



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road  
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Deval L. Patrick  
Governor

Andrea J. Cabral  
Secretary

Telephone # (508) 650-4500  
Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Charlene Bonner  
Chairperson

Janis DiLoreto Smith  
Executive Director

**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**CHE RASHAWN POPE**

**W65215**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** July 15, 2014

**DATE OF DECISION:** November 20, 2014

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

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, institutional record, the testimony of the inmate at the hearing, the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by a unanimous vote that the inmate is a suitable candidate for parole at this time. Parole is granted to an approved home plan after one year in lower security.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

Che Rashawn Pope appeared before the Massachusetts Parole Board for a review hearing on the life sentence he is currently serving at Bridgewater State Hospital. On September 8, 1998, in Suffolk Superior Court, Pope pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree for the killing of Sadrac Barlatier, and received a life sentence. Pope was also convicted of possession of a firearm and was sentenced to four to five years to run concurrently with the life sentence.

In 1995, Pope, then age 17,<sup>1</sup> believed that the victim, Sadrac Barlatier, also age 17, had murdered a friend. Pope, a member of the Mattapan Dawgs gang, made plans to kill Barlatier. On the morning of October 11, 1995, Pope left his house with a mask, grabbed a gun from its stash location, and walked to Mattapan Square looking for Barlatier. Pope was smoking "a blunt" while looking to kill Barlatier.

Pope spotted his victim, who was walking through the Square heading toward the bus stop, put on the mask and moved the gun from his waistband into the pocket of his sweatshirt. He approached Barlatier and told him words to the effect of "your time has come." As Barlatier ran, Pope pulled the gun out and shot him in the back. Barlatier fell but got back up to run to a bus. Pope responded by firing three more times as Barlatier frantically dove under the bus for cover. The bus began moving forward and drove over Barlatier, crushing his skull. Pope was arrested several days later.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY**

Pope is currently incarcerated at Bridgewater State hospital in the Cadre Unit, a coveted employment opportunity within the Department of Correction (DOC). Overall, Pope's institutional adjustment has been positive, as his latest DOC Classification report indicates that he incurred a total of 12 disciplinary infractions during his incarceration. His last serious infraction occurred in 2001 while at the Souza Baranowski Correctional Center. In that instance, Pope engaged in a physical altercation with another inmate and was subsequently placed in the Special Management Unit.

In addition to attending Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, Pope has participated in the numerous organized programming since his last hearing, including Jericho Circle, Environmental Health, Safety Officer, Fatherhood, Life Skills, and basic computer training. In addition, Pope earned his General Equivalency Diploma in 2001, completed the Correctional Recovery Program in 2009, and obtained his welding license in 2011.

He began working at Old Colony Correctional Center in 2003 and has maintained employment since. His institutional employment includes janitorial work and he was assigned to the laundry department at MCI-Norfolk for seven years. His employment evaluations have been and remain positive.

## **III. PAROLE HEARING ON JULY 15, 2014**

On Tuesday, July 15, 2014, Pope appeared before the Massachusetts Parole Board for this review hearing. This is Pope's second appearance before the Board. Pope first appeared before the Board on July 21, 2011, after serving fifteen years of his life sentence, and the Board denied parole with a three year review date. In its 2011 decision, that Board concluded that Pope's period of incarceration was not sufficient to achieve the rehabilitation necessary for community re-entry, basing its conclusion on factors including his gang lifestyle, the extensive planning for the murder, and the disregard for his community.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Board's Record of Decision following his 2011 parole denial provides that Pope was 19 years old when he committed the 1995 murder. This is in error, as Pope has a 1978 birth date.

Pope is serving his second adult incarceration and has an extensive juvenile record that commenced in 1991. He was committed to DYS by the time he was 15. As an adult, just prior to the murder, Pope was charged with assault and battery and larceny from a person for which he received a two year committed sentence after a jury trial.

Pope seeks a parole to transitional housing in the greater Boston area and intends to participate in the Future Hope Apprenticeship Program in Dorchester. The program is designed to develop and enhance job readiness skills for those with vocational aspirations. Pope intends to join the Iron Workers Union and seek employment as a welder. On a long-term basis, Pope plans to work with at-risk youth. He will continue to engage in Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. Pope has a positive support network in the community.

