



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON

W87778

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: December 17, 2019

DATE OF DECISION: June 15, 2020

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

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 that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole.¹ Parole is granted to the Interstate Compact, after 18 months in lower security and subject to special conditions.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On June 7, 2006, in Berkshire Superior Court, Christopher Robinson pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Neil Olsen. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On January 9, 2005, Christopher Robinson, 20-years-old, shot his 48-year-old stepfather, Neil Olsen, in the head with a rifle. He then struck him repeatedly with a metal pipe, killing him. Mr. Robinson eventually confessed to the murder, claiming that his mother had asked him to kill her husband. Several witnesses told police that Mr. Robinson's mother had asked Mr. Robinson to kill her husband on several occasions. It was also revealed, through other witness

¹ One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in three years.

statements, that Mr. Robinson's mother had asked for help in finding someone else to kill her husband, including her daughter's boyfriend.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON DECEMBER 17, 2019

On December 17, 2019, Christopher Robinson, 35-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for his initial hearing. He was not represented by counsel. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Robinson apologized to Mr. Olsen's family and friends for murdering him. Board Members noted that the governing offense was Mr. Robinson's only criminal conviction. When questioned about his childhood, Mr. Robinson said that he grew up in Vermont and moved to Massachusetts at age 12, after his parents divorced. He was abused as a child by both his father and his stepfather, but stated that his mother was "my world," and that he would have done anything for her. At the suggestion of his stepfather, he left school in 10th grade after receiving poor grades. He drank alcohol once and smoked marijuana twice. He did not like the effects and never used either after that. Soon after he left school, he became a father and moved in with the mother of his daughter. She asked him to leave, however, after he cheated on her and informed her of his thoughts of helping his mother kill his stepfather. At the time of the murder, Mr. Robinson was homeless.

When Board Members questioned him about the governing offense, Mr. Robinson explained that his mother had accused Mr. Olsen of abusing her and was persistent in asking him to kill her husband. Further, she had taken him to buy a machete to use in the murder and then suggested ways to make it look like an accident. Mr. Robinson stated that, on the night of the murder, his mother told him that Mr. Olsen had physically abused her and struck his (Mr. Robinson's) 8-month-old daughter in the face. Mr. Robinson waited in Mr. Olsen's barn with a rifle for about 15 minutes. When Mr. Olsen entered the barn, he shot him in the face. Mr. Robinson described how he stood over Mr. Olsen and continued to shoot him until he ran out of bullets. He then beat Mr. Olsen with a metal pipe until he was sure he was dead. After the murder, Mr. Robinson told his mother that he had killed her husband. She helped him hide the rifle.

Board Members noted that Mr. Robinson has not been found guilty of any disciplinary reports. He works steadily in the metal shop and has completed extensive programming. Mr. Robinson explained that Restorative Justice and Emotional Awareness were particularly helpful in addressing the childhood trauma that contributed to the murder of his stepfather. He also credited his participation in the Buddhist faith in helping him address his causative factors. Mr. Robinson is asking for a step down to lower security before being released to live with his wife in their home in Minneapolis. He has strong family and community support and plans to work in construction. Mr. Robinson would also rely on re-entry programs in the Minneapolis area, along with the support of the Buddhist spiritual community and his parole officer, to ensure a successful re-entry.

Mr. Robinson's father and his wife testified in support of parole. One of the victim's brothers testified in opposition to parole. A Victim Services Advocate read a letter from one of the victim's other brothers in opposition to parole. Several members of Mr. Olsen's extended family sent letters in opposition to parole. The Berkshire District Attorney's Office sent a letter in support of parole.

III. DECISION

It is the opinion of the Board that Christopher Robinson has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society after completion of 18 months in lower security. Mr. Robinson murdered his stepfather in 2005. Mr. Robinson's mother is his co-defendant and is serving a first-degree life sentence at MCI-Framingham. Mr. Robinson has completed a number of programs to address his causative factors since his commitment. His adjustment has been exemplary. Release after a gradual transition meets the legal standard.

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 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. Robinson'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. Robinson's risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Robinson's case, the Board is of the opinion that Christopher Robinson is rehabilitated and, therefore, merits parole at this time. Parole is granted to the Interstate Compact, after 18 months in lower security and subject to special conditions.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Release to Interstate Compact Minnesota, but not before 18 months in lower security; Must be home between 10PM and 6AM; Electronic monitoring; Must take prescribed medication; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for alcohol abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact or association with mother; No contact with victim's family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment/ transition, bipolar/anxiety; Must have substance abuse evaluation and adhere to plan.

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

6/15/2020
Date