

PROLOGUE

This Court Will Come to Order

The Honorable Judge Paulette Sapp-Peterson flaunted her authority, reminding everyone she was a strong, African American woman with power, and choosing not to wait for the return of Judge Andrew Smithson, the presiding judge of record. Judge Smithson, who had called in sick, was well versed in my case and extremely competent. Judge Sapp-Peterson used his absence as her best opportunity to tie up a political loose end, deciding not to take a risk on an unbiased jury.

Judge Sapp-Peterson's robe was unzipped in the front, exposing the wrinkled garments she wore underneath. Those present that day couldn't help but notice the judge wore bedroom slippers in the courtroom. She strolled to her seat on the bench, where she stoically informed both attorneys she was in a rush to get out of there and that they'd better be brief. That admonishment was an unofficial warning to make all arguments short and lay off the lectures. Her decision was already in hand, but the hearing was being recorded. Therefore, giving the appearance that she actually considered what the attorneys argued during the session was paramount.

The New Jersey Attorney General's Office sent six hired