

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*

**PAROLE BOARD**

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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**EMMANUEL OKORO**  
**W97755**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** April 16, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** September 16, 2025

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz<sup>1</sup>

**VOTE:** Parole is granted to CRJ after 6 months in lower security from date of Decision.<sup>2</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On December 28, 2010, following a jury trial in Plymouth County Superior Court, Emmanuel Okoro was convicted of murder in the second-degree for the death of Markeen Starks. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Parole was denied following an initial hearing in 2023. On April 16, 2025, Mr. Okoro appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was represented by Attorney Ryan Schiff. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Okoro's April 16, 2025, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On December 31, 2007, 15-year-old Emmanuel Okoro had been drinking and smoking marijuana with friends and family. Eventually, Mr. Okoro and his companions attempted to go to a nearby New Year's Eve party, but they were turned away at the door by 19-year-old Markeen Starks and another young man. Mr. Starks was known to Mr. Okoro and had been involved in a series of violent incidents that appeared to constitute retaliation against Mr. Stark's sister after she had spoken to police about an earlier killing.

At some point before midnight, Mr. Okoro and his companions left the site of the New Year's Eve party and went home. After the party ended, a crowd gathered outside the party and a fight

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Bonner and Board Member Ortiz were not present for the hearing, but they reviewed the video recording and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

<sup>2</sup> Former Chair Hurley participated in the hearing; however, she departed the Board prior to the decision.

broke out. Mr. Okoro and his companions saw the crowd and went toward it. Mr. Okoro was carrying a knife. Mr. Okoro and Mr. Starks confronted one another. Although it is unclear who started the physical fight between them, Mr. Okoro stabbed Mr. Starks multiple times, killing him.

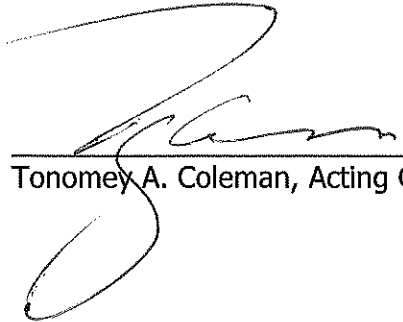
**APPLICABLE STANDARD:** Parole “[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society.” M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. In making this determination, the Board takes into consideration an incarcerated individual’s institutional behavior, their participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of incarceration, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize the incarcerated individual’s risk of recidivism. M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. The Board also considers all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the incarcerated individual at the time of the offense, the criminal record, the institutional record, the incarcerated individual’s testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing and/or in written submissions to the Board.

In the context of an incarcerated individual convicted of first or second-degree murder, who was a juvenile at the time the offense was committed, the Board takes into consideration the attributes of youth that distinguish juvenile homicide offenders from similarly situated adult offenders. Consideration of these factors ensures that the parole candidate, who was a juvenile at the time they committed murder, has a meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation. *Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk District*, 466 Mass. 655, 674 (2013). See also *Commonwealth v. Okoro*, 471 Mass. 51 (2015). The factors considered by the Board include a juvenile’s “lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility, leading to recklessness, impulsivity, and heedless risk-taking; vulnerability to negative influences and outside pressures, including from their family and peers; limited control over their own environment; lack of the ability to extricate themselves from horrific, crime-producing settings; and unique capacity to change as they grow older.” *Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk District*, 471 Mass. 12, 30 (2015). The Board also recognizes the incarcerated individual’s right to be represented by counsel during their appearance before the Board. *Id.* at 20-24.

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** Mr. Okoro was 15-years-old at the time of offense, and he appeared before the Board most recently after 17 years incarcerated. He is now 33-years-old. He was last before the Board in 2023, and the Board allowed a reconsideration to review Mr. Okoro’s parole decision due to his substantial efforts since the last hearing. Mr. Okoro has earned his Hi-Set, remained d-report free, and continued to participate in rehabilitative programming. The Board considered the evaluation of Dr. Kinscherff. The Board also considered the application of the Miller/Diatchenko factors. The Board considered public testimony from Mr. Burgo’s family members in support of parole. The Board also reviewed the opposition testimony from the Plymouth District Attorney’s Office. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Okoro has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for 2 weeks or program; Electronic monitoring for 6 months, then at PO's request for extension; 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 mental health counseling for adjustment; Residential program CRJ.

*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.*

  
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Tonomex A. Coleman, Acting Chair

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Date 9/16/25