

## Los Angeles Police Department Deputy Chief finds leadership skills at Valley College

When Donald Graham organized a sit-in as a student at Los Angeles Valley College in the early '90s, the last thing he saw for himself was a future in law enforcement, much less becoming the first Filipino Deputy Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department 29 years later.

Graham fondly remembers his time at Valley College, saying, "To me, Valley College is the very physical manifestation of redemption, of second chances, of starting over." As someone with a high school GPA of 1.92, his options were limited. But Graham found endless opportunities and learned leadership skills during his time at Valley College.

The father of three started out as a music major, fueled by his dreams to perform on Broadway. But after enrolling in a political science class with Professor Farrel Broslawsky, Graham became interested in politics, getting his start with the campus' Associated Student Union. Alongside the ASU, Graham spoke at a rally where students expressed their anger at Valley's decision to cut 90 classes. This prompted the young activist to stage a protest in the



### Deputy Chief Donald Graham

**COMPANY:**

Los Angeles Police Department



administration building that lasted 90 minutes—one minute for each class that was cut.

Under the wing of campus police officer Larry Mandersheid, Graham heard action-packed stories of life as an LAPD officer. The stories were in contrast to the calm demeanor that his mentor displayed, giving the young Graham an education into the role that police play in the community.

“It didn't matter what your problem was,” said the Deputy Chief. “If you came to the police station, Larry was there. He was like, ‘Alright, let's solve that problem.’ And he would shake your hand and make you feel like he'd known you for 1,000 years.”

Graham worked on various community assignments with the LAPD before becoming the Deputy Chief. A project close to his heart was the Junior Neighborhood Watch, which welcomed around 50 children every other week to speak with police officers. Graham's list of accomplishments includes aiding with the city's homelessness crisis, reducing crime at the Northridge Mall, ensuring safety on Metro buses, and managing large community events like Michael Jackson's funeral and the 2009 Emmy awards.

“I mentor, black, white, orange, green, female, LGBTQ. I love everybody,” said the 52-year-old Deputy Chief. “The better I can educate a police officer, the better the department I work for. But I always really try to reach out to my Filipinos and make sure that they understand that they have access.”

The Granada Hills resident credits Valley College with changing his life. A life that led him from peaceful protester to one of the highest ranking police officers in the LAPD.

“There are several colleges in the Valley,” said Graham. “But there's only one Valley College.”