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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: September 28, 2022
Re: Shelton LaJuan Adams
Convicted Killer Denied Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Shelton LaJuan Adams, age 44, of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during an August 25, 2022 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the California Correctional Training Facility in Soledad. Special Prosecutor Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

In May of 1994, Adams and co-defendants Juan Mendiola and Kumasi Huff confronted victims Franciso Vega (age 35) and Enrique Cuevas (age 19) near the Riverview Market on Robertson Road in Modesto. Both men just happened to be standing near a pay phone when Adams pointed a gun at them and demanded money. The victims immediately put their hands up as ordered. Huff held Vega against a nearby wall while Mendiola searched Cuevas and took \$40 from his pant pocket. When Mendiola began searching Cuevas's socks and shoes, Adams shot Cuevas in the head at point blank range without any provocation. As Vega tried to run away, Adams shot him four times, hitting him in the chest and back of the head. Police found both men dead on the ground with Vega still clutching a \$20 bill in his hand.

Although only 16 years old at the time of the murders, Adams was already known for having juvenile adjudications for attempted burglary and bringing a BB gun to school.

On October 20, 1995, Adams pled no contest before Judge Charles Stone to two counts of second-degree murder and admitted to personally using a firearm in the commission of the crime. Judge Stone then sentenced Adams to serve each sentence concurrently for a total of 19 years-to-life in state prison.

While in prison, Adams has repeatedly violated prison rules including fighting with other inmates, possessing marijuana, possessing contraband, testing positive for controlled substances and getting caught with a cellphone six different times, once as recently as 2020.

A prison psychologist who examined Adams prior to the parole hearing gave the opinion that he currently posed a moderate (moderate high) risk for future violence if he were to be released into the

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community. Adams's documented ongoing problem with substance-related, rule-violating behaviors supported a finding of addiction and anti-social behavioral compulsions. The psychologist found that Adams had not sufficiently implemented many of the tools he had been taught in programming courses and lacked sufficient self-awareness into the causes of his lifelong criminality, thereby increasing his potential for future violence if released on parole.

Prosecutor MacKinnon asked the Board to deny parole, pointing out that Adams's very recent rule violations coupled with his lack of sustained sobriety and substance abuse treatment made him an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if he were to be released from prison.

After deliberations, the Board denied release for three years stating that, although Adams had shown progress in some areas, his continued substance abuse and rules violations weighed against his suitability for parole. The Board gave great weight to the required youthful offender considerations which they found were outweighed by the aggravating circumstances of Adams's lack of impulse control and continuing substance abuse issues. The Board encouraged Adams to get a drug sponsor and not incur any more rule violations.

This was Adams's fourth parole hearing, having previously been denied in 2006, 2010 and 2017. He will be eligible for another parole hearing in 2025 although that date may be advanced based upon a change in circumstances. Adams has been in prison for approximately 28 years.

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