

Court again thwarts Hale - Supremacist fails in appeal to get attorney license

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White supremacist Matthew Hale lost his latest bid Monday in his 5-year legal battle to obtain a law license in Illinois.

The 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a district judge that he had no legal authority to second-guess the decisions already made by state courts in Hale's case.

"We find that Hale has had his day in the state courts, and that the District Court correctly dismissed his suit," said the opinion of a three-judge panel of the federal appeals court.

The decision comes a little more than four years after the Committee on Character and Fitness, appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court, found Hale unfit to practice law.

Shortly after the committee's decision in July 1999, Benjamin Smith, a member of Hale's racist church, went on a shooting rampage that targeted minorities, killing two people and wounding nine before taking his own life.

Later in 1999, the state Supreme Court rejected Hale's request to reconsider the committee's denial.

The U.S. Supreme Court then declined to consider the issue.

Hale then filed suit in federal court in 2001, but U.S. District Judge John Darrah said he didn't have jurisdiction to overstep the state Supreme Court.

Hale, a 1998 graduate of Southern Illinois University School of Law, has more pressing legal concerns at the moment.

He is being held without bond on charges he solicited the murder of a federal judge presiding over a trademark infringement case in which Hale's World Church of the Creator was forced to change its name. It now goes by the name Creativity Movement.

In an attempt to bolster their case last month, prosecutors tried to draw Hale closer to the 1999 shooting spree, saying he praised the murders and "proclaimed his respect and admiration" for Smith.

Hale, 31, of East Peoria has pleaded not guilty to the murder solicitation charges. His lawyer recently called the new allegations in connection with Smith's shooting spree a misguided effort by prosecutors to shore up a weak case.

The government case relies heavily on secretly taped recordings by a member of Hale's inner circle, an FBI plant.

In noting the pending murder solicitation charges in its opinion, the 7th Circuit said, "It is difficult to imagine that the committee would vote positively today in favor of Hale's character and fitness, though that is not the strict issue before us today."

In its 1998 decision, the committee found Hale's bigotry showed a "gross deficiency in moral character, particularly for lawyers who have a special responsibility to uphold the rule of law for all persons."

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