



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
**INDETERMINATE SENTENCE REVIEW BOARD**  
P.O. BOX 40907, OLYMPIA, WA 98504-0907

**DECISION AND REASONS**

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NAME: BETANCOURT, Adam  
DOC #: 768174  
FACILITY: Airway Heights Corrections Center (AHCC)  
DATE OF HEARING: April 27, 2021  
TYPE OF HEARING: LT JUVBRD  
PANEL MEMBERS: Lori Ramsdell-Gilkey, TaTeasha Davis, Kecia Rongen,  
Jeff Patnode & Elyse Balmert  
FINAL DECISION DATE: May 3, 2021

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This matter came before the above-named Board Members of the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board (ISRB or the Board) for a release hearing in accordance with RCW 9.94A.730. In preparation for the hearing, the Board reviewed Mr. Betancourt's ISRB file. Adam Betancourt appeared in person via video conferencing and was represented by Attorney Jeffrey Ellis. Testimony was provided by Department of Corrections (DOC) Classification Counselor (CC) Lisa Warner. The Board Members were located at their office in Lacey, Washington. The Board's Crime Victim Liaison and several members of the victim's family observed the hearing remotely.

The Board recently received a letter from the Grant County Prosecuting Attorney, Garth Dano. Mr. Dano strongly opposes the possible release of Mr. Adam Betancourt. He indicated Mr. Betancourt should serve the full term of 50 years agreed to in a plea and imposed at sentencing.

**LAST BOARD DECISION:**

The last Board hearing was held on June 26, 2018. The Board found Mr. Betancourt not releasable and indicated he could re-submit a petition for review in June of 2023. Subsequently, significant court rulings that provide further guidance in a release hearing for Juvenile Board

cases were published. The Board made an administrative decision to schedule Mr. Betancourt for a hearing in April of 2021.

**CURRENT BOARD DECISION:**

Based on the burden of proof set out in RCW 9.94A.730 and the totality of evidence and information provided to the Board, the Board does not find by a preponderance of the evidence that Mr. Betancourt is more likely than not to commit any new criminal law violations if released on conditions. Consequently, the Board finds Mr. Betancourt releasable.

**NEXT ACTION:**

Submit an offender release plan (ORP) for consideration.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

This was a deferred decision following a full Board discussion using a structured decision-making framework that takes into consideration: the statistical estimate of risk, criminal history, pre-release history, ability to control behavior, responsivity to programming, demonstrated offender change, release planning, discordant information, and other case specific factors. Based on the requirements of RCW 9.94A.730 the Board finds Mr. Betancourt is not more likely than not to commit a new crime if released with conditions that are designed to help better prepare him for a successful re-entry into society. Mr. Betancourt is determined to be releasable based on the following:

- Has demonstrated positive prison behavior for approximately the past 12- years, receiving one serious infraction via the Negotiated Sanction process during this time, for having sandpaper in his hobby box. He received 27 positive behavioral observations.
- Continues to maintain employment and participate in available offender change programming and educational courses. Completed Thinking for Change, Redemption, Victim Awareness, Chemical Dependency Intensive Outpatient treatment and more.

- Positive psychological evaluation completed by Dr. Richel on November 17, 2020. Mr. Betancourt scored in the Low range for psychopathy; scored Low for future violence, Low for serious physical harm and Low for imminent violence on the HCR-20 V3. On the SAPROF he scored High for his level of protective factors in place. On the VRAG-R Mr. Betancourt scored in Bin 6 of 9 which suggests a 34% chance of committing a new violent offense in a 5-year period, or a 60% chance of recidivating in a 12-year period. It should be noted that the VRAG-R is scored entirely on static factors from historical data.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Mr. Betancourt should have restrictions around his association with known felons and known gang members in the community. He will be expected to participate in sober support groups in the community. He should be on electronic monitoring for the first 90 days of supervision. In addition, Mr. Betancourt should be supervised at the highest level for the first year in the community, per policy.**

#### **JURISDICTION:**

RCW 9.94A.730, enacted in 2014, allows offenders who were under the age of 18 when they committed their crime(s) and were sentenced as adults to petition the Board for consideration of early release consideration after serving no less than 20 years of total confinement. Mr. Betancourt met the criteria and a hearing was scheduled.

Adam Betancourt is under the jurisdiction of the Board on a December 23, 1997, conviction of Murder in the First Degree, Counts I and II, in Grant County under Cause #97-1-00295-1. His time start is December 24, 1997. His minimum term was set at 300 months on **each count, to be served consecutively** for a total of 600 months, from a Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) range of 240 to 300 months. His maximum term is Life. Mr. Betancourt has served approximately 279 months in prison, plus 217 days of jail time credit.

**OFFENSE DESCRIPTION:**

According to file material, Mr. Betancourt, at his age of 16, participated in the murders of an elderly couple in Grant County, Washington. In the early morning hours of May 21, 1997, Adam Betancourt, and co-defendants Donald Lambert (age 15) and Marcus “David” Wawers (age 15), armed themselves and walked to the home of an elderly couple who were well known in the community. They stopped at an outbuilding and stole several items to include knives and ammunition which they placed in a large duffel bag. All three males entered the home. Mr. Betancourt and Mr. Lambert entered the victims’ bedroom and found them both lying in bed. Mr. Betancourt and Mr. Lambert both began shooting at the victims, shooting until they ran out of ammunition. The three co-defendants ran outside where Mr. Betancourt and Mr. Lambert reloaded their guns, then exchanged them with each other.

