

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**RICKEY ALFORD**

**W59381**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** June 18, 2020

**DATE OF DECISION:** July 19, 2021

**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 not a suitable candidate for parole.<sup>1</sup> Parole is denied with a review scheduled in three years from the date of this hearing.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On October 5, 1995, in Worcester Superior Court, Rickey Alford pleaded guilty to second degree murder in the death of Julio Suarez. Mr. Alford was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. On July 30, 1999, in the Parish of Orleans District Court, in the State of Louisiana, Mr. Alford pleaded guilty to the murder of Lester Hanson. He received a 15 year sentence for manslaughter, which was ordered to run concurrently with his life sentence in Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> The murder in Louisiana occurred six months prior to the murder in Massachusetts.

<sup>1</sup> One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review scheduled in two years from the date of the hearing. Two Board Members voted to parole Mr. Alford to a long-term residential program after a period of lower security, followed by transfer to Interstate Compact Mississippi.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Alford's manslaughter sentence expired in 2015.

On February 16, 1995, the body of Julio Suarez was found in an Andover parking lot by employees of a local company. The autopsy report determined that Mr. Suarez died from multiple blows to the skull by a blunt object. After an investigation, police were led to three individuals: Rickey Alford, Jose Enrique Rivera, and Miguel Rios. One of the co-defendants revealed that Mr. Alford had stated (prior to the murder) that he wanted to kill Mr. Suarez because of a dispute involving theft. Both co-defendants said that Mr. Alford lured Mr. Suarez into his apartment by claiming he had a phone call. Once inside, Mr. Alford severely beat him with a baseball bat. After beating Mr. Suarez to death, Mr. Alford dragged the body to the bathtub and then cleaned the blood from the rug. The next morning, Mr. Rivera helped Mr. Alford wrap the body and move it to a van. They drove to Andover, where they dumped the body in a parking lot. Mr. Alford paid each of his co-defendants \$200 with the money he stole from Mr. Suarez's wallet.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON JUNE 18, 2020**

Rickey Alford, now 56-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on June 18, 2020. Mr. Alford was represented by Boston College Law School student attorneys, Madison McWithey and Meredith McCaffrey. Mr. Alford was denied parole after his initial hearing in 2010, and after his review hearing in 2015. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Alford apologized, taking full responsibility for the murder of Mr. Suarez. Mr. Alford expressed his remorse, recognizing the harm that resulted from his "shameful" actions. Further, he informed the Board that he is no longer capable of committing a violent crime, as he has availed himself of programs that have addressed his causative factors. Mr. Alford acknowledged that violence is his "main issue," but told the Board that he has worked continuously at improving himself, claiming that he now "turns his weaknesses into positives." Student Attorney McCaffrey also provided an opening statement that outlined Mr. Alford's commitment to rehabilitation. She specifically noted his participation in programs, such as Restorative Justice and Violence Reduction, and the completion of his GED. She also noted that Mr. Alford maintained full-time employment throughout his incarceration.

Board Members questioned Mr. Alford as to his role in the governing offense, noting that he has given multiple versions of the crime. Mr. Alford admitted that, in the beginning, he minimized his culpability by lying to police officers and placing the blame on his co-defendants. When Board Members inquired as to the truth, Mr. Alford explained that an altercation ensued after he did not let Mr. Suarez use a nearby telephone to call their boss. Mr. Suarez became angry and swore at him in Spanish. Mr. Alford then picked up a baseball bat and told him to leave the property. When Mr. Suarez refused, Mr. Alford "started swinging." When the Board asked whether money was a factor in his confrontation with Mr. Suarez, Mr. Alford indicated that it was not. Board Members also inquired as to whether Mr. Alford attacked Mr. Suarez out of concern that he would turn him into his boss for stealing. Mr. Alford denied that accusation, despite his initial plea agreement stating that he had falsified receipts, of which Mr. Suarez had knowledge. When confronted by this discrepancy, Mr. Alford did not provide an explanation, but rather, admitted to having an argument earlier that day with Mr. Suarez about an unrelated matter. Upon reflection, Mr. Alford explained to the Board that he is "deeply remorseful" for killing Mr. Suarez, especially since Mr. Suarez "didn't really do anything that bad" to him. Additionally, Mr. Alford stated that, once he accepted the fact that he "killed a man for no reason," he decided to seek help.

When Board Members inquired as to the details surrounding the murder of Mr. Hanson, Mr. Alford stated that he "took complete revenge" on him. At the time, Mr. Alford believed that Mr. Hanson had molested his children. When he confronted Mr. Hanson about the allegations, Mr. Hanson allegedly admitted to the molestation. Mr. Alford then took a knife, slit his throat, and stabbed him "as hard as he could," multiple times. In addition, Mr. Alford disposed of his body by tying him up and submerging him in water. When asked how he felt about his actions, Mr. Alford indicated that he was "appalled" and wished that he had pursued legal recourse, rather than violence. When the Board questioned Mr. Alford about being a suspect (in addition to Mr. Hanson) in the case of his children's abuse, he denied any involvement, despite the on-going investigation at the time. Upon questioning, Mr. Alford cited the trauma he endured as a child, as well as the trauma of having his children taken away from him, as significant factors that led to the murder of Mr. Hanson. He described himself as "distressed" and "messed up" at the time. When the Board asked whether he recognized the parallels between the two murders he committed, Mr. Alford answered in the affirmative. He explained that the loss of his family had a substantial impact on him, and he felt "destroyed."

Board Members also discussed Mr. Alford's rehabilitative programming efforts. Mr. Alford has participated in programs such as Emotional Awareness, Jericho Circle, and Restorative Justice. The Board noted Mr. Alford's positive institutional adjustment, as he has remained disciplinary report-free throughout his incarceration. Additionally, Mr. Alford has maintained consistent employment and currently works for DOC Industries as a skilled stitcher, a position he has held since 2010.

The Board considered testimony in opposition to parole from Mr. Suarez's four children. The Board also considered testimony in opposition to parole from Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King.

### **III. DECISION**

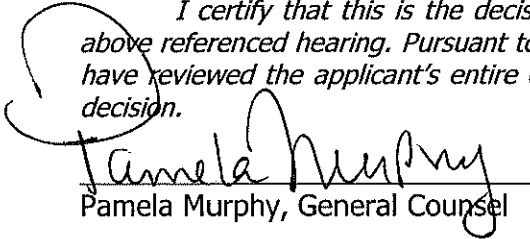
The Board is of the opinion that Rickey Alford has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Alford has served approximately 20 years for the brutal murder of Julio Suarez. Six months prior to the governing offense, Mr. Alford murdered Lester Hanson in Louisiana, for which he received a 15 year sentence, which expired in 2015. Mr. Alford killed Mr. Hanson in cold blood, telling the Board that he stabbed him as hard as he could. It remains the opinion of the Board that he is not being forthright as to the governing offense. During the hearing, he appeared to lack remorse and became angered and irritated at times. Mr. Alford has remained disciplinary report-free throughout his incarceration. He is encouraged to pursue treatment and programming to further address anger management and gain a greater understanding as to his triggers and [to] develop coping skills. The Board did note he has reconnected with his family.

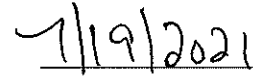
The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the 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. Alford'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.

Alford's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Alford's case, the Board is of the opinion that Rickey Alford does not merit parole at this time.

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

  
Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

  
Date