

Priest In Boston Clergy Scandal Denied New Trial

November 27, 2008

By [WBUR Newsroom](#)

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One of the central figures in Boston's clergy sex abuse scandal lost his bid for a new trial yesterday when a judge ruled a victim's repressed memories were rightly used against the defrocked priest.

Paul Shanley is currently serving a 12- to 15-year prison sentence after being convicted in 2005 of repeatedly raping and fondling a boy at a Newton parish in the 1980s.

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The victim testified he did not remember the sexual abuse until 2002, when memories came rushing back amid media coverage of the scandal.

In his bid for a new trial, Shanley argued his trial lawyer did not properly challenge the theory of repressed memory, and should have presented proof that it's questioned within the scientific community.

But Superior Court Judge Stephen Neel, who presided at Shanley's trial and heard his motion for a new trial rejected Shanley's argument today. The

judge acknowledged there is considerable controversy over repressed memories, but said the theory "is generally accepted by the relevant scientific community of mental health professionals."

He said Shanley's trial lawyer was given an opportunity to challenge the theory by putting on his own expert and cross-examining a state expert.

Shanley's lawyer, Robert F. Shaw Jr., said Wednesday he would appeal the ruling to the state Supreme Judicial Court.

"The entire theory of the case ... was that (the victim) completely repressed his memory for 20 years, and that despite memory triggers throughout that period of time, he was not capable of remembering supposed abuse that occurred week after week after week for a period of years," Shaw said.

"The evidence not only does not corroborate his claims, it contradicts them," he said.

Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone said the court rightly denied Shanley's request for a new trial.

"We believe that Paul Shanley received a fair trial and that a just verdict was rendered by the jury," he said.

Shanley was known in the 1960s and 1970s as a "street priest" who reached out to troubled children and homosexuals. He became a central figure in the abuse scandal after internal church records released in 2002 showed that officials were aware of sexual abuse complaints against him as early as 1967, but did not remove him.

This program aired on November 27, 2008. The audio for this program is not available.



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