

FILED

Apr 24, 2025

Disciplinary
Board

Docket # 002

REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE
DISCIPLINARY BOARD
WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re

BRETT ANDREWS PURTZER,

Lawyer (Bar No. 17283).

ADMONITION

WSBA File No. 23-01831

Proceeding No. 25#00028

Pursuant to Rule 13.5(a) of the Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct (ELC), a Review Committee of the Disciplinary Board hereby issues the following Admonition:

ADMISSION TO PRACTICE

1. At all times material to the grievance herein, you practiced law in the State of Washington.

FACTS

2. Manuel Ellis was a Black man who died during an arrest on March 3, 2020, in Tacoma, Washington, by the Tacoma Police Department. Three police officers were criminally charged regarding Ellis's death. A jury acquitted the police officers of all charges in December 2023 following a trial that lasted more than two months.
3. When the court adjourned on December 13, 2023, tempers had flared in the gallery of the courtroom. One of the police officer's lawyers, Wayne Fricke, attempted to calm the situation. However, when Ellis's family's attorney, James Bible, called out to Fricke, you, Fricke's co-counsel, misinterpreted Bible's intentions and loudly told Bible multiple times, who is Black, to "Keep moving, boy."
4. You later apologized to Bible and the Ellis family, acknowledging that your remark was inappropriate and expressed shame for your words. Bible and members of the Ellis family equated your remark to a racial epithet and racially derogatory against Black

1 men. Despite your apology, Bible emphasized that the apology did not mitigate the
2 impact of your words.

- 3 5. Special Disciplinary Counsel Min K. Kang has interviewed you, attorney James Bible,
4 the sister of decedent Manuel Ellis, Monet Mixon Carter, and your law firm partner
5 Wayne Fricke. According to the witness statements, they were surprised and shocked by
6 your statement. Special Disciplinary Counsel received several letters of support on your
7 behalf during the investigation.

8
9 MISCONDUCT

- 10 6. By making comments that a reasonable person would likely interpret as manifesting
11 prejudice or bias – particularly in the context of the given circumstances involving a
12 courtroom in which the underlying, public, and racially-charged criminal proceedings
13 regarding the death of Ellis were taking place, in addition to another potential context
14 regarding you treating Bible as someone more junior or younger than you –you violated
15 RPC 8.4(h) (prohibiting conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice toward
16 judges, lawyers, LLLTs, other parties, witnesses, jurors, or court personnel or officers,
17 “that a reasonable person would interpret as manifesting prejudice or bias” based on, inter
18 alia, race).

19 ADMONITION

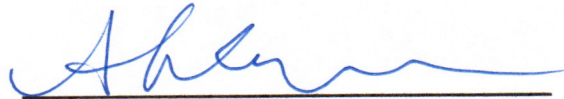
20 YOU ARE HEREBY ADMONISHED FOR THIS MISCONDUCT.

21 This Admonition is not a disciplinary sanction, but is a public disciplinary action
22 published in the Washington State Bar News under ELC 3.5 and shall be admissible in
23 evidence in subsequent discipline or disability proceedings involving you.

24 You may protest the issuance of this Admonition by filing a written notice of protest with
25 the Association-Attention: Clerk to the Disciplinary Board, within 30 days of the service
26 of this Admonition upon you. Upon receipt of a timely protest, this Admonition shall be
27 rescinded, and the grievance by shall be deemed ordered to hearing.

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Dated this 23 day of April, 2025.



Anna L. Endter, Chair
Review Committee IV

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the Admonition to be emailed to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to the Respondent's Counsel, Anne I. Seidel, at anne@anneseidel.com, on the 24th day of April, 2025.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. S.', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Clerk to the Disciplinary Board