

NLP name not exclusive, judge rules

Bandler, Richera
Co-founder of therapy will have to share the neuro-linguistic programming name

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SANTA CRUZ—Richard Bandler will still be a star in the world of neuro-linguistic programming, but he's going to have to share the limelight a bit, a judge ruled Thursday.

In Bandler's court battle over the intellectual property rights of neuro-linguistic programming, or NLP, Superior Court Judge Robert Yonts ruled mostly in favor of the defendant, Christina Hall, a former associate whom Bandler accused of trademark infringement and unfair competition.

Bandler, 50, helped develop NLP in the 1970s along with former UC Santa Cruz linguistics professor John Grinder. It's a psychotherapeutic technique that supposedly

enhances communication and is a tool to help modify human behavior. Though detractors call it a pseudo-science, it is practiced worldwide and is hugely popular in Great Britain.

In January 1997, Bandler charged in a lawsuit that Hall and other NLP trainers were wrongfully using his name in their promotional materials and infringing on NLP intellectual property over which he claimed ownership.

Yonts, who presided over the non-jury trial, disagreed.

In his written decision, the judge said Bandler can no longer claim exclusive ownership of the name, seal, and logo of the Society of NLP.

"Both Hall and Bandler played a role in the development of Neuro-Linguistic Programming," Yonts stated.

The judge also ordered Bandler to pay \$600,000 in damages to Hall, saying Bandler's "misrepresentations" about being the

exclusive owner of NLP concepts hurt Hall's business in the marketplace.

But at the same time, Yonts rejected Hall's countersuit claims that Bandler no longer had any standing as a member of the Society of NLP after he filed for bankruptcy in 1983.

Yonts also restricted Hall from ever saying she was authorized to teach NLP in the "Richard Bandler style."

Hall's attorney, Philip Burkhardt of Rancho Sante Fe, said the decision was fair. The boundaries the judge set for his client will not be a problem with her, he said.

"It's very good news for us," Burkhardt said. "We're happy to see the court understood what was going on in this case."

Bandler's attorney, Michael Carroll of San Francisco, did not return a phone call to comment.

The non-jury trial for Bandler's civil case was far more esoteric than his notorious Santa Cruz County trial as an accused murderer.

Bandler was acquitted in 1988 in a sensational case that drew national attention because of its bizarre cast: a pop psychologist, a cocaine dealer and a hooker who specialized in kinky sex.

Bandler was accused of fatally shooting 31-

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year-old Corine Christensen, the daughter of a San Francisco cop, in her Capitola townhouse in November 1986.

But Bandler claimed the prosecution's star witness, James Marino, an admitted former cocaine dealer and a close friend, killed her and then set him up to take the fall.

Marino claimed Bandler was angry at Christensen because she was having a lesbian affair with Bandler's live-in girlfriend, and because she owed him money.

Both men admitted to being in the room when Christensen was shot. But in the end, no one was ever convicted in the case.

Bandler, who moved from Santa Cruz to San Francisco after the 1988 trial, said in February that returning to his old haunt for the civil case was not a problem for him. He said the criminal trial was all behind him now and what mattered was the fight for what he believes is rightfully his.

In addition to Hall, Bandler had sued Grinder, but Bandler dropped that part of the lawsuit in the middle of trial in February. The pair reached a settlement with "mutual endorsement of their respective contributions to NLP," said Tim Volkmann, Grinder's attorney.



Bandler