



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

CHITEARA THOMAS
F80953

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **July 11, 2023**

DATE OF DECISION: **November 6, 2023**

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Tina Hurley, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, James Kelcourse

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On March 1, 2010, after a jury trial in Plymouth Superior Court, Chiteara Thomas was convicted of murder in the first degree, arson of a dwelling house, and 13 counts of attempted murder. On March 10, 2010, Ms. Thomas was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the murder conviction and concurrent sentences of 10-15 years on the remaining convictions. Ms. Thomas' convictions on all charges, except arson of a dwelling house, were vacated by order of the Supreme Judicial Court in 2015. On May 13, 2016, after a second jury trial, Ms. Thomas was convicted of murder in the second degree and acquitted on each of the attempted murder charges. The arson of a dwelling house conviction was judicially vacated as duplicative. Ms. Thomas was subsequently sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

In the early morning hours of July 6, 2006, Chiteara Thomas used a cigarette lighter to set fire to a curtain in the first-floor apartment of a three-story multi-family home on Montello Street in Brockton. The fire spread quickly throughout the home, soon reaching the second and third floors. Numerous residents were home at the time. The residents of the first and second floors were able to escape from the blaze. The second-floor residents threw their children out the window into the arms of good Samaritans waiting below and then jumped themselves, sustaining injuries. Firefighters conducted a rescue of the third-floor occupants. One of the third-floor residents, Olinda Calderon, died from injuries sustained in the fire, shortly after removal from the building. Ms. Calderon's one-month-old baby and two other third-floor residents survived.

PAROLE HEARING: Chiteara Thomas appeared before the Board on July 11, 2023, for a review hearing. She was represented by a student attorney from the Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project under the supervision of Attorney Joel Thompson. Ms. Thomas was denied parole after her initial hearing in 2021. The entire video recording of Ms. Thomas' July 11, 2023 hearing is fully incorporated by reference to the Board's Decision.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: 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.

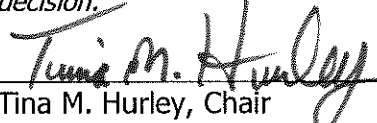
After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole. Parole reserve to New Beginnings program.

In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Ms. Thomas' institutional behavior, as well as her participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of her incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Ms. Thomas' risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Ms. Thomas' case, the Board is of the opinion that Ms. Thomas is rehabilitated and, therefore, merits parole at this time, subject to special conditions.

Ms. Thomas has completed over 30 programs, including a victim impact program. She earned her bachelor's degree, has low LS/CMI score, and has strong family and community support. She has maintained her sobriety for 17 years. The candidate presented with remorse and empathy. The Board considered testimony of parents and two state representatives. The Board also considered testimony of the victim's niece and an Assistant District Attorney, who spoke in opposition. The Board considered a step down, but due to strong community supports, the candidate will have re-entry supports.

Special Conditions: Parole reserve to New Beginnings program; Waive work for 2 weeks; Curfew: must be at home between 10PM & 6AM or at Parole Officer's discretion; Electronic monitoring at Parole Officer's discretion; Must take prescribed medication; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim's family; Must have substance abuse evaluation and must comply with recommended treatment plan; Counseling for transitional purposes; Residential program: Sober House.

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.


Tina M. Hurley, Chair

11/06/2023

Date