



October 2, 2019

Dear Governor Stitt and Members of the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board,

In Minister Theodore Parker's 1853 sermon, he stated: *"I do not pretend to understand the moral universe...I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice."* Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reiterated these sentiments 100 years later during the Civil Rights Movement. He believed that, in spite of America's history of injustice, a brighter future was possible. Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform believes this today.

We all know the statistics are bleak. Oklahoma has the highest incarceration rate in our country and in the world. We know that racial minorities and women are impacted the most by this reality, and we know that racism, systematic corruption, and classism have historically hindered American ideals of justice. As in every movement, criminal justice reform will only be realized through assertive, confirmatory actions taken by our leaders, particularly our policy makers and influencers.

The monumental task of criminal justice reform requires us to examine the darkest corners of our system. With that in mind, we are deeply concerned about the status of the Julius Jones case. For over 20 years, he has been on Oklahoma's death row, though his conviction is marred by racial bias, an ineffective public defense, and snitch testimony, which we know has led to 85% of wrongful convictions in the United States. Moreover, this case is haunted by the 21-year reign of the Oklahoma County District Attorney who sent 54 men and women to Oklahoma's death row. Over half of those convictions have been reversed, and several defendants exonerated and released from prison, as the result of prosecutorial misconduct (in 33% of the cases), false testimony by state forensic scientists, and false informant testimony, among other violations. Julius Jones' case has never been newly considered under the information we now have regarding criminal justice in Oklahoma County during that time.

Moreover, behind Texas and Virginia, Oklahoma leads our nation in the number of death row inmates executed. Since 1976, at least nine individuals have been exonerated from Oklahoma's death row. Clearly, our system has failed on numerous occasions, and has almost killed wrongfully convicted persons. It's time to examine the merits of Julius Jones' file and we respectfully request a clemency hearing on his case.

We are hopeful for the future of Oklahoma. We believe it can be a Top Ten State. This will require that we revisit our past mistakes and bring healing in the ways we can. We urge you to hold a hearing on clemency for Julius Darius Jones, restoring faith to our marginalized communities. Oklahoma's moral arc must bend toward justice.

Sincerely,

Kris Steele
Executive Director

Susan Esco
Board Member