

# NEWS RELEASE



## Judge Nancy Margaret Russo Honored By Inmates At Grafton Correctional Institution

**Cleveland:** Judges are frequently honored at community functions and presented awards for their work, but it's a bit unusual for a Judge to be given an award by inmates at a state prison.

At the Grafton Correctional Institution, the NAACP chapter representing inmate housing units 34 A and B presented their Coretta Scott King Award to Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judge Nancy Margaret Russo during a ceremony on April 13, 2017.

Judge Russo was honored for her work in Re-Entry Court, which helps inmates transition back into society when they are released from prison.

“I have received numerous awards,” Judge Russo told the gathered inmates and guests. “But this means more to me than all the others put together.”

The ceremony, a tribute to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., had a theme of “Togetherness.”

Judge Russo told the audience that she had a DNA test done to learn more about her heritage, and found out that all humans share 2% of DNA.

“You truly are my brothers,” she said. “And I am your sister. We may not always agree, but that’s family. Martin Luther King’s message of togetherness was based in science.”

Judge Russo told the inmates that she has learned so much from them, and they have helped make her a better Judge. She also says there much more work left to do in helping former inmates re-enter society. To this end, Judge Russo also advocates for changes in state law to allow for increased judicial release of inmates who were sentenced to lengthy prison terms under stricter guidelines than we currently have.

Judge Russo received a standing ovation after telling the inmates how much she respects them, and that she hopes to see them back in their communities as role models.

Judge Russo and others in the re-entry community will be taking part in next Friday’s Re-Entry Business Summit at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland. The Summit’s goal is to encourage and facilitate collaboration and cooperation between local government and the private sector, in order to encourage the employment of returning citizens.