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Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have never before been moved to write a letter such as this. However, the case of Karla Faye Tucker has impressed me as the kind of emergency that requires some action on my part.

When I studied law over 25 years ago, I learned that there are 4 functions of criminal sanctions: protection of society, deterrence, retribution, and reformation. Like millions of other Americans who are aware of this case, I am convinced that Ms. Tucker has been reformed and therefore that society no longer needs to be protected from her. In fact, this seems a remarkable example of the success of the Texas penal system (whether it has been intended to work this way or not).

Still, Ms. Tucker faces execution on February 3. To what purpose? Deterrence? Will killing a woman who has so completely embraced righteousness send any constructive message to would-be criminals? Would it not rather reinforce their cynicism that they live in a sick, perverse society that sends inconsistent messages about the kinds of behavior that it seeks to promote and those it seeks to suppress—and in which they might as well make their own rules?

If the execution of Karla Faye Tucker would not deter potential criminals, reform Ms. Tucker herself, nor provide any necessary protection to society, then what purpose would it serve? Retribution. Or to put it more bluntly, revenge. It is the closed-minded policy of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”

When people are tried for crimes, careful notice is taken of the state of mind or intent that guided their actions. If we can make allowance for the state of mind during the commission of a crime, why not the state of mind afterwards? Is not this one of the chief considerations in the granting of parole, namely reformation?

Is a person who performs a bad act to be forever considered “bad”? Is there to be no acknowledgment of reformation? Christ Jesus taught

forgiveness and the abandonment of sin, so dramatized in the case of the adulterous woman (Matt. 8:1-11) and so clearly applicable to the case of Karla Faye Tucker. Those of us who profess to follow Jesus' teachings might pause to consider how he would have viewed this case.

If Ms. Tucker had not been condemned to death, she would be an excellent candidate for parole. Why should not the circumstances that would argue for her parole be sufficient to save a life with such clear potential for doing good?

I, and many like me, look at Ms. Tucker and see a good woman. In a very real sense, she is no longer the person who carried out the crimes for which she has been convicted. If she is put to death on February 3, fairminded people everywhere will be appalled at the failure to credit her reformation, and our society will be further brutalized from witnessing another wrong committed in the name of law. Executing a good woman is a bad act which cannot hide behind the cloak of human laws.

I pray that you ladies and gentlemen will have the wisdom to see what really constitutes justice in this case, and the courage to act according to your highest sense of what is right. Let reformation, not retribution, be your guiding principle, and please recommend a commutation of the sentence of Karla Faye Tucker to Governor Bush.

Sincerely,