

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

EDWARD STARLING

W35911

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 19, 2018

DATE OF DECISION: January 9, 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 by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in four years from the date of the hearing.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On December 16, 1976, in Suffolk Superior Court, Edward Starling was found guilty of the second degree murder of 22-month-old Laquita Prout. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Mr. Starling unsuccessfully appealed his conviction.¹

On May 24, 1974, Edward Starling (age 19) was babysitting his girlfriend's 22-month-old daughter, Laquita Prout, in Dorchester. At some point in the early morning, Mr. Starling knocked on the door of a neighboring apartment, said there was something wrong with the baby, called an ambulance, and left to look for the baby's mother. Upon arrival, emergency responders found Laquita Prout dead. The medical examiner performed an autopsy and noted that the cause of

¹ *Commonwealth v. Edward Starling*, 382 Mass. 423 (1981)

death was from one or more "very severe blows" to the chest or abdomen with a fist, foot, or some other blunt instrument. Police arrested Mr. Starling that evening. The next day, Mr. Starling was arraigned in Dorchester District Court, where he was released on \$10,000 bail. The case was continued until June 21, 1974. Mr. Starling did not appear at this hearing.

He was found in Newark, New Jersey, on January 18, 1976, living under the assumed name of Marvin Morgan. He was arrested and returned to Boston for trial.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 19, 2018

Edward Starling, now 63-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on April 19, 2018. Mr. Starling was represented by Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project Student Attorneys Annie Manhardt and Jake Meiseles. Mr. Starling's parole was denied after his initial hearing in 1991. Parole was denied again after review hearings in 1993, 1996, and 1999. Parole was granted after Mr. Starling's 2002 review hearing. Parole was rescinded, however, in February 2008, after Mr. Starling had an altercation with a prison staff member. Mr. Starling was put on the next available parole hearing list (PONAL). Parole was denied after review hearings in 2008 and 2013. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Starling expressed his sorrow and remorse for causing the death of Laquita Prout. Upon questioning by the Board, Mr. Starling explained that he was on drugs during the night of the murder, and he only remembers throwing the victim. Mr. Starling said, "I know I said I kicked her, but I can't see myself doing that. I never hit a child or abused the mom."

Board Members noted that Mr. Starling's prior Record of Decision stated that he had little insight into his volatile behavior and had not engaged in enough programming to address his violent behavior. Since his last hearing, Mr. Starling said that he completed Alternatives to Violence program, Able Minds, Jericho Circle, and all of the Restorative Justice Programs (except for the Victim Offender Educational Group). Mr. Starling explained that Restorative Justice was the most comprehensive program and liked that it addressed mood swings and depression. He also felt the mock job interviews were helpful exercises. Mr. Starling said that he attends Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps program. In addition to programming, Mr. Starling told the Board he has earned three bachelor's degrees and three associate's degrees. He also works cleaning the second floor of his unit.

The Board asked Mr. Starling about disciplinary reports he received for attempting to make alcohol (2014) and for screaming at a corrections officer (2016). Mr. Starling agreed that he was found with Gatorade bottles that could be used for making alcohol in his cell, but denied that there was any fermented juice in the bottles. Mr. Starling admitted that he was wrong to have yelled obscenities at a corrections officer. Mr. Starling's parole plan is to move to a lower security facility before being released to Open Heaven's Door Ministries, a long-term residential program. Mr. Starling hopes to start a cleaning business or a barbershop, if released. He would continue to attend Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous and seek individual mental health counseling. Mr. Starling stated that he has strong support of family and friends in the community.

Friends and family attended the hearing in support of parole. The mother of the victim testified in support of parole and sent a letter of support, as well. Mr. Starling's cousin and a friend testified in support of parole. Bishop William Dickerson II of the Greater Love Tabernacle and Milton Jones, Director of Operations of the Peace Institute, also testified in support of parole

and submitted letters of support. Mr. Starling's daughter sent video testimony in support of parole. Many former attorneys (who represented Mr. Starling over the years) sent letters of support, as did family and friends. Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni and Boston Police Commissioner William Evans sent letters of opposition.

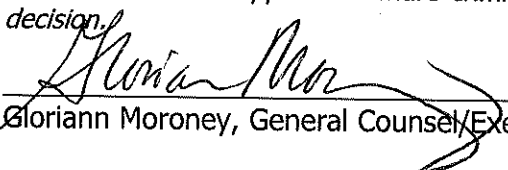
III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Edward Starling has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Edward Starling committed a violent offense - assault on a 22-month-old child resulting in a child's death. He has little insight into his volatile behavior.

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 an 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. Starling's 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 programs could effectively minimize Mr. Starling's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Starling's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Edward Starling is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

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



Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel/Executive Director

1/9/19
Date