



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

RAMADAN SHABAZZ

FKA JAMES HALL

W33556

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: February 7, 2023

DATE OF DECISION: March 2, 2023

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Tina Hurley, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Dr. Maryanne Galvin, James Kelcourse, Colette Santa

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On March 21, 1972, after a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court, Ramadan Shabazz¹ was convicted of first-degree murder in the deaths of Calvin Thorn and Harry T. Jeffreys. He was also convicted of one count of armed robbery. Mr. Shabazz received two death sentences and a consecutive life sentence, respectively. The death sentences were reduced to life in prison without the possibility of parole on February 13, 1976. On November 24, 1999, the armed robbery conviction was vacated by the Superior Court. Mr. Shabazz's life sentences were commuted to life with the possibility of parole on December 15, 2022.

Mr. Shabazz appeared before the Parole Board for an initial hearing on February 7, 2023. He was represented by Attorney Mia Teitelbaum. The entire video recording of Mr. Shabazz's February 7, 2023, hearing is fully incorporated by reference to the Board's decision.

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 a suitable candidate for parole.

¹ Mr. Shabazz was known as James Hall at the time of his conviction.

Reserve to home plan. On August 14, 1971, in Dorchester, MA, 21-year-old Ramadan Shabazz (FKA James Hall) and his co-defendant participated in an armed robbery, during which they shot and killed two security guards, 47-year-old Calvin Thorn and 26-year-old Harry Jeffreys. Mr. Shabazz, now 73 years old, was before the Parole Board on February 7, 2023, after he was commuted by Governor Baker from first degree murder to second degree murder on December 15, 2022, making him immediately eligible for parole. The Board considered the offenses to be directly related to his undiagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (which had yet to be recognized as a mental health disorder), stemming from his service in Vietnam. Mr. Shabazz became addicted to opiates and other substances while serving in Vietnam. Upon his return from such services, he sought help through the VA; however, he did not receive needed treatment for his mental health and substance use disorder. Since advancements in treatment, Mr. Shabazz has invested in and benefitted from such treatment. He has been sober for over 40 years. He remains vigilant to counseling to assist with stability and sobriety. Mr. Shabazz served 51 years and, during such time, he completed 48 furloughs without incident. He achieved his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Boston University. He had a long work history within the prison system. He was in the Cadre Program at Bridgewater State Hospital for many years, where he provided support to mentally ill patients. Additionally, he completed more than 50 programs to include Restorative Justice and veteran's groups. Mr. Shabazz's institutional conduct and commitment to rehabilitation was exceptional. It is noted that, while serving a 1st degree sentence, Mr. Shabazz demonstrated immediate contrition and invested in self development despite serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. The Board notes that this was his first incarceration of any kind and he had no prior criminal history. The Board also considered Mr. Shabazz's current age, as well as his age at the time of the offense and medical issues. Mr. Shabazz has also invested in making reparations for his offenses. He has a significant support system that includes recognized re-entry organizations to assist with needs related to long term incarceration. He has maintained such support throughout his incarceration.

Special Conditions: Approve home plan before release; Waive work for 2 weeks; Must be at home between 10 pm and 6 am; 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 evaluation and must follow recommended treatment plan for transition and long term incarceration; Must have substance abuse evaluation and must follow recommended treatment plan.

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. Shabazz'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. Shabazz's risk of recidivism. Applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Shabazz's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Ramadan Shabazz is rehabilitated and, therefore, merits parole at this time.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

3/2/23
Date