



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ALFONSO PRATER

W62351

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 10, 2011

DATE OF DECISION: May 4, 2012

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied with a review in five years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Alfonso Prater, age 18, shot Alfredo Reynoso, age 24, to death just after midnight on February 6, 1996 in Lynn. Prater was a drug dealer who believed the victim to be a rival drug dealer. Prater and four associates planned to rob the victim of drugs and money. Prater took the primary role in the plan. Prater approached the victim's car where the victim sat in the driver's seat, pulled out a gun and pushed it against the victim's shoulder, and ordered the victim to get out of the car. The victim refused to get out and the car moved forward. Prater shot him once in the chest. Lynn Police arrested Prater on February 14, 1996.

At trial, Prater and one co-defendant were convicted of second-degree murder. A third co-defendant was acquitted. Prater's girlfriend testified for the prosecution after pleading guilty to manslaughter and receiving a sentence of 6 to 9 years (she completed her sentence while on parole in 2004). The Supreme Judicial Court affirmed the convictions for Prater and his co-defendant.

Prater's criminal record includes several prior offenses. His most serious offenses, committed at age 16, were possession of a firearm and assault with a dangerous weapon (the firearm). As an adult, Prater had prior convictions for assault and battery, possession of cocaine, possession of marijuana, and larceny of a motor vehicle.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 10, 2011

Alfonso Prater made an opening statement in which he stated that at the time of the murder he was "living an illegal lifestyle by selling drugs." He sold cocaine and sought to "accumulate money as fast as possible." He said he did not intend to murder Mr. Reynoso. He described a middle class early childhood; his father was in the Navy. His parents separated when he was nine, and he moved to Lynn with his mother. He reported that he had good grades and athletic success as a young person. He was expelled from high school in his senior year due to a criminal case that resulted in a conviction from assault and battery. He denied that he ever had a substance abuse problem.

The inmate is now 34 and has been incarcerated for 15 years. He is currently a cadre unit worker at Bridgewater State Hospital. He receives satisfactory work and housing evaluations. He has 11 disciplinary reports, with the last one occurring in 2006. He obtained a GED in 1998. He began more regular program participation in 2007, and has participated in Alternatives to Violence and Violence Reduction. He stated that he attends AA/NA. He has pursued a correspondence course in personal training for physical fitness.

The inmate's sister and father testified in support of parole. Essex Assistant District Attorney Catherine Semel testified in opposition to parole.

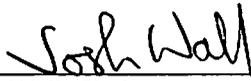
III. DECISION

Alfonso Prater, in his parole hearing, displayed a disconcerting habit to obscure his true motives and actions. He consistently minimized his criminal conduct and offered self-serving reasons for the conduct. These are some examples: (a) he started dealing drugs because he wanted to get himself and his girlfriend "back on track, back in school;" (b) he choose to rob a drug dealer because he did not want to harm a law-abiding citizen; (c) his girlfriend was primarily responsible for setting him up to do the robbery because she intentionally brought the victim to the neighborhood; (d) somebody else gave his the gun; (e) the co-defendants were "always asking me about robbing another drug dealer but I always refused to do that;" (f) he "kindly asked" the victim to get out of the car; (g) on the juvenile firearm offense and assault, "I really didn't do nothing, I just held the gun for a friend;" and (h) he wanted to plead guilty to spare the victim's family but his lawyer convinced him to go to trial. All these answers are incomplete, misleading, or false. As one Board member told him at the hearing, "You are more interested in rationalizing your behavior than identifying the issues that you need to address."

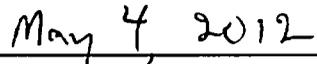
Given the inmate's persistence in avoiding candor, it is hard to credit his critical claims about the murder that "I didn't know the gun was loaded" and "the shooting was an accident."

By continuing to maintain positions that are implausible and in conflict with other evidence, the inmate shows that his rehabilitative work has not yet produced true insight into his behavior or understanding of the work he needs to be doing to correct his behavior. Parole Board members concluded that Prater does not demonstrate the level of insight, empathy, or truthfulness (a) to warrant parole, or (b) to ensure that he has the necessary cognitive and behavioral skills to succeed in the community without re-offending. Prater has not reached the point where it is reasonably probable that he would not commit a new crime if released and his release is not compatible with the welfare of society. Accordingly, his parole is denied.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date