

Hale wanted fewer blacks on his jury - White supremacist was 'worried sick'

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A newly unsealed transcript of jury selection from last month's trial of white supremacist Matthew Hale shows that he was "worried sick" that too many black jurors would be picked for him to get a fair trial.

After several blacks had already been selected as jurors, Hale asked the presiding federal judge for more peremptory challenges to bounce potential jurors without cause.

After a personal appeal from Hale during a closed-door hearing in chambers, U.S. District Judge James Moody quickly denied the request. Earlier this week, Moody unsealed a transcript of the April 9 hearing at the request of the Tribune.

A racially diverse jury convicted Hale, leader of the Creativity Movement, of soliciting the murder of a federal judge in anger over her order in 2002 to change the name of his group.

At the closed-door hearing, Moody at first refused to let Hale address the court.

"The problem is that I've made decisions that Mr. Hale disagrees with," said his lawyer, Thomas Anthony Durkin.

Despite Hale's racist views, Durkin has said he wanted to pick black jurors because he believed they would be fair-minded and more likely to believe government wrongdoing.

"I don't agree with him, which is why I said I think he should address you," the transcript quoted Durkin as saying. "I don't want to withdraw as his lawyer, but I can't make that kind of argument in the courtroom, and I'm not going to. So he can either fire me ... I can't do it. I'm not going to do it."

The judge then let Hale speak.

"I am very, very concerned that due to the statements that I have made over the years, statements which should not be relevant to this case, that I will be adjudged by my beliefs and not on the evidence," said Hale, a law-school graduate who was denied a license to practice law in part because of his racist views. "I'm extremely worried about it. I have been worried sick since yesterday."

"I saw the way it was going, and I'm sorry that this has had to occur, and I didn't want it to occur, but it's just too much to ask when statements are going to be admitted into evidence of me talking in a derogatory way towards blacks and then be sat in judgment by blacks," Hale said. "I just, I'm just, I just feel sick about it."

The jury was made up of six whites, five blacks and one Hispanic. Two jurors who previously spoke to the Tribune on condition of anonymity denied Hale's racist beliefs played a part in reaching their verdict.

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