

PUBLIC DEFENDER OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY

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October 23, 2019

**The Honorable Kevin Stitt
Governor, State of Oklahoma
Oklahoma State Capital
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105**

**Pardon and Parole Board
2915 N. Classen, Suite 405
Oklahoma City, OK 73016:
RE: Julius Darius Jones Oklahoma County CF-1999-4373
Request for Clemency/ Commutation**

Governor Stitt and the esteemed Members of the Pardon and Parole Board:

I appreciate your time in reviewing this plea for Clemency for Julius Darius Jones. Mr. Jones has been awaiting execution for the killing of Paul Howell since spring of 2002. Mr. Jones has been incarcerated for that crime since late July of 1999. This request for clemency in no way is attempting to diminish the value of Mr. Howell's life, this prayer for relief, however, is asking for mercy for a man who has been incarcerated and received a death sentence since shortly after his nineteenth birthday.

I feel so strongly about this case because I was one of the trial attorneys on this case. I was fresh out of law school. I began working at the Oklahoma County Public Defender's office in late September of 2000, the Monday after I was sworn in to the practice of law. When I had my initial meeting with Robert Ravitz, Chief Public Defender of Oklahoma County, he told me that I would be covering the misdemeanor docket and asked if I would be willing to work on a high-profile death penalty case. I agreed to work on the case because I was interested in that type of litigation because I did my internship during law school at the Oklahoma Indigent Defense System Capital Trial Division- Sapulpa Office. In retrospect, I look back and ask God why I agreed to work on this case. As I look back, nineteen years later, I realize I was woefully inept and way over my head. However, I feel like I can attempt to make this right by writing this letter.

Julius Jones was nineteen years old when he was accused of killing Paul Howell. At this time, I was still 21 and a young law student at the University Of Tulsa College Of Law. I point this out to

show how young we both were at the time, and to show how much things can change over the course of 19 years. Julius was originally represented by an Oklahoma County Legend, Barry Albert. Unfortunately, Mr. Albert fell ill and other lawyers were appointed to represent Julius. These lawyers were good lawyers, but neither had any capital trial experience. Mr. Jones had a codefendant by the name of Christopher Jordan. Mr. Jordan was accused of being involved in the Paul Howell homicide as well. Mr. Jordan was approximately the same age as Julius, and they had attended high school together.

Many of the people that were associated with the facts of this case had some previous relationships with Mr. Jordan. Mr. Jordan knew several of the witnesses independent of Julius Jones. Shortly after the homicide, Mr. Jordan made a statement to police. There were some issues of concern regarding that statement. As the lawyer for Mr. Jones, it was obvious that Mr. Jordan was minimizing his involvement and maximizing the involvement of Mr. Jones. In my opinion, certain details did not appropriately reflect the facts. This statement would never be used against Mr. Jordan because the judge suppressed the statement. This was because the police lied to Mr. Jordan and his lawyer while interrogating Mr. Jordan and would not allow him to see his lawyer when his lawyer attempted to be present for the interview. That interview was never used to impeach Mr. Jordan when he gave inconsistent testimony during Mr. Jones' trial. In fact, none of Mr. Jordan's inconsistent statements were used to impeach him during the trial, and his cross examination at trial took less than 30 minutes.

Ultimately, The State of Oklahoma offered Christopher Jordan a plea offer. In exchange for his testimony against Julius, the state would offer him a Life sentence with all but for the first 30 years to be suspended. (Life sentence with the first 30 years to serve in prison.) This sentence was supposed to be an 85% crime, as the plain reading of what crimes were 85% in 1999, according to the Oklahoma Statutes. But, Christopher Jordan did not serve 85% of 30 years. He served less than 15 years. Now he is currently walking the streets of Oklahoma City.

Julius, however, got stuck with good lawyers with no death penalty trial experience and unfortunately, his lawyers failed him. His co-defendant, with legally the same culpability as him, served less than 15 years, while Julius is facing execution. His trial team did not request a red bandana to be analyzed that the gun was found wrapped in that was hidden in a crawl space in the Jones's home. It was Julius' contention that Jordan stashed that gun. That bandana was subsequently tested and may have had Julius's DNA on it. However, upon further investigation, it would be reasonable to find Julius's DNA on something found in his home. However, it is also important to note that 2 other DNA profiles were found on that bandana (the media did not report that information) nor was Christopher Jordan compared as a potential contributor to any of the samples on the red bandana.

Julius had an alibi that lead counsel decided not to run in his case. Mr. Jones had always been adamant about his whereabouts the evening of the homicide. Unfortunately, people who made the decisions from his trial team would not let Julius present it, nor his family members testify on his behalf in the first stage of his trial. Even if the jury didn't believe his alibi, it is possible they may have spared his life and given a verdict less than death. However, that was not the case and the jury pronounced a death verdict with less than 3 hours of deliberation in the punishment phase. As a member of his trial team, this has haunted me for years.

After the jury announced their verdict, other members of the trial team elected me to escort Julius up to the holding facility of the courthouse. The lights from the television cameras made it impossible to see through my tears. As I entered the jail elevator, I collapsed into the wall and continued to sob. Julius remained stoic and followed protocol and remained facing the back of the elevator in silence. When we arrived upstairs, I followed him to the area where they “dress out” defendants during jury trial. Of course, I was still crying and apologizing profusely. He took his handkerchief out of his pocket and told me it would be ok. I could not believe how selfless he acted in that situation; the jury had just sentenced him to death, and he cared enough about me to reassure me that things were going to be ok. I will hold that act of grace close to my heart for the rest of my life.

I have had the opportunity to keep up with Julius throughout the years. He still checks in with me even though he could justifiably hold a lot of resentment towards me. He is a man that has submersed himself in the teachings of God since he has been incarcerated. He tells me he still prays for me and my family and I truly believe he does. He checks in on me during the high and low points of my life. He sent me a card after the birth of my daughter and poems after heard of the death of my mother. He has treated me with nothing but kindness and respect.

So, I come to you asking for your mercy and grace. Please do not condemn this man to death. He was not given a fair opportunity to fight for his life. I feel that we failed Julius Jones. The system also failed him by giving 2 people with the same legal culpability such drastically different sentences. Putting Julius Jones to death will not bring back Paul Howell. However, putting Julius to death will further perpetrate the already inappropriate criminal justice system. I am not asking for you to vacate his sentence. However, I am asking that Mr. Jones’s sentence be modified to a life sentence with all but the first 30 years to be suspended. The same sentence that Mr. Jordan received in this case.

Sincerely,

Robin Bruno
Assistant Public Defender