

## HEIPLE ARGUES FOR REVIEW OF HALE'S LAW LICENSE DENIAL

Chicago Tribune - November 18, 1999

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Saying white supremacist Matthew Hale 's bid to obtain his law license raised issues of "significant constitutional magnitude," Illinois Supreme Court Justice James Heiple on Wednesday filed a dissenting opinion, arguing the high court should have reviewed Hale's petition seeking to become a member of the bar.

Heiple, one of the most controversial figures on the Supreme Court, said Hale's petition raised questions about standards and rules of conduct set for lawyers as well as issues of free speech that "deserve a judicial review and determination by this court."

Last week, the Supreme Court issued a one paragraph order, without comment, that let stand a decision by the court's Committee on Character and Fitness, which had blocked Hale's efforts to obtain his law license.

Hale, the leader of East Peoria-based World Church of the Creator, earned a law degree from Southern Illinois University Law School. He has passed the state's bar examination but has been repeatedly denied his license by the court panel license on the grounds that he lacks "good moral character."

Hale's church gained notoriety after former church member Benjamin Smith, an avowed white supremacist, went on a shooting rampage over the 4th of July weekend that killed former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong and a Korean student at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Hale's attorney, Anita Rivkin-Carothers, said she welcomed Heiple's dissent.

Rivkin-Carothers acknowledged that Heiple's dissent has no impact on the outcome of the petition, but noted "it does at least indicate that there are justices sitting on the Supreme Court who realize this is about the 1st Amendment and not about Matthew Hale ."

Heiple, the former chief justice who gained notoriety by writing the court's controversial ruling in the Baby Richard custody battle, attacked the court fitness committee for denying Hale's admission to the bar without finding him guilty of misconduct.

The committee, said Heiple, "speculates" that were Hale admitted he would--at some future time--likely face disciplinary action because of his beliefs.

Heiple said the court should address this important question of whether the committee can base its assessment of an applicant's character "on predictions of future actionable misconduct."

Similarly, Heiple posed the hypothetical question of whether Hale would have been disbarred if he had made his racist statements after obtaining a law license.

Edition: CHICAGO SPORTS FINAL

Section: METRO CHICAGO

Page: 3

Index Terms: OFFICIAL ; COURT ; ILLINOIS ; ISSUE ; ETHICS ; RIGHTS ; CAREER ; LAW DISCRIMINATION

Record Number: CTR9911180247

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