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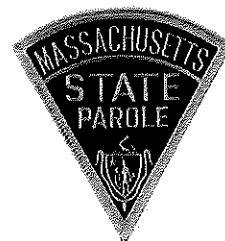
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety

PAROLE BOARD

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Gloriann Moroney
Chair

Kevin Keefe
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ABDUL JALEEL MAHDI

W31736

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: March 19, 2019

DATE OF DECISION: February 18, 2020

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Gloriann Moroney, Colette Santa, Paul Treseler¹

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in writing, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in three² years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On May 28, 1968, Abdul J. Mahdi, was found guilty by a jury in Hampden Superior Court of murder in the first degree, assault with intent to murder by means of a dangerous weapon, and two counts of armed robbery. These convictions were related to the murder of Ernest Ladner, Jr. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on the first degree murder conviction, rendering him ineligible for parole. In addition, Mr. Mahdi was sentenced to 18 to 20 years on the assault conviction and 18 to 20 years on the armed robbery conviction, to run concurrently with one another, but from and after the sentence on the murder conviction. Mr. Mahdi's convictions were later overturned,³ resulting in his tender of guilty pleas to murder in the second degree, armed

¹ Board Member Treseler was no longer a Board Member at the time of vote.

² One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in one year.

³ *Commonwealth v. Mahdi*, 388 Mass. 679 (1983).

assault with intent to murder, and two counts of armed robbery. Mr. Mahdi received a sentence of life with the possibility of parole for murder in the second degree, as well as two concurrent sentences of 18 to 20 years on the remaining charges. Consequently, Mr. Mahdi became parole eligible.

On January 1, 1968, Mr. Mahdi picked up his co-defendants, Odris Hastings and Arthur Hurston, for a drive to Albany, New York. Mr. Mahdi claimed that he needed to buy a few grocery items for his family. On the way, Mr. Mahdi drove to the Knox Street Market in Springfield, Massachusetts, operated by Ernest Ladner, Sr. (age 58) and his son Ernest Ladner, Jr. (age 33), because he knew it would be open. Mr. Ladner, Sr. knew him well, as Mr. Mahdi was a former neighborhood resident and regular customer and, in addition, had once painted the store. Inside the store, the co-defendants bought fruit from Mr. Ladner, Sr. at the front counter, while Mr. Mahdi went to the rear. Mr. Mahdi then returned to the front of the store with Mr. Ladner, Jr., holding a gun and demanding money. After taking approximately \$180 from Mr. Ladner, Sr., Mr. Mahdi directed both men into the store refrigerator. About ten minutes later, Mr. Mahdi returned, telling the men that he would have to kill them. Then, Mr. Mahdi shot both men; Mr. Ladner, Jr. was immediately killed by a single gunshot and Mr. Ladner, Sr. survived three gunshot wounds. Mr. Mahdi was arrested on January 2, 1968, after being identified by Mr. Ladner, Sr.

In addition, on January 25, 1971, Mr. Mahdi pleaded guilty in Hampden Superior Court to armed robbery, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, and assault with intent to murder for his role in the robbery and shooting of a hotel clerk. For these convictions, Mr. Mahdi received one sentence of 40 to 50 years and two sentences of 5 to 10 years, to run concurrently with one another. During the course of the trial for the crimes against the hotel clerk, Mr. Mahdi testified that, on December 19, 1967, he shot and killed Paul Beaupre, an off-duty police officer for the Town of Bloomfield, Connecticut. The State of Connecticut did not prosecute Mr. Mahdi for this murder, as he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Massachusetts.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MARCH 19, 2019

Abdul Jaleel Mahdi, now 89-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on March 19, 2019. He was represented by Attorney Lisa Newman-Polk. Mr. Mahdi was denied parole after his initial hearing in 1996, and after his review hearings in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Mahdi stated that it was a "shock" when he "found [himself] participat[ing] in criminal conduct" and apologized to the families of the victims for his crimes. Board Members noted that Mr. Mahdi had no criminal history until 1967, when, at age 37, he shot four people in three weeks. When asked if he had any insight into what prompted his drastic change in behavior, Mr. Mahdi responded that he "didn't plan" to commit the crimes; rather, it "just happened."

When Board Members asked Mr. Mahdi to explain what prompted him to rob and shoot the Ladner men (as different motives for the crime have been provided in the past), Mr. Mahdi could not "recall" a clear motive for his actions. When Board Members asked Mr. Mahdi why he shot the hotel clerk on December 16, 1967, he responded that "the gun went off," and that he had been "set up" by another person to commit the crime. When questioned by the Board as to why he killed Mr. Beaupre on December 19, 1967, Mr. Mahdi clarified that he had not known him to be a police officer. When the Board pushed Mr. Mahdi to explain why he had shot a man,

regardless of his occupation, Mr. Mahdi stated that he, and others, were in Connecticut looking for a white man that had been raping black women. Mr. Mahdi felt that Mr. Beaupre's attitude was "recalcitrant," leading him to believe that Mr. Beaupre was the perpetrator of the rapes. He then told the Board, "One thing led to another and I shot him."

When the Board raised concern that he has not participated in any treatment or programming since 1985, Mr. Mahdi responded that, instead of treatment or programming, he helps others as his way of apologizing for what he has done. He said that he spends his days attending religious services and teaching various subjects to other inmates. When Board Members questioned Mr. Mahdi as to why he believed that he meets the standards for parole, Mr. Mahdi said that he has seen many people paroled over the decades and believes that he qualifies. He further supported his request for parole by stating that he is not well and does "not want to die in prison." Mr. Mahdi described a parole plan to include living with his daughter and spending time with his family.

Mr. Mahdi's daughter testified in support of parole. Mr. Mahdi's attorney submitted a Neuropsychological Report, authored by Dr. Robert Mendoza, in support of parole. A representative from the Victim Services Unit read a statement on behalf of Mr. Ladner Jr.'s family in opposition to parole. Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Howard Safford testified and submitted a letter in opposition to parole. The Board considered other letters of opposition and support.

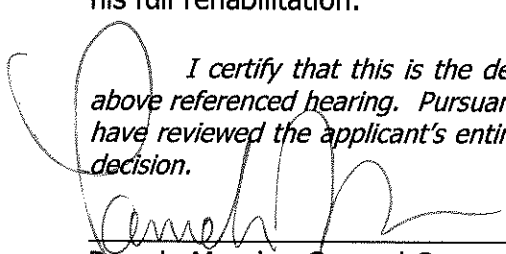
III. DECISION

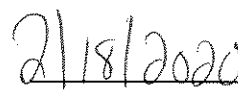
Mr. Mahdi committed numerous murders in two states. He has yet to demonstrate a level of rehabilitative progress that would be compatible with the welfare of society.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such 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." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Mahdi's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Mahdi's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Mahdi's case, the Board is of the opinion that Abdul Jaleel Mahdi is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Mahdi's next appearance before the Board will take place in three years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Mahdi to continue working towards his full rehabilitation.

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.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel


Date