

Disgraced ex-journalist's bid for lawyer license stumbles in California Supreme Court

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Disgraced journalist Stephen Glass may have to choose a vocation other than the law to complete his road to redemption.

The California Supreme Court on Wednesday showed no signs of sympathy regarding Glass' bid for a license to practice law, hammering his journalistic past and suggesting his infamous history of fabricating dozens of magazine stories and public lies disqualifies him from joining the profession.

During an hour of arguments in Sacramento, all seven justices were skeptical of Glass' position that he is not the same person who tarnished the journalism world 15 years ago.

"Here is my problem," Justice Carol Corrigan told Jon Eisenberg, Glass' lawyer. "They say character is what you do when no one is looking. Mr. Glass' history ... when no one is looking has been pretty abysmal."

Added Justice Kathryn Mickle Werdegar: "Being admitted to practice law is a privilege. Our task is to certify that his moral character is such today that he can with integrity be a member of the bar."

Glass, now a paralegal for a Los Angeles law firm, has applied to become a California lawyer, arguing that he has changed his ways since a journalism scandal in the late 1990s resulted in his downfall. He gained such notoriety after fabricating stories for publications such as The New Republic that he became the subject of a Hollywood movie, "Shattered Glass."

Two State Bar Court decisions backed Glass' bid to be licensed as a lawyer, citing dozens of character witnesses, such as judges and law professors, who have vouched for his reformation.

But the state bar has argued against his right to be admitted, saying he has not done enough to atone for his journalistic sins. State bar attorney Rachel Grunberg told the court the bar "strongly opposes" Glass' right to be a California lawyer, calling him an "infamous serial liar."

Asked at one point whether Glass could ever rehabilitate himself enough to be licensed, Grunberg replied: "On this record, we don't think he should ever be admitted."

But Eisenberg insisted that Glass, now 41, has spent more than a decade reforming, telling the court that "he is not a liar today."

"We are asking you to have faith in Stephen Glass. But it is not blind faith," Eisenberg said. "He has redeemed himself and has good moral character."

The Supreme Court has 90 days to rule on Glass' case.

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