Pope was represented by Ashley Theodore, a student attorney from the Harvard Prison Legal Assistance Project. Ms. Theodore provided an opening statement to the Board outlining Pope's suitability for parole as he has accepted full responsibility for his actions and understands the gravity of what he did on October 11, 1995. Pope himself offered an emotional apology to Mr. Barlatier's family, to his own family, and the community, acknowledging that his violence impacted the children, mothers, bus passengers, bus operator, and those in the immediate vicinity who watched as Pope gunned down Mr. Barlatier during the morning commute.

Pope has utilized his incarceration to change, both fundamentally and profoundly, through participation in numerous programs. He has addressed his anger and has identified the underlying issues regarding his criminal behavior in the community. Pope, during his opening statement, expressed shame and regret for his selfish, senseless, and violent behavior. He also expressed remorse for the effect it has had on the victim's family and the impact on the community.

As he did at his initial hearing, Pope admitted that he had been planning the murder and looking for Mr. Barlatier. Pope acknowledged that he carried the mask and the gun every day in preparation for the murder. He affirmed that he held a leadership role in the Mattapan Dawgs. He believed that the victim had killed a friend of his and avenging that killing was the primary motive for this murder.

Pope became attracted to street life at an early age, as he became emotionally disconnected following the death of his grandfather. As he conveyed during the hearing, Pope did not see a future for himself and assumed he would be killed due to growing up in an environment where many people did not make it.

Pope has been incarcerated for 18 years, during which time he engaged on the path toward rehabilitation. Since his last hearing, Pope has completed numerous cycles of Jericho Circle, a program that has allowed him to break down the walls of insecurity and provided him with an opportunity to address his feelings of shame, guilt, and regret. In addition, Pope has developed a greater understanding of how his criminal behavior impacted the community through participation in the Second Thoughts Program, which is a Restorative Justice initiative within the DOC. Participation was motivated by his need to give something of substance back to society.

Suffolk Assistant District Attorney Charles Bartoloni submitted a letter opposing Pope's petition for parole citing, "the Commonwealth, readily concedes that Mr. Pope has had an overall positive adjustment while incarcerated. He has reduced his disciplinary reports over the years and has participated in numerous programs since his last hearing. We feel however, Mr. Pope needs to continue this improvement for a longer period of time." Several of Pope's family members and friends attended the hearing, three of whom spoke in support of his petition for parole. The Barlatier family supplied a statement of forgiveness to the Board providing "he has done his time and can be released." In closing, Ms. Theodore reiterated Pope's suitability for parole.

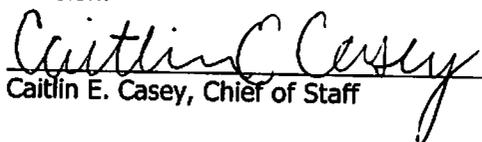
#### **IV. DECISION**

When he was 17 years old, Che Rawshawn Pope had been engrossed in a gang lifestyle, taking a leadership role within a gang. Relying on his gang connections, Pope located and used a stashed weapon to murder another teenager, Sadrac Barlatier, and had done so in a brazenly public fashion and aberrantly motivated by a desire to avenge a prior killing. During his incarceration, Pope chose a rehabilitative path and made sincere strides towards reforming his criminal thinking, which was on display during his latest hearing. Pope, now 36 years old, has positively engaged in rehabilitative programming and has used his 18 years of incarceration productively, having participated in educational and work skills development. After consideration of all these factors, the Parole Board concluded that Pope is rehabilitated and presents no current risk for violence, and that supervised release is compatible with the welfare of society.

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 Pope is suitable for a parole. Accordingly, the Parole Board grants parole to an approved home plan after one year in lower security. This release plan will allow for important supports and treatment during a closely supervised transition. Pope must adhere to all DOC rules and expectations during this transition.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Parole to an approved home plan before release; report to regional parole office on day of release; supervise for drug use with testing required; supervise for alcohol use with testing required; AA or NA two times per week; no contact with victim's family; contact permitted with Lavell Fulks, who testified at his parole hearing as a supporter and is a counselor for ex-offenders; counselling for adjustment issues.

*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.*

  
Caitlin E. Casey, Chief of Staff

11/20/14  
Date