



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Telephone # (508) 650-4500
Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lieutenant Governor

Mary Elizabeth Heffernan
Secretary

Josh Wall
Chairman

RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

CLARENCE CARTER

W43586

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2011

DATE OF DECISION: April 3, 2012

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied with a review in five years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Clarence Carter retaliated against a former girlfriend by breaking into her house in the middle of the night and lighting the house on fire. Carter knew that adults and children were asleep in the single-family house. Five people, including two toddlers, died in the fire that Carter set intentionally. He was convicted of second-degree murder for each death, and is serving five concurrent life sentences. He seeks parole from the five life sentences. Carter committed the murders at approximately 2:00 a.m. on December 2, 1985. He was upset with a former girlfriend, Renee McCoy; on the night of the murders he had seen Ms. McCoy getting into a car driven by a male. Carter, age 17, decided to retaliate by setting a fire in the McCoy home at 139 Bowles Street in Springfield.

Carter entered the home through a basement window; he carried a can of gasoline. He poured gasoline throughout the first floor, and lit the fire with a match. He knew that the McCoy family members were asleep on both the first and second floors of the single-family home. Carter ran from the house as the fire spread. The five victims were Renee McCoy (age 16) and her daughter Cassandra McCoy (age 22 months), Joseph Blanks (age 3), Gerald McCoy

(age 19), and Barbara McCoy (age 39). All five victims received burns over nearly the entire body. Springfield Police arrested Carter on December 5, 1985; he pleaded guilty on May 4, 1987; he has served 26 years for the five murders. He has completed concurrent sentences for arson and burglary connected to the fire. He has no other criminal convictions.

Carter has received 49 disciplinary reports during his incarceration. Most seriously, he struck a corrections officer, possessed a shank, and fought another inmate three times. His disciplinary record has improved in recent years. His program participation has increased in recent years.

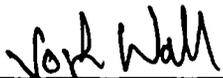
II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 14, 2011

At the hearing Clarence Carter described that he was upset with Renee McCoy because she had broken up with him and he had seen her earlier in the night get into a car driven by a man. He admitted that he entered the house through a basement window, doused the first floor in gasoline, and used a match to light the fire. He said he knew who lived in the house and knew that adults and children were asleep in the house. He said that he smoked marijuana on the night of the murders. He provided the curious explanation that he "wanted to burn Renee's things" in order to "get her back." He denied other acts of violence against Renee McCoy, despite some evidence of a prior incident. Referring to the possibility of a prior incident, the inmate said, "To my recollection, I never broke in, covered her mouth, or gave her a black eye."

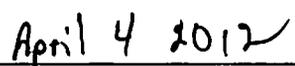
III. DECISION

The Parole Board concluded that the four goals of sentencing have not been met. The current length of incarceration is insufficient for punishment, deterrence, incapacitation, or rehabilitation. Clarence Carter broke into a house and poured gasoline through much of the first floor. He has not yet come to terms with the reality of his intent: he did not intend to "burn Renee's clothes," he intended a house fire that would almost certainly kill every occupant. With five innocent people dead, parole at this point would undermine the goals of punishment and deterrence. With 49 disciplinary reports and a continued minimization of his intent, the inmate does not show sufficient rehabilitation. Carter's release is not compatible with the welfare of society, and his parole, therefore, is denied.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date