

Faces behind the Figures

Are we safer because they're behind bars?



David Taylor, No. 219443

Crimes: Second-degree Murder & Felony Firearm

Sentences: 15-40 yrs. plus 2 yrs.

First possible release: February 2005

In spite of his fine institutional record for the last 10 years, a high parole guidelines score and an excellent Assaultive Offender Program report, the parole board continued David Taylor in prison for 24 months because of a crime he committed almost 20 years ago at age 15 and because the interviewer thought he showed too little remorse.

David Taylor's father died before he was born. When he was two, his mother moved from South Carolina to Detroit's east side with her five children. After six years of schooling, Taylor dropped out. He spent little time at home and dealt drugs to support himself. He had frequent brushes with the law and, at age 15, pled guilty to assault with intent to commit murder and felony firearm. He spent 13 months at the Adrian Training School before going AWOL following a home visit.

When he was 18, Taylor shot and killed a man he says shot at him earlier in the day over a money dispute. Unknown to Taylor, the man was carrying his son, who was also injured. The jury convicted Taylor of second-degree murder and felony firearm. Based on his juvenile record and the facts of the offense, the judge sentenced Taylor to 15 to 40 years, plus two years for the gun.

Now 34, Taylor has done well in prison. He has always held a job, receiving good to outstanding work reports. In 1997 he completed his GED. He has only one misconduct citation since 1995. For the past five years, Taylor has resided in Level I facilities or camps. His parole guidelines score indicates he is a low risk for re-offending.

Taylor completed the 44-week Assaultive Offender Program (AOP) in October 2004, two weeks before his first parole interview. Since the board had not received his final program report, it deferred its decision until the report was available. Taylor's evaluation was excellent on almost every measure of his progress. His therapist wrote:

Mr. Taylor's ability to understand how his thoughts were connected to his feelings and ultimately his behavior was excellent. He was able to verbalize and share how he had adopted beliefs and values from his neighborhood and family that had resulted in his criminal behavior... [Mr. Taylor] acknowledges that his lifestyle of dealing drugs and living his life by a street code or a street mentality directly contributed to his crime... [he] showed a great deal of remorse.

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Although the board said it would weigh his AOP report carefully, in early November it continued Taylor for 24 months. It gave as its “substantial and compelling reasons”:

Despite completion of therapy, P shows little insight into his violent behavior at interview. This is the 2nd violent crime involving a shooting that this P has been involved in. Shows little remorse for the adult victim in this offense.

Taylor sent a letter asking for reconsideration to MDOC Director Patricia Caruso saying he wants to be judged on who he is today, not on who he was at age 15 or 18. He wrote: “My history won’t ever change, but I don’t think the same way I thought 15 or 20 years ago. I retired that mentality a long time ago.”

His letter was referred to the board, which declined to change its decision. Taylor’s next re-consideration date is in February 2007.