



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 29, 2020

Tulsa Faith Leaders Announce Support for State Question 805

OKLAHOMA CITY — A group of Tulsa Faith Leaders have joined together to announce their support for State Question 805. They released the following joint statement:

"Faith plays a vital role in all of our lives. When we stack years onto someone's nonviolent sentence, we tell people we do not have faith in them. For too long, Oklahoma has handed down decades-long sentences for nonviolent crimes - like the mother sentenced to 15 years for shoplifting or the veteran given 17 years for pawning a stolen laptop. We keep too many Oklahomans in prison for far too long when they should be back with their families and congregations, getting the help they need and taking steps towards recovery and redemption.

Decades-long sentences deprive people of hope and undermine the goals of redemption and rehabilitation. State Question 805 would help end decades-long prison sentences for nonviolent crimes. Forgiveness lies at the heart of our religious traditions, as does the possibility of redemption and renewal, and we believe that everyone deserves the chance to reach their God-given potential. Piling on years of prison time far beyond the maximum for nonviolent crimes is unjust, adversely affects families, and doesn't make us safer.

Oklahoma has the highest imprisonment rate of Black people in the nation. In 2019, Black people who were released from Oklahoma prisons served 15% longer sentences than white people. Black individuals also faced 35% longer sentences than any other group of people for drug related crimes. Too often, we focus on punishment instead of mercy.

Oklahoma has thousands of children with mothers in prison. Without the guidance of their mothers, these children are more at risk for depression and drug and alcohol abuse that can lead to another generation of incarcerated individuals. Long prison sentences don't just impact those serving time, but their entire family.

This injustice harms our families, neighbors and communities. We must continue to make criminal justice reform a priority in our state.

Communities and families, our siblings in faith depend on the passage of State Question 805 so it's incumbent on all of us to vote yes."

Rev. Dr. Rodney Goss
Morning Star Baptist Church

Rev. Chris Moore
Fellowship Congregational UCC
Church

Rev. Todd Freeman
College Hill Presbyterian Church

Rev. Joey Crutcher
New Heights Christian Center

Rev. Dr. Ray Owens
Metropolitan Baptist Church

Rev. Jamaal Dyer
Friendship Baptist Church

Rev. Layla Caldwell
Agape Outreach Ministries

Rev. Marcus L Howard
New Life Training Center

Rev. Terry & Barbara Shannon
New Heights Christian Center

Rev. Gerald L. Davis
Church of the Restoration
Unitarian Universalist

Rev. Andrea Chambers
Antioch Baptist Church

Rev. Sean Jarrett
New Jerusalem Baptist Church

Rev. Jean Neal
New Faith Baptist Church

Rev. Bill Hemm
Forest Park Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Kathy Brown
St. Paul United Methodist

Rev. Barbara Prose
All Souls Unitarian Universalist

Rev. Lizette Merchan-Pinilla
Fellowship Congregational UCC
Church

Father Dewayne Messenger
All Souls Ecumenical Catholic
Church

Rabbi Marc Boone Fitzerman
The Synagogue, Congregation
B'nai Emunah

Rev. Dr. Eric Gill
Metropolitan Baptist Church

Pastor Arlando Jasper
I John Fellowship Church

Father William Holly
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church

Rev. Cathay Edwards
Unitarian Universalist

Pastor Melvin Cooper
World Won Ministries

Pastor Scott Gordon
Calvary Baptist Church

Pastor Emanuel Collier
First Baptist Mohawk

Pastor Doug & Chloe Allen

Pastor Larry Brown

Pastor Larry Stokes
Real Life Outreach

Rev. Elliot Stokes

Pastor Harold W. Jones
Full Gospel Outreach

Pastor Bill Davis

Pastor Jay Oates
Latter House Outreach

Pastor Jerome Steele
Amazing Grace

Pastor James & Glenda Beard

Pastor Loren & Patrick Green

**Pastor Melvin & Sandra
Johnson**
New Hope Baptist Church

Pastor Dwayne & Judy Grundy
Hallelujah Church

Pastor Toni Washington

Evangelist Maggie Horton
Amazing Grace

Pastor Jermaine Gunn

Pastor Emerson Griffith

Pastor John Hairston

Rev. Marlin Lavanhar
All Souls Unitarian

**Institutional names given for identification purposes only*

About Yes on 805 and Oklahomans for Sentencing Reform

Oklahomans for Sentencing Reform is a diverse and bipartisan initiative committed to implementing common-sense sentencing reform in Oklahoma. The group, which includes community leaders, advocates and people who are directly impacted, intends to stop the use of harsh and ineffective repeat sentence penalties by advocating to pass State Question 805 on the 2020 ballot. For more information, please visit <http://www.yeson805.org/>.