



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



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 11, 2017
DATE OF DECISION: September 20, 2018

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of 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 written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in two 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 in the death of Roberto Cruz and was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Also on that date, Mr. Adisa pleaded guilty to additional charges that included a sentence of 30 to 40 years for armed robbery. Mr. Adisa's convictions from a second incident included two additional counts of armed robbery, for which he received a sentence of 10 to 15 years each, and possession of a firearm, for which he received a 3 to 5 year sentence. All sentences were ordered to be served concurrently. Mr. Adisa committed these crimes while on probation from a 1990 conviction, in Suffolk Superior Court, for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

On January 20, 1991, Anthony Owens (Ajamu Adisa), along with four other individuals, two of whom were juveniles, went to Brighton with the intent to secure an automobile. They armed themselves with firearms to do so, with Mr. Anthony Owens carrying a nine millimeter handgun. They saw a pizza delivery man, Roberto Cruz, making a delivery on Brainerd Road. His vehicle was on the street in front of the building with his flashers activated. The five individuals surrounded Mr. Cruz, demanding his key to the motor vehicle. He refused to give up the keys and ran back into the foyer, stating that he was going to call the police. At that time, certain members of the group ran into the foyer. The rest of the group remained outside to act as lookouts. As subsequent demands were made for the keys, Mr. Cruz began pressing the buzzers to each of the apartments. At that time, Mr. Anthony Owens withdrew the gun and fired one shot at close range, directly into the back of Mr. Cruz's head. The keys were taken, and the individuals drove away in Mr. Cruz's vehicle. Mr. Cruz died the following day, leaving behind his wife and nine-month-old son.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON JULY 11, 2017

Mr. Adisa, now 49-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on July 11, 2017. Mr. Adisa was denied parole after both his initial hearing in 2009 and his review hearing in 2014. He was not represented by counsel. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Adisa expressed his remorse and apologized to the family of his victims. Mr. Adisa described himself, at the time of the murder, as self-centered and selfish and often making excuses for his behavior.

The Board questioned Mr. Adisa at length about his criminal history, as well as the causative factors that led him to prison. Mr. Adisa stated that he did not have a conscience, as he was filled with anger and resentment at the time of the governing offense. Some of the anger was due to his son's medical condition. As he sought financial means to support himself and his family, he resorted to the only way he knew how: "selling drugs and robbing." He acknowledged that the level of violence escalated when the victim refused to give him what he wanted. As to why he shot Mr. Cruz, he informed the Board that he fired the weapon into the foyer for the sole purpose of obtaining the car and to leave the area. He stated that it was never his intention to kill Mr. Cruz; he only wanted to steal his car.

Since his last hearing, Mr. Adisa has participated in numerous programs, including the Countdown to Freedom and Assertive Communication. Additionally, he has earned his Serv Safe and OSHA certificates. He recently transferred to Old Colony Correctional Center (OCCC), where he is employed as a companion. The Companion Program has been instrumental part of his rehabilitation, as he has learned both empathy and compassion.

Mr. Adisa had many supporters at his hearing, and multiple letters of support were submitted on his behalf. The Board considered oral testimony from his fiancé, his step-father, and three friends, all of whom expressed strong support for parole. The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office and the Office of the Boston Police Commissioner submitted letters in opposition to parole.


III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Ajamu Adisa has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Adisa would benefit from a longer period of positive adjustment. His presentment was devoid of rehabilitation and readiness. Mr. Adisa should engage in recommended programming at the OCCC, as he transferred there in March of 2017.

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. Adisa'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. Adisa's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Adisa's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Ajamu Adisa is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Adisa's next appearance before the Board will take place in two years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Adisa 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.


Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

9/20/18
Date