

Calling RSE a Cult. JZ Knight loses defamation lawsuit

J.Z. Knight v. American Association of Retired Persons, Thurston Co. (Wash. Superior Court). In 1995, the channeler of "Ramtha" sued the AARP for defamation arising from an article in Modern Maturity magazine on cults.

Obtained summary judgment dismissing all of plaintiff's claims. Plaintiff admitted that she was a public figure.

She was unable to show that any statement was publicized with actual malice. No appeal was taken. From K&L Gates legal services

Stephen A. Smith - Washington First Amendment/Media/Advertising Lawyers - Never a Dull Moment

<http://www.superlawyers.com/washington/article/Never-a-Dull-Moment/03089d5f-1caf-440c-b683-e4838d2bc53c.html>

In what must be one of the more bizarre examples of entrepreneurial creativity, Eclipse Enterprises, out of California, printed and distributed a line of trading cards portraying serial killers. Bianchi's likeness was included. He sued the company for \$8.5 million while he was serving a life sentence in Walla Walla, saying his face, which he claimed was his trademark, was improperly used. Smith argued that, as a serial killer trying to flee the police, Bianchi wasn't trying to market his likeness; therefore his face was not his trademark. Smith and Eclipse won the case. Smith also represented the Hearst Corp., owner of the P-I, when Bianchi claimed a book published by Hearst contained inaccuracies. "Our defense was that most of the statements were true or essentially true," Smith says, "and that his reputation was so low that it couldn't be damaged further." The judge awarded the case to Hearst.

Smith also found himself dealing in one case with the embodiment of a 30,000-year-old mystic, and, in another, the words of Moses. Smith's client, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), was sued by JZ Knight and Ramtha's School of Enlightenment after the AARP published an article on cults that included an interview with a woman who had spent a lot of money on Knight's organization. "Their claim was that the Ramtha School was depicted as a cult," Smith says. "I took a deposition of Knight—she is a very successful businesswoman." Knight claims that the spirit Ramtha communicates through her, and Smith says he didn't want to miss the opportunity to chat with the 300-century-old entity. He petitioned the judge to allow him to depose Ramtha. "The judge said that after I deposed Knight, I could try to convince him. But we didn't need it."

In the end, even Ramtha couldn't have saved Knight; the judge awarded a summary judgment to the AARP based on the conclusion that Knight was a public figure, and therefore malice would have to be shown

Marshall drifted toward Ramtha, [a New Age cult based on the teachings of J.Z. Knight](#), by Catherine Collins and Douglas Franz, *Modern Maturity*, June 1994, v37 n3 p22(10), (C) 1994 American Association of Retired Persons

When someone leaves a cult, his problems are just beginning," says Rudin of the American Family Foundation. "It can leave a very big hole in a person's life. You've cut yourself off from other people. And to recover you must rebuild those bridges. You have to rebuild your self-esteem and deal with the rage and the shame. And sometimes you have to take care of the practical things: jobs, credit, bank accounts, a place to live, health care, etc."

Caroline Marshall (*) knows all that. "My life was undergoing radical change. The Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) company I worked for was in Chapter 11 and I was losing my job. A personal relationship was breaking up and my children were all away and busy with their own lives." Marshall drifted toward Ramtha, a New Age cult based on the teachings of J.Z. Knight, a Washington state housewife who claims to be the entity through which a 35,000-year-old warrior spirit speaks. "Before I knew it, I was caught up. It's far easier than people think," she says.

Thus at the age of 58, Marshall left the east and moved to Washington to pursue her studies of Ramtha. It was a decision that cost her two years and approximately \$30,000 in savings.

As Marshall's involvement increased, she became more and more concerned. The warnings of impending natural and economic disasters were extremely intense and included talk about a race of underground space aliens conspiring with the United States government and feeding on human beings.

Finally, Marshall's sons helped her make a break.

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[http://www.caic.org.au/biblebase/apocol ... lderly.htm](http://www.caic.org.au/biblebase/apocol...lderly.htm)
