



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

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**Charlene Bonner**  
*Chairperson*

**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**SEIGFRIED GOLSTON**  
**W35525**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** January 29, 2015

**DATE OF DECISION:** May 1, 2015

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sheila Dupre, Lee Gartenberg, Ina Howard-Hogan, Tina Hurley, 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 by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review in two years from the date of the hearing.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On May 20, 1976, Seigfried Golston was found guilty of first degree murder in Suffolk Superior Court after a jury trial. Golston killed Ronald Salem, a stranger to Golston, by beating him over the head with a baseball bat outside of a store in Dorchester. Golston was thus sentenced to serve the mandatory term of life in prison without the possibility of parole. The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) affirmed his conviction on August 26, 1977 in *Commonwealth v. Seigfried Golston*, 373 Mass. 249 (1977).

Golston, then 17 years old, murdered Ronald Salem, a 34-year-old husband and father of five children. In the afternoon of August 24, 1975, Mr. Salem, a Caucasian, came out of a store in Dorchester's Columbia Point neighborhood after buying cigarettes and a soda, and walked towards his car. Golston, an African-American youth, was an employee at the store and



lived nearby with his mother and six siblings. Golston silently followed Mr. Salem when he left the store and then hit him over the head with a baseball bat. Golston fled the scene and went home, changed his clothes, and then returned to the store where he worked. A witness to the crime saw the victim bleeding in the street and called the police.

Mr. Salem was taken to a nearby hospital, with limited brain functions. Several days later, Mr. Salem's remaining brain functions disappeared. In the opinion of the responsible physician, Mr. Salem had deceased, having reached the stage of irreversible brain death. In accordance with appropriate medical practice, and after consultation with his family, Mr. Salem was then taken off the respirator and passed away on August 31, 1975.

Golston's murder of Mr. Salem appeared to be a random act of violence incited by racial tensions in the Boston area that had reached national notoriety. Golston stated that, by August 1975, he was an angry and confused young man. He attributed his anger to the impact that racial tensions had on him during the busing crisis in the 1970's. Golston, who resided in the racially segregated Columbia Point projects, had been transferred to South Boston High School in 1974 as part of the court ordered desegregation of Boston schools in the mid-1970's. Like many other students, Golston was subject to daily physical and emotional racial violence as he went to and from school. However, Golston did not know Ronald Salem, nor had he ever seen him before the day of the attack. Golston was angry for reasons having nothing to do with Mr. Salem, who was white and present in Columbia Point. Golston did not speak to or otherwise interact with Mr. Salem while he was in the store. Indeed, when witnesses asked Golston why he hit Mr. Salem, Golston replied, "For kicks. I felt like it."

On December 24, 2013, the SJC issued its opinion in *Diatchenko v. District Attorney for Suffolk District & Others*, 466 Mass. 655 (2013) in which the Court determined that the statutory provisions mandating the imposition of a life sentence without the possibility of parole were invalid as applied to juveniles convicted of first degree murder. The Court further decided that Diatchenko, and other similarly situated inmates, were to be afforded parole hearings. Accordingly, Golston, who was a juvenile at the time of the murder, came before the Parole Board for a hearing on January 29, 2015.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL & CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Prior to the murder, Golston had a limited criminal history. On March 1, 1972, Golston, then age 14, was arraigned on a charge of disturbing the peace in Suffolk County Juvenile Court, which was continued without a finding. On August 12, 1975, less than two weeks prior to the murder, Golston was arraigned in Roxbury District Court following his arrest for committing an assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. These charges, however, were filed in 1979, following his conviction and sentencing on the murder.

During his incarceration, Golston received multiple disciplinary reports. The most serious report occurred in 2001 when Golston attacked another inmate with the handle of a scrub brush, causing blunt head injury, a nasal fracture, and numerous scalp lacerations. According to Golston, the other inmate pulled a knife on him, so he grabbed the scrub brush to defend himself. Both inmates were charged in the incident. He currently receives positive employment and housing evaluations, and his latest classification report recommends a



reclassification to minimum security based on his positive adjustment and program participation.

### **III. PAROLE HEARING JANUARY 29, 2015**

Seigfried Golston, age 57, appeared for his initial parole hearing represented by Attorney James Rosseel. Golston is serving a life sentence for first degree murder. He became eligible for parole after serving 15 years of his life sentence due to the Supreme Judicial Court's *Diatchenko* decision. Golston has served 40 years of the life sentence. In Golston's opening statement, he expressed remorse and apologized to the victim's family. He admitted that he struck Mr. Salem for no reason at all and then "just left him there." He told the Board that "for years I denied publicly that I was the one who struck [Mr. Salem], but I always knew that it was me who was responsible for his death and that reality continues to live with me and haunt me every day, and will continue to do so for the rest of my life."

Golston is currently housed at Old Colony Correctional Center, where he has been assigned for a number of years. He is employed in the print shop, a job he began two years ago and continues to enjoy. He is very involved in Toastmasters and the Lifer's group and also participates in religious services and chapel. He participated in the Project Youth Program and is also the basketball league referee for inmates age 35 and older. He stated that, over time, he has invested in programs that addressed educational and emotional growth, communication, and skill building. His most important work includes tutoring and involvement as a board member of Toastmasters.