They saw that the female victim had gotten up from the bed and both Mr. Betancourt and Mr. Lambert fired at her several times. They then reloaded their guns again. Meanwhile, the female victim made it to the telephone in the kitchen and called her adult son. While she was on the phone with him, Mr. Betancourt and Mr. Lambert began shooting yet again, ultimately killing her. The female victim was hit at least seven times and the male was hit six times. He was alive when help arrived but died at the hospital a short time later.

The victim’s adult son was able to provide police with the names of a young man who had worked for the victims but got fired. He stated the boy and some friends had been on his dad’s property recently and he chased them off. When the police went this boy’s home they located all three co-defendants as well as a teenage girl who admitted she had been aware of the planned offense.

**PRIOR RISK RELATED/ CRIMINAL CONDUCT:**

Adam Betancourt has no prior convictions. He does admit to being involved in criminal activity as a teen and being a member of a known gang, Surenos.

**PROGRESS/BEHAVIOR:**

CC Warner testified that Mr. Betancourt has completed the following program: Redemption, Redemption Facilitation, Thinking for a Change (T4C), substance abuse treatment, numerous courses through University Behind Bars (UBB), Victim Awareness, Beekeeping. He works in Correctional Industries in their upholstery department. He receives very positive reviews from his work supervisors. He has received one minor infraction since his last hearing. He has received 27 positive behavioral observations, eight negative and seven neutral. She stated the negative observations were mostly for being covered for count. CC Warner stated that Mr. Betancourt would like to release to the Spokane area where he has a good deal of support to include his fiancé and several mentors. She noted that there are community concerns in Clark and Chelan Counties. He believes he has employment opportunities in Spokane County. He would like to release to a transitional/sober house.

Mr. Betancourt wanted to add that he worked on a proposal to allow holding Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting on the living unit. He said this was accepted and they have started holding the meetings. In addition, he helped to introduce a class called "Communication Breakdown" which is taught by inmates to inmates. It helps people identify high stress situations and talk about them. He and another inmate worked on it together and felt it would be helpful.

The Board asked Mr. Betancourt when he quit associating with the gang. He said officially he quit in 2015 but unofficially he stopped associating with them in 2009 or 2010. He was asked why he quit, and he said, mainly because he saw all the "bull" and lies and mistrust. In addition, he saw how much his association with the gang disappointed his friends and family as well as staff who were supportive of him. He was asked how he will stay away from the gangs upon release. He stated he will set strong boundaries and he plans on surrounding himself with positive pro-social people. He acknowledges he still has a niece whose husband is active in the gang. He said he will simply have to avoid those people and he will put nothing above his freedom or his sobriety.

The Board asked Mr. Betancourt about the offense and his part in it. He acknowledged he and one co-defendant were armed and they both shot at the victims as they lay in their bed. Mr. Betancourt said the two victims awoke and sat up in their bed and he was scared. Mr. Betancourt admitted he fired first. He had no explanation for why he didn't just run away once they realized someone was home, nor why they didn't just leave after they had run out of bullets the first time. He said that basically once they had started shooting he was afraid of getting caught and determined they would have to kill the victims.

Mr. Betancourt expressed a good deal of remorse for the crimes. He stated he understands it was a heinous crime. He stated he tries now to make morally sound decisions. Mr. Betancourt stated he has several men who are mentors and who support him and give him advice. He knows he can go to them for help. He stated he does have a couple of friends who are ex-inmates who are doing well in the community. The Board asked Mr. Betancourt if he had ever submitted a letter to the victims via the "letter bank" and he stated his prior counselor didn't know what the process was. He did write a letter to them that he gave to his attorney.

Mr. Betancourt met his current fiancée in 2015. He stated she is 44 years old and has no criminal history. She has three adult children. She grew up with a friend of his and he introduced them. He explained that he wishes to release to a transition type house upon release instead of directly to his fiancée's home because he wants to stand on his own two feet first and become financially secure. He knows the dynamic of their relationship will change when he releases.

Mr. Ellis provided an opening and a closing statement and stated that it has been an honor to represent Mr. Betancourt. He stated that Mr. Betancourt's record shows a true dedication to change. He believes he is ready for release.

LRG: ffo

April 30, 2021

cc: AHCC, Adam BETANCOURT, Attorney Jeffrey Ellis, File



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P.O. BOX 40907, OLYMPIA, WA 98504-0907

TO: Full Board

FROM: Lori Ramsdell-Gilkey (Fawn Opp, CRT)

RE: BETANCOURT, Adam DOC# 758174

Panel recommends: Finding of Releasable

Next action: Submit ORP for consideration

<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Lori Ramsdell-Gilkey 5-3-2021 TaTeasha Davis 5-3-2021 Elyse Balmert 5-3-2021 Jeff Patnode 5-3-2021 Kecia Rongen 5-3-2021	