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PRESS RELEASE

CONVICTED MURDERER JACOB HUTCHINS GRANTED "YOUTH OFFENDER" PAROLE

Napa County District Attorney Allison Haley announced that Jacob Hutchins, aged 39, was granted parole after a May 16, 2019 hearing that was held before the Board of Parole Hearings at Chuckawalla State Prison in Blythe, California.

Hutchins stands convicted of the murder of 18 year old, Michael Arreguin. On May 16, 1998, Hutchins and fellow gang members drove in two vehicles to the location of the victim in the City of Napa. Hutchins shot the innocent victim in the face with his .22 caliber handgun. The victim died of his injuries.

Hutchins was convicted at jury trial of Second Degree Murder, Shooting from a Vehicle, and firearm and gang enhancements. The Honorable W. Scott Snowden sentenced Hutchins to 42 years to life in prison. On November 21, 2018, Governor Brown commuted Hutchins' sentence to 20 years to life, stating, "Mr. Hutchins committed a very serious crime, but he has distinguished himself by his exemplary conduct and rehabilitation in prison."

This was Hutchins' first parole hearing.

Deputy District Attorney Lance Hafenstein appeared at the hearing and argued against the release of Hutchins based upon the cruelty and callousness of the murder and his gang associations. Notwithstanding, the Parole Board found Hutchins suitable for parole and that he was not an unreasonable risk of danger to society if released from prison, noting his young age and diminished culpability when he committed his crime. The decision will be reviewed by the Board of Parole Hearings and can be reviewed by the Governor.

The Napa County District Attorney's Office sends a representative to every state prison parole hearing that results from a Napa crime. Deputy District Attorney Hafenstein stated, "Our office opposed this inmate's suitability for parole, based on his crime and on factors that make him a continued risk to society. In our opinion, the Parole Board's decision is an affront to the memory of Michael Arreguin and his family."

Beginning in 2009, a Three-Judge Panel on prison overcrowding ordered California to reduce its prison population. The decision was upheld by the United States Supreme Court. As a result, a variety of programs were instituted to reduce prison populations, including Youth Offender parole. SB 261,

effective January 1, 2016, provides that inmates who committed their crime when they were under the age of 23 shall be eligible for a Youth Offender parole hearing. At such a hearing, the Parole Board is required to give “great weight” to the diminished culpability of juveniles as compared to adults, the hallmark features of youth, and any subsequent growth and increased maturity of the inmate in determining suitability. All inmates convicted under the age of 23 are eligible no matter what the crime: including serious, violent sex crimes and murders, as was the case in this matter.

“The family of Michael Arreguin left a Napa courtroom over twenty years ago believing that the man responsible for their loved one’s death would not be eligible for parole for 42 years. Now, they suffer from both the lifelong loss of Michael and a profound betrayal by a system that simply did not honor its word,” said Allison Haley, Napa County’s District Attorney.

Any questions regarding this case may be directed to Assistant District Attorney Paul Gero.