Golston described his upbringing as "pretty good." He was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, as the third oldest of seven siblings. When he was still very young, his mother moved the family to Dorchester, MA. At some point, his father left the family and his parents divorced, leaving his mother to raise seven children. Golston said his mother was very good to him and his siblings and, aside from the usual sibling fighting, everyone got along. Golston told the Board that he received average grades and participated in football, basketball, and baseball. He said things were good for him until the busing era, specifically 1974, when he was forced to change schools from his neighborhood school to a school in South Boston. He described this time in his life as "living in a war zone" where he, his siblings, and neighborhood friends were constantly harassed and taunted with racial slurs and had rocks thrown at them during bus rides to school. He told the Board that he became increasingly angry at what was happening to him, and at 16-years-old, he was considered the "fighter" of his group of friends. He was the one who stood up for his friends at their new school and during the bus rides to and from Columbia Point.

Golston was asked to reflect on the events leading up to the murder of Mr. Salem. He said that on the day he hit the victim with a bat, he was working at Mother's Market, a local convenience store next to his home. Golston told the Board that he had a fight with his sister that morning. She had bitten him and he arrived at work upset from that incident. He saw Mr. Salem come into the store and thought he might be in the neighborhood to cause trouble. Golston reported that there had been a recent streak of cars being vandalized in their neighborhood. Golston also said he was not used to seeing white people in Columbia Point or at the store. He told the Board that Mr. Salem bought cigarettes and left the store without causing any trouble. However, Golston said that he had already made up his mind and left the store to get a baseball bat from his house. He then followed Mr. Salem as he left the store.



Golston crossed the street and hid behind a building waiting for Mr. Salem to walk by, so he could strike him with the bat. After hitting Mr. Salem with the bat, Golston said that he ran home to change his clothes and returned to the store pretending like nothing had happened. He admitted that he told people he beat Mr. Salem "for kicks," but said that he really did not feel that way. He told the Board that he did not intend to kill Mr. Salem, but that he "just wanted to teach him a lesson." Golston said, "I knew what I was doing [hitting a man over the head with a baseball bat] but I had no idea what would happen, that [Mr. Salem] would die."

The Board questioned Golston as to why he has not completed more programming that is specifically geared towards anger and violence issues. He responded that he has addressed his anger issues through other programs, even if the programming was not specifically for anger issues. The Board also asked Golston about his institutionalization, as he has essentially grown up in prison over the past 40 years. A Board Member pointed out that the world has drastically changed over the past 40 years, from the use of technology to the way people now interact and socialize with one another. Golston could not specifically articulate what he has done to acclimate himself to the changing world, only offering that he is not concerned about his ability to successfully adjust. When asked about his parole plan if granted a parole permit, Golston said that he would like to live with his mother and sister in Dorchester. He said that he has support from family and friends in the community, but provided no specific employment opportunities or support programs he would attend.

Golston had five people testify in support of his parole. Reverend William Loesch, a family friend who knew Golston before the murder, testified to the atmosphere and racial tensions that were ubiquitous in Golston's life at the time of the murder. He also said that he knew Golston as a young adolescent and that he was not a troublemaker or a violent teenager. Deborah Fulgian, his cousin, and Darrel Golston, his brother, testified that they would support Golston in any way needed if he were granted a parole. Helaine Chersonsky, a friend, testified to Golston's good moral character and his remorse about the crime. Lastly, Dr. Charles Desmond, a family friend who knew Golston before the murder, testified to Golston's good character as a teenager and his sincere belief that Golston will not be a threat to the public if granted parole.

Speaking in strong opposition to Golston's parole was the victim's sister, one of the victim's sons, and Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Helle Sachese. The victim's family members spoke to the random, vicious, and unnecessary attack on Mr. Salem. They said that they were robbed of a father, brother, husband, and friend, which darkened their lives for the past 40 years. ADA Sachese talked about the violent and gratuitous act that Golston committed three weeks shy of his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and how his behavior has not changed as evidenced by his history of disciplinary reports while incarcerated.

#### **IV. DECISION**

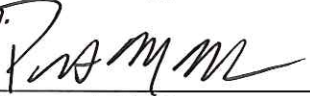
Seigfried Golston was almost 18 years old when he committed the offense for which he now serves. He grew up in an environment that exposed him to significant racial tensions and violence, culminating in the volatile busing crisis in Boston in the 1970's. Golston acted immaturely and impetuously at the time of the murder and failed to appreciate the risks and consequences of his heinous acts. Golston has, however, utilized the latter half of his 40 years in prison to participate in programs that promote meaningful self-development and occupational skill building. The Board commends Golston's rehabilitative efforts in this regard. Over the



course of his incarceration, there has been a clear pattern of an increase in program involvement and a decrease in disciplinary infractions. However, the Board is concerned about Golston's lack of specific anger management and violence reduction programming. The Board is also concerned that Golston's parole plan is still in its formative stages and, thus, is not yet a viable plan. Golston also needs to exhibit realistic expectations about his acclimation back into a society that he has been separated from for the past 40 years.

The standard we apply in assessing candidates for parole is set out in 120 C.M.R. 300.04, which provides that "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." Applying that appropriately high standard here, it is the unanimous opinion of the Board that Seigfried Golston does not meet the legal standard of parole at this time. In reaching this decision, the Board carefully considered Golston's age at the time he committed the crime and the detailed packet of information provided by his attorney in support of parole. The Board also considered Golston's disciplinary record while incarcerated, the programming he chose to participate in, and the impact statements of both his supporters, as well as those in opposition. Parole is denied with a review period in two years from the date of this hearing. Golston must continue his positive adjustment and program participation, including programming in anger management and violence reduction. He must also develop a more specific and viable parole plan that includes specific support services aimed at helping him have a positive adjustment back into society.

*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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Peter Mimmo, Staff Attorney

5/1/2015  
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Date