



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



**PAROLE BOARD**

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**Gloriann Moroney**  
*Executive Director  
General Counsel*

**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**ROBERT LITTLES**

**W51448**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** **Review Hearing**

**DATE OF HEARING:** **May 8, 2018**

**DATE OF DECISION:** **January 17, 2019**

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Colette Santa, Lucy Soto-Abbe

**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.<sup>1</sup> Upon resolution of Mr. Littles' New York warrant, parole is granted to a LTRP (long term residential program) with special conditions, but not before 9 months in lower security.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On November 7, 1991, in Suffolk Superior Court, Robert Littles (né Armand Coleman) pleaded guilty to the second degree murder of Calvin Reese and was sentenced to serve life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On November 20, 1990, Mr. Littles (age 17) and some friends attended a party at a Roxbury night club. Mr. Littles was a member of a security threat group that was active in the Orchard Park housing project in Roxbury. Calvin Reese (age 19) was a member of a rival security threat group. When Mr. Littles and his co-defendant saw Mr. Reese in a night club, they devised a plan to kill him. Mr. Littles' co-defendant started a fight as a distraction. Mr. Littles, armed

<sup>1</sup> Two Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in two years from the date of the hearing.

with a .38 caliber pistol, then approached Mr. Reese from behind and shot him in the back of the head.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 8, 2018**

Robert Littles, now 44-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on May 8, 2018, for a review hearing. He was represented by Attorney Amy Belger. Mr. Littles was denied parole after his initial hearing in 2005. He postponed his next hearing. After his 2017 review hearing, he received a split decision and was put on the next available list (PONAL). In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Littles apologized to the family of Calvin Reese. He expressed his remorse and took responsibility for the murder of Mr. Reese. When the Board questioned Mr. Littles about his warrants in New York, Attorney Belger told the Board that the Queens District Attorney's Office would extradite on Mr. Littles' warrant for an unarmed robbery charge. She asked to leave the record open to verify this information.

Mr. Littles told the Board that since his last hearing, he has completed over 10 programs. He spoke of his involvement in the three week Transformational Prison Project, where inmates and victims' families share their stories, and explained how it was particularly helpful. Mr. Littles also told the Board that he has become a feminist over the past year and put together a program as part of the Correctional Recovery Academy (CRA). Mr. Littles said the program looks at "toxic masculinity and things of that nature." Upon questioning by the Board, Mr. Littles noted that many people who are returned to prison "don't live on the inside the way they need to live on the outside." In addition, he said that inmates do not take rehabilitative programs seriously and try to take short cuts. Mr. Littles recognized that he is fortunate to live in a Therapeutic Community program at MCI-Norfolk that models life outside of prison more closely. Mr. Littles said that his biggest concern about re-entry was building a broad support network and not being ashamed to ask for help when he needs it. Mr. Littles explained that he has been working to broaden his support network over the past year.

Although the Board recognizes that Mr. Littles was a minor when he committed the murder, that he was influenced by his peers, and that he has since matured, they questioned him as to why he killed Calvin Reese. Mr. Littles said that his group had been using a car registered to Mr. Reese's girlfriend. Mr. Littles' group thought that Mr. Reese had "snitched" on the group, by reporting the car as stolen. Mr. Littles also said that when his group tried to intimidate Mr. Reese, Mr. Reese "was courageous" and did not back down, which the group took as a sign of disrespect. Mr. Littles said he reacted to Mr. Reese in an extreme manner that he now recognizes as wrong. The Board noted that while Mr. Littles has not received any recent disciplinary reports, he has accrued a significant number of reports over the course of his incarceration. Mr. Littles said that going to prison at a young age was difficult, and he incurred most of his disciplinary reports in his early years. He told Board Members how, as he matured, he became less self-centered and began to take rehabilitative programs seriously. Through the Correctional Recovery Academy and the Restorative Justice programs, in particular, he has become more community focused, as well as committed to becoming a better person.

Mr. Littles' parole plan requests that he be re-classified to a minimum security facility and then to a pre-release facility, prior to his re-entry into society. Mr. Littles has been offered housing from a sober house in Worcester and has applied to three other residential programs. If released, Mr. Littles would participate in the THRIVE community reintegration program and continue to participate in the Transformational Prison Project. Mr. Littles has been accepted into the

University of Massachusetts Addictions Counselor Education Program, where he hopes to become a licensed alcohol and drug counselor. He also has his welder's license and plans to find work in construction, while he works toward becoming a counselor.

Mr. Littles submitted a psychological evaluation to the Board conducted by Dr. Hillary Ziven, Psy.D. Mr. Littles also submitted a Psychosocial Report prepared by Lisa Gigliotti, Sentencing Advocate/Mitigation Specialist. Mr. Littles' aunt attended in support of parole. Mr. Littles' mentor in the Correctional Recovery Academy and his social worker also attended in support of parole. John Christian, an instructor at the University of Massachusetts Addictions Counselor Education Program (ACEP), attended and wrote a letter of support. Lyn Levy, the former director of Span, Inc., and State Representative Russell Holmes also wrote letters of support. Many friends, family members, and former inmates also wrote letters in support of parole. Calvin Reese's mother, aunt, and brother testified in opposition to parole. Mr. Reese's aunt read a letter of opposition from Mr. Reese's uncle. The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office and Boston Police Commissioner William Evans submitted letters of opposition.

### **III. DECISION**

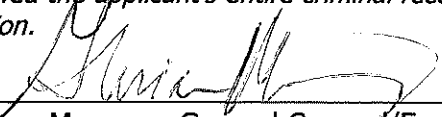
The Board is of the opinion that Robert Littles has demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Littles has availed himself of rehabilitation. Release meets the legal standard.

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 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 the context of an offender 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 the murder, has "a real chance to demonstrate maturity and rehabilitation." *Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk District*, 471 Mass. 12, 30 (2015); *See Also, Commonwealth v. Okoro*, 471 Mas. 51 (2015).

The factors considered by the Parole Board include the offender'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 a unique capacity to change as they grow older." *Id.* The Board also considered Mr. Littles' institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction could effectively minimize Mr. Littles' risk of recidivism. After applying this appropriately high standard to the circumstances of Mr. Littles' case, the Board is of the opinion that Robert Littles merits parole at this time. Upon resolution of Mr. Littles' New York warrant, parole is granted to a LTRP (long term residential program) with special conditions, but not before 9 months in lower security.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for Long Term Residential Program; Must be home between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am; Electronic monitoring – GPS; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence, testing in accordance with agency policy; Report to assigned Massachusetts Parole Office on day of release; Must have one on one mental health counseling for adjustment; Long Term Residential Treatment; Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous at least 3 times/week.

*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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Gloriana Moroney, General Counsel/Executive Director

1/17/19  
Date