



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Thomas A. Turco III
Secretary

Telephone # (508) 650-4500

Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Gloriann Moroney
Chair

Kevin Keefe
Executive Director

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

VICTOR BRUCE

W69218

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: August 13, 2019

DATE OF DECISION: April 27, 2020

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Karen McCarthy, Gloriann Moroney, 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. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in three years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On March 12, 2001, in Middlesex Superior Court, Victor Bruce was found guilty of second-degree murder in the death of 35-year-old Earlyn Class. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. On that same date, Mr. Bruce was convicted of unlawful possession of a firearm. He received a sentence of 3-5 years to be served from and after his life sentence. In 2003, after an appeal, this sentence was amended to be served concurrent with his life sentence.

Victor Bruce (age 18), was involved in a sexual relationship with Earlyn Class. However, Ms. Class was in a relationship with another individual. On September 10, 1999, Mr. Bruce arrived outside of Ms. Class' home in Everett. He rang the bell and pounded on the door. Upset with Ms. Class, Mr. Bruce picked up a planter from the front steps and hurled it against the door, smashing it. Mr. Bruce circled around to the rear of the house and stood on the back

¹ Three Board Members voted to grant parole. Four Board Members voted to deny parole.

steps. When Ms. Class came to the door, Mr. Bruce fired four shots from his .38 caliber revolver and ran away. Police were called, and Ms. Class was transported to the hospital, where she died of multiple gunshot wounds less than an hour later. Mr. Bruce was arrested that day.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON AUGUST 13, 2019

Victor Bruce, now 38-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on August 13, 2019, for an initial hearing. He was not represented by counsel. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Bruce apologized to the victim's family and her children. He stated that he has been incarcerated for 20 years on this sentence. Mr. Bruce explained that he postponed his 2014 hearing, as he was still trying to put together his home plan. He now has a home plan and has completed programming. Mr. Bruce stated that his first formal diagnosis of mental illness was in 2001. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and put on medication. In 2016, when his doctor placed him on a new medication, Mr. Bruce decompensated. Mr. Bruce claims to be doing well on his current medication and meets with his clinician at least once a month.

Mr. Bruce told the Board that he was born in Boston and raised by his mother, beginning at age four. He indicated that there was both domestic violence and substance abuse in the home. At age 13 or 14, after witnessing his mother's abuse, he left to reside with his grandmother. At the time, he was smoking marijuana and experiencing paranoia. He stayed with his grandmother until he was about 17-years-old, but then left for Georgia, where he stayed for about a year. However, he dropped out of school and came back to live in Massachusetts until the time of the murder. Mr. Bruce agreed that a majority of his anger issues stemmed from his childhood.

When speaking about the events leading up to the governing offense, Mr. Bruce told the Board that he met Ms. Class after returning to Massachusetts. They started a sexual relationship immediately. Mr. Bruce also spoke of another man in Ms. Class' life. On the day of the murder, Mr. Bruce indicated that when he went to her home, Ms. Class opened the door, but then slammed it on him. So, he went around the back of the house and rang the doorbell. When a man came to the window, Mr. Bruce asked him to get Ms. Class. When she did not come to the window, Mr. Bruce explained that out of "frustration I shot the door, and she was behind the door." Mr. Bruce claimed that the door had glass and a curtain, disputing the fact that he knew she was behind it.

Board Members noted that Mr. Bruce shot the gun multiple times and questioned him as to the purpose. He responded that he was being selfish, and that he was not thinking of anyone at the time. When questioned further, Mr. Bruce explained that he didn't know if it was jealousy, but that he had made many foolish choices. He wasn't "thinking right." Mr. Bruce admitted that he may have been trying to "compete" with the other man in her life. He claimed that he had purchased the gun, previously, because he had been robbed. However, he denied firing it prior to the murder. Mr. Bruce admitted to having sexual relations with other women, telling the Board that his relationship with Ms. Class was only sexual, as well. The Board noted that three shots hit Ms. Class and mentioned a potential domestic violence connection. Board Members expressed concern as to whether Mr. Bruce understood why this shooting occurred and, whether, he was being open and honest with himself about what was going on at the time of the murder.

Mr. Bruce told the Board that his last violent act in prison occurred in 2010. He acknowledged that his last disciplinary report (in 2016) was for giving another inmate money. Mr. Bruce currently has a job within the institution and denies any drug or alcohol use during this incarceration. Mr. Bruce obtained his GED in 2001, when he was trying to "make some changes." He completed such programming as Violence Reduction, Anger Management, Restorative Justice, and Jericho Circle.

The Board considered oral testimony in support of parole from Mr. Bruce's mother, grandmother, and three members of the community. The Board considered oral testimony in opposition to parole from Ms. Class' brother, daughter, and son. Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Adrienne Lynch testified in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

It is the opinion of the Board that Victor Bruce has made a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release incompatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Bruce appears to lack insight as to his causative factors. Mr. Bruce would benefit from continued treatment/programming. He should also remain compliant with a mental health plan/regimen.

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. Bruce'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. Bruce's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Bruce's case, the Board is of the opinion that Victor Bruce is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

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