

Jack Jaskaran



Jack Jaskaran is a Captain in the New York City Police Department. Since July 2010 he has been on leave as a Harvard University “New York City Fire Fighters, Police and Emergency Workers Public Service Fellow,” in the Harvard Kennedy School of Government’s Mid-Career Masters of Public Administration program. He expects to earn his MPA in May 2011.

He joined the NYPD in 1993 and graduated from the Academy in the top 1% of a class of 2,419 police officers. As an officer, sergeant, lieutenant and captain he worked in a variety of uniformed and undercover enforcement units, focusing on problems ranging from school-based crime to pick-pocketing (on which he became a State-wide expert and was interviewed in the national media) to violent street crimes, to domestic violence to organized crime. When he was promoted to captain at the age of 31, he was one of the youngest captains in the NYPD and the first person of South Asian descent to achieve that rank. As Manhattan Borough School captain (liaison to the City Department of Education), Jaskaran implemented several initiatives that would serve to reduce thefts of property within public schools. He also implemented a borough wide anti-truancy initiative that is still in practice today. Jaskaran says that 9/11 was an experience that changed his orientation toward policing. As he explained:

“On September 11, 2001 I was in the rank Sergeant in an anti-robbery unit with an office very close to the World Trade Center and as a result was able to quickly respond with three of my officers to assist with the evacuation of the towers and the surrounding area. Before that tragic day, my primary focus had always been enforcement oriented. I was very much accustomed to seeing things on an individual scale or micro level (get one ‘bad guy’ off the streets at a time; I knew of no other way of getting that done other than one at a time). I knew very little if anything at all about the policy realm and its significance. My perspective began to change based on some of my observations made on September 11, 2001. The heroic response of the NYPD on that day, based on the existing response policies, made me start to think differently. I started to understand how policies worked and how effective they could be in engendering positive changes on the macro level. To obtain a better understanding, I forced myself back to school to obtain a Bachelor’s degree. Up until that point I was content with going through life without a college degree, after all who needed a college degree to catch a robber, or so I thought. I also pursued the next two ranks above Sergeant.

After being promoted to captain, I went back to school and pursued a Master’s in Urban Affairs with a specialization in Public Policy. This degree, combined with my enforcement experience, enabled me to acquire an executive position in the Police Commissioner’s Policy and Planning Office, formerly known as the Office of Management Analysis and Planning. That assignment put my enforcement career on hiatus. However, while serving in the Policy Office I was able to participate in the implementation of several initiatives that were geared towards enhancing the enforcement efforts of the Department’s more than 33,000 sworn personnel as well as improving the delivery of other police services. I was now able to do significantly more than just get one ‘bad guy’ off the streets at a time through the implementation of effective street enforcement policies.”

Jaskaran—who is of South Asian heritage, was born in Guyana, and raised in New York City—was given an opportunity to contribute to the NYPD’s cultural awareness and cross-cultural

relationships when in 2007 he was named commanding officer of the Department's Community Outreach Section within the Community Affairs Bureau. He oversaw the daily field and operational activities of 9 units, including the New Immigrant Outreach Unit, LGBT Liaison Unit and 7 Patrol Borough Liaison Units. With city-wide responsibility, the Community Outreach Section's mission is to promote positive relations between the community and the police and to address any volatile situation that could result in community unrest.

Three years earlier, he provided another type of leadership to enhance cross-cultural understanding and respect, serving as the founding president of the NYPD Desi Society, a not-for-profit organization and an official Department fraternal organization that represents South Asian Americans in the organization. ("Desi" is an umbrella term used to refer to anyone of South Asian descent, aimed at fostering unity among South Asians despite their many religions, countries of birth, and political differences.) The group is the first South Asian-American fraternal law enforcement organization in the United States. Jaskaran's work on behalf of this group is seen as having helped improve understanding and relationships between the department and the community in the wake of the September 11th tragedy, which has led some to be suspicious of anyone—even police officers—who appear to be Arabic, Islamic, or South Asian.

More recently, Jaskaran served as a research team leader and project director in the Resource Analysis Section (RAS) of the NYPD's Office of Management Analysis and Planning. RAS is the research and assessment arm of the Police Commissioner, and it conducts in-depth analytical studies of Department policies, strategies and resources and formulates recommendations to improve operational procedures and policies. The subjects RAS addresses include complex and sensitive organizational, programmatic, financial, intergovernmental, legislative and political issues. The team Jaskaran led in this assignment includes civilians, police officers, detectives, sergeants and lieutenants who are also statisticians, attorneys, professional researchers and writers. Jaskaran was responsible for establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with nongovernmental organizations as well as other city, state and federal agencies and when necessary, for representing the Police Commissioner at meetings between the NYPD and these agencies and organizations.

He is highly decorated for his tactical performance (including 35 medals for a variety of high profile arrests and an award for restraint in the use of force when arresting a violent suspect who had just engaged in a shootout with uniformed officers) and for administrative and community engagement accomplishments. The New York State Senate gave him a “Men of Distinction Award,” he received the Police Commissioner’s Award for Exemplary Performance twice, the police union named him Rookie of the Year, and several community organizations have recognized him for outstanding community service. If “90% of life is just showing up,” Jaskaran gained a competitive edge as his career advanced, for in 2009 he received the NYPD’s “Perfect Attendance Award,” never having missed work due to illness in over 15 years.

Jaskaran has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Community and Human Services from the State University of New York—Empire State College in New York City; a Master of Science Degree in Urban Affairs from Hunter College (with distinction—4.0 GPA); and advanced training and certifications from the Coro Foundation’s New York Leadership Center (Immigrant Civic Leadership Program), the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles (Certificate in Leadership Initiatives for Police Command Staff), and John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Police Leadership in a Multiracial and Multicultural City).