

April 27, 2020

The Honorable J. Kevin Stitt
Office of the Governor, State of Oklahoma
Oklahoma State Capitol
2300 Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

The Honorable C. Allen McCall, J.D.
Mr. Larry Morris
Ms. Kelly Doyle
Mr. Adam Luck
Mr. Robert Gilliland, J.D.
Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board
2519 North Classen, Suite 405
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73106

Dear Governor Stitt and Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board Members,

As I like to tell people everywhere, I love Oklahoma and the time I spent there. The Oklahomans I met are empathetic, kind and just, which is why it was easy to form such a special connection with the state and its people. Unfortunately, I am contacting you today because I believe the state's criminal justice system is on the verge of carrying out a grave injustice, one that is inconsistent with the values of the Oklahoma I know and love.

As I have learned more about the case of death row prisoner Julius Jones, it has become readily apparent to me and many others that his conviction was tainted by a deeply flawed process. As more details come to light regarding his situation, I join with many voices to express sadness and profound concern regarding his conviction and death sentence. I would like to convey just a few of the issues in Julius' case that concern me.

Julius' public defenders lacked the resources, expertise, and motivation to fight for his life. Though Julius and his family members were expecting to testify about his whereabouts at the time of the crime, none of them were called to the stand. His legal team also failed to present a photo of Julius taken 9 days before the crime which would have dramatically contradicted the eyewitness description. In addition, they failed to adequately question the co-defendant, who is reported to have bragged in jail about framing Julius. I am also troubled by the issues of racial bias in Julius' case. To hear that a juror allegedly used the N-word when referring to Julius during trial, yet remained on the jury, is deeply disturbing to me.

Throughout my childhood, there were ample opportunities to make poor choices. It is because of my parents, basketball, and the grace of God, that I did not follow the wrong crowd. Like many young people, Julius did not always make the best choices. Julius made a mistake in befriending his co-defendant, and as a result, his life has been altered forever.

I humbly ask you to review Julius Jones' commutation application and extend mercy towards him. In the words of Attorney Bryan Stevenson, "If we can look at ourselves closely, and honestly, I believe we will see that we all need justice, we all need mercy, and perhaps we all need some measure of unmerited grace."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by a long horizontal stroke and several loops.

Russell Westbrook