



SPECIAL SECTION

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

'LIVING  
TO TELL'

See videos  
of local figures  
sharing their  
memories of the  
struggle for equality

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AS HISTORY IS MADE, LONG ISLANDERS  
TELL THEIR STORIES IN THE FIGHT  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

# 'We opened the government'

**D**orothy Goosby, 70, of Hempstead Village, became the first African-American woman elected to the Town of Hempstead Board in 1999. She is currently the only Democrat and the only African American on the board. She was the lead plaintiff in the 1988 lawsuit that forced the town to change from an at-large voting system, which the suit charged disenfranchised minority voters, to six councilmanic districts. In a case that took 12 years to settle, the U.S. Supreme Court in 2000 refused to hear Hempstead Town's appeal.

"I became an activist because I was born and raised in the segregated South.[Apalachicola, Fla.] In the South I was not made to feel like a human being. ... I did not like the fact that we did not have good

books, that we were not taught subjects,[math and science] because I was told I was too dumb to learn them. I've never been dumb. So I became an activist because I realized that in order to change things I had to be involved. And I became involved in the Goosby vs. Town of Hempstead case for the same reason. We had bad streets in our area. We had poor schools. We had bad parks. All that we paid for as taxpayers, we were not part of it.[town government] "So in order to be part of it, we filed Goosby vs. Town of Hempstead ... to change from at-large voting to councilmanic districts so that we could play a role in our own destiny. It [at-large voting] meant that we were not represented, because we were 12.5 percent of the population during the time we filed this case. So you disperse

12.5 percent into the entire town, which is over 700,000 people, you're completely lost. Not only that, it was discriminatory.

"They never had a black on the town board until Mr. [Joseph] Mondello appointed [Curtis E. Fisher in 1993, who later was elected] There were moments when I doubted. I had two positions that I was terminated from [because of] this case. I was called the N-word. ...

"I was able to do it because of the support I had from my family, as well as many friends, and certainly from my attorney, Fred K. Brewington. I am optimistic. First of all, because of the Goosby vs. Town of Hempstead case we now have 19 legislative seats in Nassau County, whereas, before it was five supervisors. Out of those 19 we have two black legislators. Instead of one black woman there are now three of



**DOROTHY GOOSBY**

us.[on town boards Islandwide] I take great pride in that because we opened the government; finally we have the opportunity to participate in government."

— OLIVIA WINSLOW

Recalls lawsuit that changed Hempstead Town's voting system. VIDEO  
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## Challenged the voting system

**A**s a young boy in Lakeview, Frederick Brewington met the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. when the civil rights leader toured Long Island in 1965 — an experience that has stayed with Brewington, now 52 and a civil rights lawyer who lives in Freeport. Brewington litigated the successful suit against the Town of Hempstead that changed the voting system to be more representative of the town's large minority population.

"I was one of the first students to be involved in the desegregation of the Malverne School District and learned the lesson as to what was going on at that very early age of third grade.

"My involvement in the justice system is, for me, an extension of my beliefs that we can and must make our system one which is just and fair to all.

"There have been a number of very high points so far in the work that my staff and I have done. One of them is the Goosby v. the Town of Hempstead case, where we challenged the at-large voting system in the Town of Hempstead and toppled down the entire form of government, creating for the first time, in the largest township in America, councilmanic districts where African-Americans could select candidates of their choice. It was also an impor-



**FREDERICK BREWINGTON**

Reflects on impact of meeting the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. VIDEO

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tant case because it gave people the opportunity to hope, and know that they could stand tall, face the adversity, face the challenges, face a discriminatory system and change it. And in modern-day civil rights, we don't see those type of victories too often that are so monumental.

"My responsibility is to continue to go forward. Because if we don't raise the issues appropriately to the powers of justice, the powers of justice can't come down to really make a change. We've got to appropriately challenge the halls of power to really make something happen."

— JENNIFER BARRIOS

