

LUPE VALDEZ

b. 10/11/1947

Lupe Valdez is the first woman, the first minority candidate, and the first lesbian to be elected Sheriff of Dallas County, Texas.

“You can simply sit there complaining about something that’s broken or wrong, or you can get busy and actually do something about it.”

Lupe Valdez was a senior agent with the Department of Homeland Security when she reached a defining moment in her career. She had spent 24 years in law enforcement, beginning in the county prison system and moving into increasingly responsible positions with the General Services Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Customs, and the Department of Homeland Security. In 2004, she decided to gamble job security and retirement income to run for Sheriff.

On November 2, 2004, Valdez became the first woman, the first minority candidate, and the first lesbian to be elected Sheriff of Dallas County, Texas. She ran as a Democrat in a heavily Republican state, which led *The Dallas Morning News* to comment that “Dallas County voters managed to shatter at least four different stereotypes in one fell swoop.”

In addition to her other “firsts,” Valdez is the first former migrant worker to be elected Sheriff of Dallas County. She is the youngest of eight children. Her family followed the crops north to Michigan, picking green beans, beets and sweet potatoes. Despite the challenges, Valdez’s mother was determined that her youngest child — and only daughter — would have an education.

Valdez put herself through college by working two jobs. In six years she earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration. After college, she enlisted in the Army Reserves, where she rose to the rank of captain, serving in the military police and military intelligence. While serving as a law enforcement officer and federal agent, Valdez earned a master’s degree in criminology and criminal justice.

As Dallas County Sheriff, Valdez is responsible for 7,000 prisoners and 1,322 deputies, detention officers and bailiffs. “Going from migrant worker to a professional, that was a challenge. Going from jailer to federal agent, that was a challenge.” Compared to all that, she says, this new job is “not a challenge.”



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