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**PAROLE BOARD**

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Josh Wall  
Chairman

**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**WILLIAM RAMOS**

**W55984**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** April 30, 2013

**DATE OF DECISION:** April 22, 2014

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Cesar Archilla, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Ina Howard-Hogan, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying 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 writing, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is denied with a review in three years from the date of the hearing.

**I. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On February 28, 1994, in Hampden Superior Court, William Ramos pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to serve life in prison. That same day, he was also sentenced to serve concurrent terms of 18 to 20 years for armed robbery, eight to ten years for kidnapping, and three to five years for unlawful possession of a firearm. He has not appealed his convictions.

On the evening of March 19, 1984, 17-year-old Ramos and his two co-defendants, Juan Torres and Ezequiel Rodriguez<sup>1</sup>, decided to rob someone. They saw the victim, 31-year-old Arthur Matte, leave the Chessman Lounge in Springfield and followed him outside. They

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to serve 18 to 20 years in prison. He was released from custody on December 2, 1994. Torres pleaded guilty to assault with intent to rob and was sentenced to serve six to ten years in prison.

approached the victim as he walked toward his friend's car and Ramos asked him for a cigarette. Ramos pulled out a gun and forced the victim into the car.

Rodriguez drove the car, with the victim in the passenger seat and Ramos and Torres in the backseat. Ramos sat behind the victim, held a gun to his back, and tied a handkerchief bandana around his eyes. Ramos held the gun on the victim while they beat him and rummaged through his wallet and pockets looking for money. Ramos ordered the victim to disrobe in an effort to thwart any attempt to contact the police, but the victim refused and cursed at them. Ramos then put his hand on the victim's shoulder, pushed him forward, and shot the victim in the back while he was blindfolded. Rodriguez pulled the car over to the side of the highway and Torres pulled the victim from the car and left him on the shoulder on the side of the highway. The victim was still breathing at the time.

Rodriguez wiped down the steering wheel with a shirt, put on a pair of gloves, and threw the shirt out the window. They abandoned the car in a lot near Franklin Street in Springfield. A hitchhiker discovered the victim's body around 3:00 A.M. and called the State Police. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy showed that he had suffered a gunshot wound to the left back and blunt trauma to the left portion of his neck and his testes. Further investigation revealed that Ramos and his co-defendants had assaulted and attempted to rob another man prior to the kidnapping, assault, and murder of Mr. Matte.

Following the murder, Ramos remained at large until 1993 when he was arrested in Virginia for driving while intoxicated and his fugitive status was discovered.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 30, 2013**

William Ramos, now age 46, appeared for a parole review hearing after receiving a three year setback subsequent to his initial hearing in 2008. He stated that the Parole Board denied his parole because of his "lack of responsibility and my criminal behavior, I didn't accept responsibility and didn't admit to the crime, I didn't meet the criteria." He stated that, "I have done many programs and have searched my inner self to find the cause of why I did what I did; I searched more to learn more about why I did what I did." He reported that he has completed Anger Management and the Correctional Recovery Academy and noted that they were effective as they "taught me to walk away from others and how to diffuse situations." However, he could not effectively explain how he has dealt with his anger issues.

Ramos received his GED in 1999 and has received his certification in Occupational Safety and Health Administration Safety (OSHA). He believes that he has done an ample amount of programming to address his substance abuse issues. He reported completing all components of the Alternatives to Violence Project and currently attends Book Discussion, Men's Work Program, Portrait Artist, Smart Recovery, Cognitive Skills, Emotional Awareness, Spectrum STG Program, Resources for Change, Spanish Father's Group, Smart Recovery, Transition Planning, and Alcoholics Anonymous. He stated that Emotional Awareness taught him "how to sit down and talk to someone and I know those were tools I needed." He is on the wait list for a number of other programs and is employed in Maintenance.

