

Luiz Inácio da Silva

Person: Luiz Inácio da Silva

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Description Luiz Inácio da Silva came to global prominence during the campaign which led to his election as President of Brazil on 27 October 2002 — fifty-seven years to the day after his birth in Caetés, Brazil. The seventh of eight children, Lula (as he has come to be popularly known) was born to subsistence peasants and raised by his mother, who relocated to São Paulo in 1952 in search of better opportunities. Work in the warehouse of an engineering firm gave him the opportunity to train as a lathe operator, which in turn led to his participation in the metalworkers' union in 1969. He was elected president of the union in 1975, a role he used to politicize union members in order to mount a challenge to both industry and government over the wage restrictions then in place. A major strike in 1978 by over 500,000 workers led to significant pay increases for workers, and soon after, to the creation of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT), with Lula at its helm.

Lula ran as the main left-wing candidate in all four of the elections following the end of the military dictatorship (1989, 1994, 1998), almost winning in 1989 with 47 percent of the votes in the second round of balloting. In Brazil, Lula is known as a skilled and passionate orator, whose life experience as a worker makes him uniquely suited to understand the situation of the poor and disenfranchised. Globally, Lula has rapidly assumed the position of one of the leaders of the struggle against neo-liberal globalization and for greater social and economic equality worldwide.