

Statement from James Broadnax's Wife and Legal Team

April 30, 2026

James Broadnax was executed today by the State of Texas after more than 17 years on death row for the 2008 murders of two young men, Stephen Swan and Matthew Butler. He was a beloved husband, friend, and mentor, and will be missed by those who had the privilege of knowing him.

James was a teenager with no meaningful criminal record on June 19, 2008 when he decided to get high on PCP with his cousin Demarius Cummings, who came up with the idea to rob two young men in a parking lot in Garland, Texas. In the course of the robbery, Demarius shot and killed Mr. Swan and Mr. Butler. After James's arrest, three local Dallas news stations were inexplicably allowed to access and interview him while he was still high, and James confessed to the shootings in a misguided attempt to protect his cousin, who had a more serious rap sheet. Those interviews became the foundation of the State's case against James at trial. The State's trial strategy was deeply problematic. The Dallas DA's Office struck every single Black juror who was eligible to serve in James's case, keeping careful notes of each juror's race, and then made arguments at trial referring to racial stereotypes that they believed would appeal to their chosen jury, referring to James's rap lyrics as evidence of a propensity for future dangerousness, and describing him as a "psychopath" and as similar to a predator from "Animal Planet."

After hearing that James's execution date had been set, Demarius, in his own words, finally "decided to come clean" and tell the truth of what happened in 2008. In a declaration signed on March 11, 2026, Demarius admitted that he, and not James, was the one who shot and killed both victims. Demarius's confession was consistent with the DNA evidence in the case, which found Demarius's DNA on both the gun used to kill the victims and on one of the victim's clothing, while James's DNA was not on either. James's legal team filed multiple appeals based on these new facts and new evidence of the Dallas DA's unconstitutional racial jury selection practices. They also pressed his case with the Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot, with the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, and with Texas Governor Greg Abbott. It is a profoundly troubling statement about our system of justice that none of these decisionmakers were willing to take steps to grant James relief, or even a stay or reprieve to investigate the new facts showing that James did not kill Mr. Swan and Mr. Butler.

James was never a psychopath or predator, but he was a troubled teen who deeply regretted his participation in the robbery that led to his cousin killing Mr. Swan and Mr. Butler. He found his footing and profoundly transformed himself during his nearly two decades on death row. Through discipline, Christian faith, and an unwavering commitment to growth, James dedicated his life to becoming a source of

stability, mentorship, and healing for others around him. He was selected for a highly competitive faith-based rehabilitation program, reserved for individuals with a record of sustained discipline and demonstrated commitment to change. Within that program, James became a leader, teaching classes on conflict resolution and spirituality, helping de-escalate tensions between incarcerated individuals and staff, and guiding others through some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

James met and fell in love with Tiana Krasniqi in 2024. Tiana was a law student working on a research project on racial disparity in Texas death row cases when she reached out to James, and was impressed by the intelligent, soft-spoken person she met. During his last two years, James and Tiana spoke almost daily. They married on April 14, 2026, just two weeks before his execution.

James was a caring, thoughtful, spiritual, and deeply intelligent person who positively impacted all who came to know him. He will be missed by all of us and by his family and many friends. James spoke often of his feelings for the families of Mr. Swan and Mr. Butler, and about his remorse for his role in these crimes, and our thoughts at this time are with their families as well, as James's were.

We thank all who have spoken up to support James and his case, including the many thousands who were moved to sign petitions for James and to reach out to decisionmakers to advocate for him. James repeatedly expressed the hope that those who were moved to support him would continue to support reforming the justice system to prevent others from being unjustly sentenced and executed. We also want to thank all who worked so diligently to advance James's case, including the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the capital punishment clinics at the University of Texas and Cornell University. Thanks as well to filmmakers Moira Fett and Lucy Adams, who produced a powerful documentary video on James as part of his clemency petition, as well as James's spiritual advisor whose prayer sessions gave him added strength to carry on.

We wish finally to share some words from James, as we continue to celebrate his life and mourn his passing:

I would like to thank everybody for their love, prayers and support, legal and otherwise, and for all of the effort of fighting for justice in this case. It doesn't go unnoticed, and we thank you.