Throughout his incarceration, Ramos has received 18 disciplinary reports, including reports for possession of contraband, stealing, possession of Security Threat Group paraphernalia, fighting, and trying to coerce an inmate to join a specific Security Threat Group. He has had three returns to higher custody during this commitment, all due to gang activity; however, since his last parole hearing, he has not incurred any disciplinary reports. Ramos stated that he became gang involved at age 15 when he lived in New York. He participated in fights with rival gangs, stole, committed some robberies, used marijuana, and drank alcohol. His mother moved the family to Springfield to get him away from the gang. Ramos reported that he started high school in Springfield but dropped out after three months and joined a gang. He stated that he joined the La Familia gang while incarcerated at Walpole. He stated that his family kept visiting him and was displeased about his behavior, which triggered his decision to engage in programming, work on his GED, and work in the kitchen. "My rehabilitation began in 1998 when I was at MCI Shirley, I had to do some soul searching and I felt something was missing, the GED motivated me to do more programming." His renouncement of gang membership was accepted by the Department of Correction in May 2000. He acknowledged that he did not have many programs until he made a more concerted effort at rehabilitation starting in 2007.

He described the murder as "completely random" and informed the Board that he and his co-defendants "were looking around to rob someone and the victim appeared as an easy target when we saw him coming out of the bar." He admitted that this robbery was his idea, as well as committing two or three prior robberies using a knife, including an attempted robbery earlier that evening. Ramos stated that, "I shot [the victim] in the left shoulder trying to shut him up. He was blindfolded when he was shot. He wasn't responding to my questions. I gave him an order and I didn't want him to back talk to me." He reported that his co-defendants were mad at him for shooting the victim and were shocked by his anger, "so I turned the gun on to Mr. Torres and told him to shut up."

Ramos appeared to deliberately withhold information from the Parole Board about the attempted robbery, the murder, and his criminal record. He made no mention of the attempted robbery until a Board Member specifically asked him about that incident. At that point, he stated, "I chose the first victim to rob because he was under or near a bridge and seemed like a regular person." In describing the murder, Ramos failed to mention the injuries to the victim's genitals and, when he was questioned about it, stated "I didn't do anything to his genitals. The autopsy said he was found on a cliff, I hit him but I did not hit him in his genitals." Ramos denied hiding information and instead said, "I'm nervous so that's why I'm forgetting to explain certain parts of my criminal record and crimes. I forgot I had a case of a gun." Ramos did say that, "I reached over the seat and searched the victim's pockets; I got a few dollars; then I beat him; I hit him in the face, chest, and shoulders; he was swearing and asking why I was hitting him; I was telling him to shut up and hitting him."

Two weeks after the murder, Ramos ran away to New York because he was "scared." After absconding, he moved several times from New York to Puerto Rico and finally settled in Virginia, where he remained a fugitive for almost ten years, speaking to no one about the murder. He stated that while he was in Virginia he established a whole new life. He admitted to using heroin, cocaine, and alcohol when he lived in Puerto Rico and New York, but said that, while in Virginia, "I was working and taking care of my family, I drank here and there and



stopped using drugs." He stated that he met the mother of his child, continued using his own name, and obtained a valid driver's license using his real identifying information.

During the initial portion of his incarceration, he maintained contact with his family, wife, and son. He reported that he and his wife decided to "cordially part ways." He last spoke to his son on the phone about ten years ago when his son was about 12 years old, and the last time he had contact with his wife, mother, and family was about three to four years ago. Ramos reported that "the most important people in my life have abandoned me." He stated that he "hopes to repair those relationships little by little" and acknowledged his need for a sponsor and treatment through AA/NA.

Mr. Ramos had no supporters in attendance. Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Dianne Dillon appeared in opposition of parole.

### **III. DECISION**

William Ramos was 17 years old when he committed a random and violent kidnapping, robbery, and murder on an unsuspecting man. The murder followed several years of gang activity with antisocial and criminal behavior. He fled from prosecution and lived for nearly a decade as a fugitive in Puerto Rico, New York, and Virginia. He entered prison to serve his sentence at age 28. He quickly reverted to gang activity, violence, and antisocial behavior. He was returned to higher custody three times. Ramos started to improve his behavior in 1998 after he pursued a GED and he renounced gang membership in 2000. He began more active rehabilitative programming in 2007. Ramos has made good progress in reforming his character and behavior, but it takes considerable time to rehabilitate from the antisocial behavior he exhibited in the community and in prison. At the hearing, his inability to speak more candidly about his criminal activity is a sign that more work is needed. He is not yet rehabilitated.

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 Mr. Ramos does not merit parole at this time. The period of review will be three years, during which time Mr. Ramos should continue his good behavior, use programs to promote honesty and prosocial thinking and conduct, and develop community and family support.

*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.*

  
Jarvis DiLoreto Noble, General Counsel

4/22/2014  
Date