



# Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

Date: October 5, 2023  
Re: Matthew Black  
Convicted Killer Denied Parole

### **For More Information Contact:**

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**Modesto, California** - Stanislaus County District Attorney Jeff Laugero announced today that Matthew Black, age 42, of Turlock was found unsuitable for parole during August 29, 2023, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings at the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility in Corcoran, California. Deputy District Attorney Margot L. Roen appeared at the hearing and argued for continued confinement based on Black's attitude toward his crime, his denial of a major mental disorder, his propensity for violence, and the lack of any substantive programming since incarcerated.

On October 4, 2006, Black chased down and killed Denise Swanner, a young mother of two, in a brutal shooting that was unprovoked, according to law enforcement. When questioned by police about the shooting, Black, who has since been diagnosed with schizophrenia, told police that he believed people were chasing him and trying to kill him when he murdered the victim.

On January 27, 2010, Black entered a plea of no contest to murder in the second degree and admitted to using a gun during the crime that caused the victim's death. On February 10, 2010, Judge Thomas D. Zeff sentenced Black to a total of 19-years to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

Black's violent behavior continued after he was incarcerated. For example, at the time of the hearing, Black had already received twelve rule violations while in prison, nine of which involved violence, with the most recent occurring in 2021 for fighting with his cellmate.

At the hearing before the Parole Board, Black initially denied killing Swanner, instead claiming that another unnamed individual had shot her. After further questioning by the Board, Black admitted that he had in fact shot and killed the victim but inaccurately characterized it as self-defense. Black also denied having any mental health issues or needing any treatment or medication, despite his schizophrenia diagnosis and the connection of his mental health disorder to the murder.

Several of the victims' family members spoke to the panel asking that parole be denied. Prosecutor Roen argued for continued confinement based on Black's attitude toward the crime, such as now essentially blaming the victim by claiming self-defense. In addition, Prosecutor Roen argued that Black still posed a serious danger to the community because he was likely to continue to engage in

violence if released from prison, especially given his denial of schizophrenia and his failure to create a mental health management plan if paroled. Finally, Prosecutor Roen emphasized to the Board that Black had shown little change or improvement after being incarcerated for over 16 years.

After deliberations, the Board denied parole for five years. In rendering its decision, the Board found that several factors weighed against Black's release. Specifically, the Board cited his criminal and parole history (for instance, he was on parole for committing another crime when he murdered the victim), his lack of self-control and change, as evidenced by his continued use of violence to problem solve, his disrespect of authorities and the law, and his callous and criminal attitude. Overall, the Board found that Black had significant work to do in order to be considered for parole at his next hearing and recommended that he refrain from committing any new rule violations, that he participates in anger management, and that he strengthens his parole plans, including formulating a mental health management plan.

This was Black's first parole hearing. He will be eligible for another hearing in 2028, although he may petition the Board of Parole Hearings to advance that date if he can demonstrate a change in circumstances.

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