

INDETERMINATE SENTENCE PAROLE RELEASE REVIEW
(Penal Code Section 3041.2)

ROYCE CASEY, [REDACTED]
First Degree Murder

AFFIRM: _____

MODIFY: _____

REVERSE: _____ X _____

STATEMENT OF FACTS

In 1995, 17-year-old Royce Casey and his two crime partners, also both juveniles, made plans to kill their 15-year-old friend and dismember, sexually violate, and cannibalize her body as part of a satanic ritual. The crime partners strangled and stabbed the victim, and Mr. Casey stomped on her head and neck, killing her. The crime partners did not carry out their other plans, and instead dragged the victim's body and attempted to hide it under leaves before fleeing.

GOVERNING LAW

The question I must answer is whether Mr. Casey will pose a current danger to the public if released from prison. The circumstances of the crime can provide evidence of current dangerousness when the record also establishes that something in the inmate's pre- or post-incarceration history, or the inmate's current demeanor and mental state, indicate that the circumstances of the crime remain probative of current dangerousness. (*In re Lawrence* (2008) 44 Cal. 4th 1181, 1214.)

DECISION

I acknowledge that Mr. Casey committed this crime when he was 17 years old and has since been incarcerated for 24 years. In making this decision, I carefully examined the record for evidence demonstrating Mr. Casey's increased maturity and rehabilitation, and gave great weight to all the factors relevant to his diminished culpability as a youthful offender, including his emotional immaturity, risk-taking behaviors, faulty judgement, and poor decision-making at the time of the crime. The psychologist who evaluated Mr. Casey in 2019 concluded that, when Mr. Casey committed the crime, his thinking and acts were shaped by the hallmarks of youth, including a willingness "to go along with negative behaviors in order for his negative peers to like and respect him."

In determining whether Mr. Casey is suitable for parole at this time, I have given great weight to Mr. Casey's growth in prison. He has earned his GED and an associate degree, participated in significant self-help programming, including as a mentor, and maintained employment while incarcerated. He has received exceptional work ratings from correctional staff who applaud him for his hard work, great attitude, and dependability. I also acknowledge that the psychologist who evaluated Mr. Casey in 2019 found that he represented a low risk for future violence. I commend Mr. Casey for his significant efforts in rehabilitation and encourage him to continue on this positive path. However, these factors are outweighed by negative factors that demonstrate he remains unsuitable for parole at this time.

Mr. Casey and his crime partners brutally killed their young friend because they believed that a Satanic ritual sacrifice of a young virgin would help their musical abilities. This crime was not an impulsive act, but rather the crime victims discussed and planned it over the course of several months. This is also not a case where Mr. Casey was controlled by others in the group and, in fact, the psychologist who evaluated him noted that, "he seems to have gone out of his way to associate with negative peers."

I have carefully examined the record for evidence that Mr. Casey's insight and self-awareness have developed sufficiently to minimize his risk factors, including associating with negative peers, being swayed by violent and antisocial ideologies, and rationalizing brutal conduct for self-serving purposes. Mr. Casey's discussion of the causative factors for his involvement in the crime are concerningly lacking. At his parole hearing, Mr. Casey discussed his fear of judgement and need to be accepted saying, "I've tried to please people to protect myself from perceptions of when I was a little kid and being hurt and not having the ability to communicate or to express or to ask...for help from people that can help me." I have determined that Mr. Casey must do additional work to deepen his insight into the causative factors of his crime and coping skills before he can be safely released on parole.

CONCLUSION

I have considered the evidence in the record that is relevant to whether Mr. Casey is currently dangerous. When considered as a whole, I find the evidence shows that he currently poses an unreasonable danger to society if released from prison at this time. Therefore, I reverse the decision to parole Mr. Casey.

Decision Date:
July 9, 2021



GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor, State of California