



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

AJAMU ADISA

(formerly known as Anthony Owens)

W50618

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: July 15, 2014

DATE OF DECISION: September 30, 2014

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Ina Howard-Hogan, Tina Hurley, 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 inmate's testimony at the hearing, 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 three years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On March 9, 1992, in Suffolk Superior Court, Ajamu Adisa (formerly known as Anthony Owens) pleaded guilty to second degree murder, three counts of armed robbery, assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon, receiving a stolen motor vehicle, and unlawful possession of a firearm. Adisa, while on probation for a 1990 conviction for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, murdered 29-year-old Roberto Cruz during an armed robbery. Approximately three weeks later, Adisa and several associates assaulted Sang Min Wang during another armed robbery.

On January 20, 1991, Adisa, then age 23, and four other associates, two of whom were juveniles, armed themselves and set out to steal an automobile in Brighton. Armed with a nine-millimeter handgun, Adisa and his associates surrounded the murder victim, Roberto Cruz, who was making a pizza delivery to an apartment building on Brainerd Road in Brighton. Adisa, while armed and supported by his associates, demanded the keys to Cruz's vehicle. Cruz, refusing to give up the keys, ran to the apartment foyer, and began pressing the apartment buzzers, asking for help. Adisa followed Cruz into the foyer, told Cruz to stop ringing the buzzers, and shot Cruz at close range into the back of his head. Adisa took the keys to Cruz's vehicle, took his car, and drove off. While being interviewed by police, one of the associates reported that a few days after murdering Cruz, Adisa destroyed the vehicle by burning it with gasoline.

On February 9, 1991, Adisa and four associates went to Commonwealth Avenue in Allston. Sang Min Wang was helping a friend move from an apartment. While Mr. Wang was moving items into a car, Adisa and his four of associates surrounded him. Adisa brandished a gun and demanded Wang's car keys. When Wang refused, Adisa hit him in the face, knocked him to the ground, and took his wallet and keys. Adisa and his associates stole the vehicle and drove off.

Adisa committed these crimes while on probation from a 1990 conviction in Suffolk Superior Court for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. On November 20, 1989, Adisa and several other associates severely beat David Sanchez while he was traveling on a bus to Upham Square in Dorchester. Adisa, who was then 22, joined a group of at least four other people in rushing, kicking, and stabbing the victim. While he survived the attack, Mr. Sanchez's injuries were so severe that he lost approximately three quarts of blood and was hospitalized for eight days. Adisa received a three to five year suspended sentence for this conviction.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON JULY 15, 2014

This was Ajamu Adisa's second appearance before the Parole Board. His first hearing was on July 9, 2009, and he received a five year denial based on his poor institutional behavior which included numerous disciplinary reports, many of which were violent in nature. The 2009 Parole Board was concerned that despite programming, Adisa appeared to lack any meaningful rehabilitation.

During the instant hearing, the Parole Board focused on Adisa's progress in rehabilitation. Adisa spent part of the hearing providing a history of his dysfunctional upbringing, including being introduced to criminal behavior by his caretakers. He stated he has addressed these issues in programs. Adisa also detailed the stressors he was facing around the time he committed the offenses. Adisa stated having a son of his own provided him with the unconditional love that he had needed all his life. Unfortunately, despite his best intentions, Adisa was unable to provide for his son's many needs and made mistakes as a parent. Adisa continues to have strong feelings associated with his son who is now 22, and still considers his role as a father to be very important. Adisa stated he does not have any additional family support, but that his Muslim faith has been a source of support and he believes he can find the help he will need within his chosen place of worship.

Adisa transitioned to Bridgewater State Hospital in August 2009 where he is a worker. Adisa stated most of his work has entailed assisting two inmates who were severely mentally ill with various daily needs. Adisa said that it taught him compassion and understanding. Adisa reported that he has come to learn that he was "hard headed and was not able to see others' point of view," but working at Bridgewater State Hospital has helped him work on that issue. He also stated engaging in Art Therapy has helped him feel valued, as he is able to make things for other people.

Adisa has completed numerous programs since his last hearing. Adisa reported that he is very good at carpentry and has taken other occupational programs to assist him with future job placement. Adisa stated that his ultimate goal is to provide for his son's continued emotional and medical needs by finding a job and an apartment. Adisa stated he will also seek the support of SPAN Inc. to assist him with his own needs.

The Parole Board addressed specific concerns with Adisa's criminal history, lack of supports, institutional issues and his ability to successfully transition back to the community. Adisa outlined a history of significant neglect, abuse, and a lack of supports to assist him in leading a productive life. Adisa stated that he was essentially alone in the community and had problems with authority that continued throughout most of his incarceration. Adisa did not have anyone speak in support of his release at his hearing. Adisa stated that his Muslim faith is very meaningful to him, but admitted that he lacks any significant relationships within his faith-based community at this time as well.

The Suffolk District Attorney's office provided a letter opposing Adisa's parole, citing the history of his criminal offenses, his poor institutional adjustment and concern that he has not been rehabilitated. In addition, the Boston Police Commissioner William Evans wrote a letter of opposition citing the nature of the offenses and concern for public safety.

III. DECISION

Ajamu Adisa was convicted of several crimes arising from three separate incidents. Adisa's crimes include several violent armed robberies including severely beating and stabbing one victim, and shooting a pizza delivery man in the back of the head for refusing to give him his keys. His conduct in the community was violent and unconscionable. During the earlier stages of Adisa's incarceration he continued a pattern of violence and disregard for others. In total he has incurred 33 disciplinary reports, two since his 2009 hearing. That said, Adisa has engaged in more positive conduct, and appears to have started to benefit from the programming and work in which he has engaged. Adisa has shown significant improvement since transitioning to Bridgewater State Hospital to work and he appears to have gained some sense of empathy for others through his experience as a companion worker for two severely mentally ill inmates. While Adisa has shown such progress, his positive conduct and recent shared insight is too limited when considering a release at this time. In addition, Adisa presented with little supports and a re-entry plan that does not appear to meet his needs.

The standard for parole is set out in 120 C.M.R. 300.04, which provides that "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such an offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of

society." Applying that appropriately high standard, it is the unanimous decision of the Parole Board that Adisa is not suitable for parole because he is not rehabilitated. He will be eligible for a review hearing in three years from the date of his hearing. The Parole Board encourages Adisa to continue his positive investment in rehabilitation. He is also encouraged to try and build his supports, whether it be through his religious community or more formal therapeutic options to assist him should he be granted a parole to the community in the future.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.


Janis DiLoreto Smith, General Counsel

9/30/14
Date