U.S. NEWS 05/15/2019 01:24 pm ET

Anti-Vaccine Rallies Draw Hundreds In Epicenter Of Measles Outbreak

Anti-vaxxers gathered to share warnings and conspiracy theories at events in New York. One doctor even suggested that Jews are given “bad” vaccines.



By Nina Golgowski



Anti-vaccination rallies in New York this week rallied hundreds of protesters who encouraged the public to safeguard their children from vaccines, even as [the state grapples with the largest measles](#)

[outbreaks](#) in the country.

At a rally in Monsey, a Rockland County town northwest of New York City, hundreds of ultra-Orthodox Jews on Monday heard from speakers who shared warnings and conspiracy theories, including that Jewish communities are being intentionally given “bad” doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

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“Is it possible that these lots are bad?” Dr. Lawrence Palevsky, who runs a holistic pediatric wellness center in Long Island, New York, asked the crowd, [according to The New York Times](#). “It’s fascinating because we’re told how contagious the disease is, but somehow it’s centered in the Jewish community.”



JOHANNES EISELE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Orthodox Rabbi Hillel Handler of Brooklyn also pushed the belief that Jews are being targeted. He accused government officials of trying to blame Jews for spreading measles, and claimed it actually comes from undocumented immigrants.

“We Hasidim have been chosen as the target in order to distract from the virulent diseases that are sweeping through the city from illegals,” he told the crowd, [according to Gothamist](#).

Handler reportedly also claimed, unsubstantially, that contracting the measles or chickenpox is a good thing as it decreases one’s chance of getting cancer, heart disease and strokes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — which has [warned that there are roughly two to three deaths among every 1,000 measles cases](#) — has credited the unusually high number of measles cases across the U.S. to travelers who contract the disease overseas and then bring it to communities that have under-vaccinated populations.

Recent measles outbreaks in New York State, New York City and New Jersey have been linked to overseas travel, primarily among unvaccinated people in Orthodox Jewish communities who brought it back from Israel, [the CDC has said](#).

Some parents who oppose vaccines have dismissed the CDC, accusing the federal health agency of lying.

Local health and government officials, along with a local rabbi, issued [a joint statement](#) in which they condemned the claims shared at Monday’s gathering. They said those views “runs counter to every statement from the medical experts and elected officials of our county.”

“

This type of propaganda endangers the health and safety of children within our community and around the world, and must be denounced in the strongest language possible.

—joint statement from New York health and government officials

“This type of propaganda endangers the health and safety of children within our community and

around the world, and must be denounced in the strongest language possible,” the statement read. “The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is safe and effective and is the only way to prevent the measles.”

There were 225 confirmed cases of measles in Rockland County as of Friday, according to the [New York State Department of Health](#). It’s the second highest number in the state, after New York City, where there have been [498 cases since September](#).

On Tuesday, another anti-vaccination rally in the state’s capital of Albany drew hundreds of supporters after lawmakers proposed a bill that would eliminate a religious exemption for vaccinations.



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Protesters stand in the rain while protesting against legislation to narrow exemption to state-mandated vaccines at a rally at New York’s state Capitol on Tuesday.

“I want the choice. I’m a public school teacher. My kids deserve a public education,” parent Kathleen Buglino [told News 12 Westchester](#). Some schools, including [Orthodox Jewish schools in New York City](#), have forbidden students from attending if they are not vaccinated.

“They are not disease carriers. They are healthier than any of their friends,” she said of unvaccinated children.



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Demonstrators stand in the rain while protesting against legislation to narrow exemption to state-mandated vaccines at a rally at the state Capitol on Tuesday.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., whose criticism and skepticism of vaccines was condemned as “tragically wrong” and “dangerous” by his family last week, was among those speaking at the rally.

“I’m not anti-vax,” he told the crowd, according to the New York Daily News. “I just want safe vaccines and I want robust science. They have no incentive to make that product safe.”

Del Bigtree, a former television producer on CBS’s talk show “The Doctors,” also appeared before the crowd, proclaiming: “Every study shows around the world that the unvaccinated children are healthier.”

