

RAFAELA AMELIA VALDEZ

Rafaela A. Valdez was born in Harlem, New York and proudly served her city throughout her career. Ralphie as she was known to family and friends, attended Music and Arts High School where she developed an appreciation of art and fashion and became an accomplished oil painter. She also took courses at Hunter College as part of her post-secondary education.

Ralphie began her career in law enforcement with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) on 12/17/1973. Upon graduating from the police academy, as a young highly motivated and energetic police officer, she skipped patrol duties and headed straight to the Organized Crime Control Bureau (OCCB) narcotics division. On 6/30/1975 during a tumultuous time in New York City, Ralphie was a part of widespread layoffs that occurred in NYPD. However, due to her superior service to NYPD, she was fortunate enough to return to OCCB less than one year later and she continued to excel in her career until her retirement. During her 28-year career, Ralphie also served in the Arson and Explosion Unit, the Joint Bank Robbery Task Force, the Chief of Detectives Office, and the Special Investigations Division. In 1993, Ralphie joined the Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT), which was her last assignment with NYPD. Ralphie was one of only three individuals permanently assigned to the HNT. On this team, she was a key contributor in developing the specialized training program for other negotiators throughout the city. As a result of her significant contributions, Ralphie was featured in the *A&E* channel documentary "Talk to Me" which revealed some of the harrowing life and death situations that she and other officers faced each and every day.

Within her various assignments, Ralphie demonstrated exceptional skills in the areas of research, analysis, strategic planning, program management, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, team leadership, and training. She embodied diligence and distinction as evidenced by her three promotions throughout her career to Detective 3rd, 2nd, and ultimately 1st grade on 12/23/1993. Also among her honors are two medals for Excellent Police Duties (EPDs), six medals for Meritorious Police Duties (MPDs) and two Commendations. These are esteemed and venerable accomplishments for any member of the law enforcement community to attain, but they are even more notable because she did so as a woman of color in an exceptionally tough, male-dominated environment. Even so, Ralphie's commitment to consistent proficiency and excellence went beyond her individual performance and benefit. She also advised and served as a mentor for many younger officers, and was known for giving back.

Dedicated to justice for all people and communities, Ralphie joined the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) as an associate member in 1987. Concerned about equity among associate and executive members of the organization, Ralphie advocated for associate members to have a greater voice within the organization on the national level. In 1995, she spearheaded the petition process to have an associate member representative on the NOBLE national board. After a successful petition and vote by the organization to have an associate member on the board, Ralphie became the first to serve in that capacity from 1995 to 1996.

Never satisfied with the status quo, as an associate representative, Ralphie fought for associate members to have the right to vote, and once again successfully helped lead the way for greater inclusion. In 1997, associate members of NOBLE voted on the national level for the first time in the history of the organization at the national conference in Miami, Florida.

Ralphie was a true professional, and though she left home at home when she came to work; she brought her full being to bear on the tasks at hand. Ralphie enjoyed the finer things in life, and brought this passion to the job and to NOBLE by constantly raising the bar with her special flair. Her grit and spunky personality coupled with her sharp wit and sense of humor enabled her to routinely break glass ceilings in the profession and successfully negotiate everything from peaceful resolutions to tense hostage situations to new organizational statutes. Ralphie was a natural trailblazer. Within the span of two years, Ralphie's foresight, initiative, and persistence helped to reshape NOBLE and redirect its path to more fully realize its goals of justice, equality, and advancement for all people and communities then, now, and for years to come. This is part of Rafaela Amelia Valdez's legacy; a beacon of hope that inspires and empowers others to raise the standard and move boldly together toward solutions for a common good. Ralphie distinguished herself as a highly-respected trailblazer whose contributions are widely recognized as adding great value to NYPD, NOBLE, and the entire Law Enforcement community.