by Mark Sherman Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg moved slowly. In session, she often had her head down, sometimes leading visitors to think she was asleep. She once acknowledged that she did occasionally nod off. She often kept her eyes closed during parts of the day.

But it was a mistake to equate her gait and gaze with frailty, for Ginsburg showed over and over a steely resilience in the face of personal loss and serious health problems that made the diminutive New Yorker a towering champion and forceful presence at the court over 27 years.

She made few concessions to age and recurrent health problems. She worked full time for a personal trainer. She never missed any time in court before the age of 85, and then only following surgery in December 2018 for lung cancer.

Ginsburg died Friday of complications from metastatic pancreatic cancer at her home in Washington at 87, she said.

In late court tenure, she became a social media icon, the sharply dressed RBG, a moving role model for any student who admired Ginsburg’s dissent in a case cutting back on a key civil rights law.

She was at first taken aback. There was nothing “notorious” about this woman of reticence who wore a variety of lace collars on the bench and often appeared in public in elegant gloves.

But when her law clerks and grandchildren explained the connection to another Brooklynite, the rapper The Notorious B.I.G., her skepticism turned to delight. “In the word of the arts, but I do write fairly well and analyze problems in elegant terms because you’re not getting wet,” she explained.

Her stature on the court and her death at the age of 87 in 2018 was the unquantifiable loss of one of the liberal bloc’s most reliable members, Ginsburg wrote that she was like “throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you’re not getting wet.”

In her final years on the court, Ginsburg was the unquestioned leader of the liberal bloc as it pushed back on what it deemed an increasingly conservative majority. Ginsburg took pride in being the second woman to serve on the court, which she joined in 1993 under President Bill Clinton. She was the first Catholic and first Justice appointed in the 20th century.

Ginsburg had special affection for Brandeis, the first Jew to sit on the Supreme Court, declaring again and again by this court — and with increasing frequency — that “nine” is the magic number.

She could take some pride in equality of the sexes in the law. In the 1970s, she argued six key cases before the court that were “the only way to empower the American people and ensure that the American people shouldn’t be denied a voice,” opined Sen. John "Kiki" Dillinger, founder and president of In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda.

By Alicia Bannon, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law

Black women mourn death of Justice Ginsburg, vow to continue the struggle for equality

September 19, 2020 — The night the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was announced her appointment. “She has already done that,” Ginsburg announced her appointment. “She has already done that.”

For Gemma Monteverdi, Ginsburg was "a role model for women everywhere."

"This is one of those moments when you can’t help but feel a little bit of sadness," Monteverdi said. "But you also feel a sense of pride and accomplishment."