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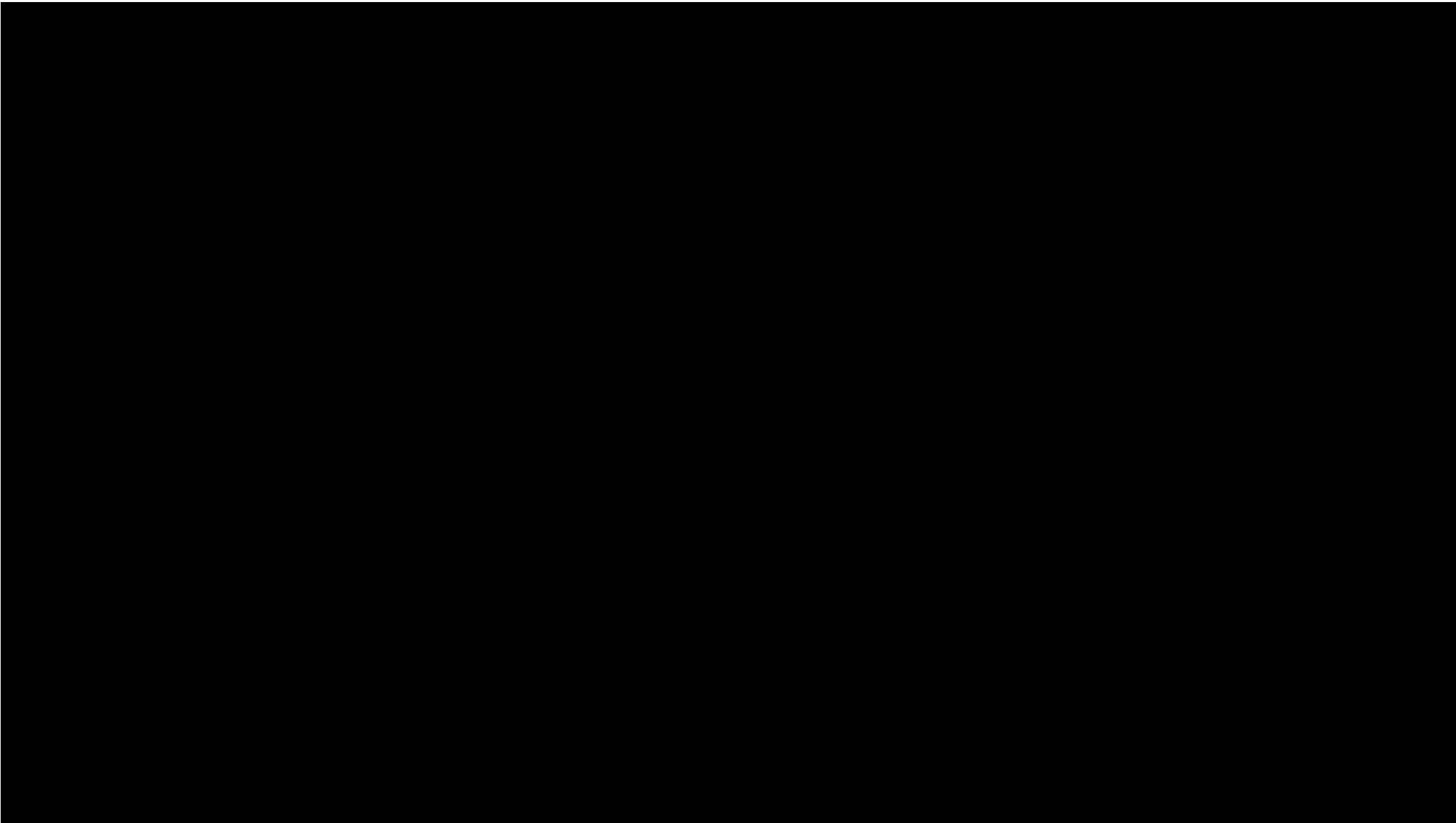
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Nina Golgowski 
General Assignment Reporter, HuffPost

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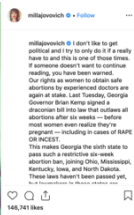
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