Dear Governor Stitt,

We are Evangelical leaders from here in Oklahoma and from across the country. We are greatly concerned about the case of Julius Jones, and troubled that he is on death row despite compelling evidence of an unreliable conviction in which racial bias infected his case. With great respect, we write to you today to ask you to do everything in your power to ensure that no execution date is set in Julius Jones’ case.

Julius was convicted for the murder of Paul Howell, a white victim who was shot and killed in 1999. From the start, his case was riddled with racial discrimination. Upon his arrest, according to Julius, a police officer used the “n word”, and the State was successful in removing all prospective black jurors except one.

Evidence that was uncovered in 2017 is even more disturbing. At least one juror harbored racial prejudice that influenced his vote to convict and sentence Julius to death. One juror reported that a fellow juror commented that the trial was a waste of time, and that “they should just take that n\*\*\*\*\* out and shoot him behind the jail.” The juror who heard the comment raised concerns with the trial judge who did nothing to address the issue. The juror was allowed to remain on the jury, and Julius was sentenced to death.

These blatantly racist statements disgust us, and we are appalled that no action was taken to remove this juror. Racial bias has absolutely no place in our justice system, and it is clear that Julius’ constitutional right to a fair trial was denied.

It is also worth noting that there is a new detailed statistical study of racial bias in the application of the death penalty in Oklahoma. We now know that a black defendant like Julius, accused of killing a white male victim in Oklahoma is nearly three times more likely to receive a death sentence than if his victim were a nonwhite male. This prejudice took place during the time that Julius was tried and sentenced.

Our faith compels us to speak out since we are all equal and precious in the eyes of our Father in Heaven. Racial bias is completely inconsistent with our values that every life is created in the image of God.

It is for these reasons that we ask you to intervene in the case of Julius Jones and to stop his execution. To do anything less would be to condone the injustices that are so prevalent in this case. Our Father expects more from us.

You will remain in our prayers as you make your decision.

In Christ,

Tony Campolo, Professor Emeritus at Eastern University

and Co-founder of Red Letter Christians, St. Davids PA

Lisa Sharon Harper, Founder and President of Freedom Road, Washington, DC

Kristyn Komarnicki, Director of Dialogue and Convening for Evangelicals for Social Action, St. Davids, PA

Brian McLaren, Christian Author and Theologian, Marco Island, FL

Shane Claiborne, Red Letter Christians, St. Davids, PA