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Oklahoma State Conference NAACP Support Clemency Application for Oklahoma Death Row Inmate Julius Darius Jones

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – On Monday, October 21, 2019, The Oklahoma State Conference, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, (NAACP), sent a letter to Governor John Kevin Stitt and the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board, urging them to grant clemency to Julius Darius Jones, who has been on Oklahoma's death row for 20 years.

Mr. Jones has maintained his innocence for almost 20 years and faces a death sentence. This letter joins growing statewide and national support of Julius Darius Jones, whose case involves issues including racial bias and an ineffective legal counsel. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), over its more than 100-year history, has adamantly opposed the death penalty, due to its racially disparate application. It has been our historical mission to eliminate race-based discrimination within the criminal justice system.

Oklahoma has a longstanding history of wrongful convictions, exonerations, mass incarcerations, and racially charged accusations, as exemplified by the 1921 Tulsa Riots, which is a national disgrace. In order to correct the wrongs of the past and move forward as a more ethical state, cases such as Julius Jones must be seriously reconsidered. Julius Jones' story highlights the longstanding racial discrimination that has permeated the criminal justice system in America and more specifically, Oklahoma.

"The troubling issues in Mr. Jones' case is frighteningly like those found in many of the cases of men and women who were fortunate to be exonerated before their death sentences were carried out. Most of these cases, as with Mr. Jones' case, have zero physical evidence and rely solely on witness testimony, circumstantial evidence, and faulty or fraudulent forensic evidence.

The Oklahoma Death Penalty Review Commission after more than a year of work has recommended that a moratorium on carrying out capital punishment in the state be continued

indefinitely. “It is undeniable that innocent people have been sentenced to death in Oklahoma,” the report concludes. Wrongful convictions and executions happen because of factors such as: Mistaken eyewitness testimony, Faulty forensic science, Fabricated testimony or testimony from jailhouse informants, Grossly incompetent lawyers, False confessions, Police or prosecutorial misconduct, Racial bias.

Oklahoma has historically faced an indigent defense funding crisis, which has adversely impacted the state’s public defender system. African Americans are disproportionately represented nationally on death row and among those who have been executed. Black people make up 13 percent of the population, but they make up 42 percent of death row and 35 percent of those executed (See the NAACP’s Death Penalty Fact Sheet <http://www.naACP.org/latest/naACP-death-penalty-fact-sheet>). Beyond these crucial facts, the compelling and factual reasons listed below justify the urgent need to commute Julius Jones’ death sentence.

NAACP founding member, W.E.B. DuBois, once said that racial injustice continues to be “America’s blind spot.” Governor Stitt and members of the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board, we ask you to commute Julius Darius Jones’ sentence, so that justice is not further abandoned because of Oklahoma’s blind spot.

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race.