

Hempstead town Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby reflects on making history in 1999

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Senior Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby made history when she was elected to the Hempstead Town Board in 1999 after a long legal battle.

Goosby has been shaking up the establishment for years. It all started in 1988 when Goosby filed a lawsuit against the Town of Hempstead, arguing that its at-large voting system for electing town council members discriminated against African Americans.

"Dorothy Goosby said yes, I'll be the name plaintiff and in that living room, we shook hands with her and her husband Jay, who has passed away now, therein the case was born," says attorney Fred Brewington.

Brewington is a longtime civil rights attorney in Hempstead and the founder of the largest African American-owned law firm on Long Island. Fred knew the only way to change the system was to sue, but he needed someone to stand up.

"She's a maverick because she dared to step up when other people wouldn't," says Brewington.

Eleven long years after filing the lawsuit, a federal judge ruled in favor of Goosby and a year later, Dorothy ran for and became the first African American woman to serve on the Hempstead Town Board. For the past 20 years, Goosby has been re-elected by an overwhelming majority.

"If they don't get what they want, they call me and other council people will really listen," says Goosby.

Goosby wants things to be better for the next generation. The mother of two didn't want to run years ago, but she knew she couldn't stay on the sidelines if she wanted things to change.

"I'm not going to be here forever," says Goosby. "I want them to learn and what I want them to know is how important it is to get involved."

Goosby's voice helped make civil rights history in the Town of Hempstead.

The Hempstead Town Board even named the Plaza at Town Hall after Goosby last year during Black History Month.

Goosby has no plans to retire anytime soon and continues to work tirelessly for her constituents. In addition to being a distinguished public servant, Goosby is a registered dietician, author and longtime advocate and supporter of children and youth programs.