The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

LARON "RONNIE" ELLIOTT

W62780

TYPE OF HEARING: **Initial Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **October 11, 2012**

DATE OF DECISION: **January 29, 2012**

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

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, institutional record, the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by a unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is denied with a review in two years.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On May 30, 1997, a Suffolk County jury convicted Laron Elliot of second degree murder by joint venture. Michael McAfee, the codefendant, was convicted of first degree murder. Mr. Elliot was sentenced to life imprisonment. He also received concurrent sentences of 9-10 years for assault with intent to kill and 4-5 years for possession of a firearm. The murder victim was Cassius Love, age 16.

On July 10, 1995, Michael McAfee, Mr. Elliot and three other individuals were involved in a fight at a McDonald's restaurant in the Roxbury section of Boston. One of the individuals they were fighting with was a young man named Steve Clinton. Mr. Clinton was punched and kicked several times before running to a nearby restaurant. Another individual named Alvaro Sanders intervened and suggested matters be resolved by Mr. McAfee and Mr. Clinton fighting each other one on one. Mr. McAfee responded to Mr. Sander's proposal in a threatening manner, which fueled an argument that would later serve as a precipitating factor to the lethal offense.

Later in the day, Mr. Sanders and the victim, Mr. Love, located the codefendants on Walnut Avenue in Roxbury. After a brief chase, they stopped in front of Mr. Elliott's house. Mr. Elliott ran inside his house and emerged with a rifle. Mr. Elliott raised the rifle and pointed it at Mr. Sanders and Mr. Love, while Mr. McAfee reportedly yelled "lace them." When Mr. Elliott did not fire, Mr. McAfee grabbed the rifle and shot Mr. Love six times. He fired once at Mr. Sanders as he ran from the scene. Mr. Love collapsed at the scene and was pronounced dead a short time later at Boston City Hospital.

Mr. Elliott and Mr. McAfee fled the scene. After being identified by Mr. Sanders, Mr. McAfee was arrested two days later. Mr. Elliot had fled the area and stayed in various places evading police. He was arrested two months after the offense.

II. INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

Mr. Elliott has served 17 years. His institutional adjustment has been inconsistent primarily due to sporadic periods of disciplinary issues. Mr. Elliot has engaged in several physical altercations, and his most serious disciplinary infraction occurred in 2007 when he participated in a scheme to bring drugs into the institution. He has not incurred a disciplinary report since that time.

Since entering the institution, Mr. Elliot has consistently increased his participation in rehabilitation, including occupational skill building, education and treatment for factors related to his criminal history. He has completed a significant number of programs that address a myriad of areas that enhance reintegration into the community. Mr. Elliott has maintained consistent employment when in the general population and he has gained his barber's license as well as participation in college level courses.

III. DECISION

Mr. Elliott provided a detailed and comprehensive version of the offenses for which he has been convicted that is consistent with all known facts. Mr. Elliott agrees that if he had not supplied the gun that killed Mr. Love, Mr. Love would very likely still be alive. Mr. Elliott also presented his understanding of why he could not shoot Mr. Love. He insisted that even though he was entrenched in a lifestyle of drug dealing and crime, he was not a person who was capable of physical harm to that degree. Mr. Elliott made a decision to use the gun to threaten people, but he also made the decision to not pull the trigger, despite significant and immediate pressure to do so. Mr. Elliott describes himself as incapable of firing the gun, which is consistent with the depiction of his character, despite his criminal behavior, as described by those in his family and community both at the time of the offense and now.

Mr. Elliott admittedly was engaged in a lifestyle of selling drugs at a very young age. His family dynamics supported and encouraged his drug dealing as those around him benefitted and depended on him to feed their own addiction and financial gains. He was put in the position of being a "mule" to transport drugs around the age of 8. As he progressed in his drug dealing, he sporadically attended school, and by all accounts, spent much of his time and money trying to care for his younger siblings.

Mr. Elliott made no excuse for his criminal record, or for his part in the murder of Mr. Love. He has however, appeared to gain necessary insight into his history of poor decisions, the pain he has caused others, including his community at large, and his need to develop positive skills while in prison. Mr. Elliott has essentially grown up in prison, and his testimony,

as well as the testimony of other's support a positive progression in his rehabilitation. Mr. Elliot described the programs offered as being "the bits and you're the tool. You have to put them together and make them work." Mr. Elliott is currently working, engaged in programming, and pursuing his Bachelor's Degree. His goal is to major in business management.

In terms of his disciplinary issues, Mr. Elliott admits that he has had to grow up in prison and developing positive coping skills in a difficult environment has been challenging. Mr. Elliott also denies his involvement in conspiring to bring drugs into the institution. He admits that he was willing to try and bring walk-man devices into the institution, and made phone calls to do so, but denies any knowledge of drugs being part of that arrangement. Mr. Elliot insisted that walk-mans are a valuable commodity within the institution, but stated he would not have engaged in a drug conspiracy ring had he known. Essentially Mr. Elliott describes his role as being unknowingly set up by others due to his willingness to try and have walk-man devices delivered. His willingness to violate institutional rules is a source of concern to the Board.

Mr. Elliott had numerous members of his family and community in attendance who spoke in support of his parole. They presented as productive members of society who are invested in his positive re-entry into the community. In conjunction with Mr. Elliott's efforts to fully rehabilitate, his supporters appear to share the responsibility for his successful re-entry as a productive member of society. That said, the Parole Board has considered all factors relevant to parole, including, the opinions of those who oppose his release, his criminal history, and his institutional record. It is the opinion of the Parole Board that Mr. Elliott is making significant and positive progress to prepare himself for reintegration into the community. He has, however, made some concerning decisions within the institution that demonstrate he has more work to do to warrant a release into the community. Mr. Elliott is encouraged by the Parole Board to invest in all areas of his rehabilitation, continue his positive growth, maintain his positive relationships both within the institution and in the community, and obey all the rules of the facility. It is the unanimous decision of the Parole Board to deny Mr. Elliott's parole with a review in two years. At this time, his release is not compatible with the welfare of society.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.

Caitlin C Casey
Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff

1/29/13
Date