

## 77<sup>TH</sup> AREA HISTORY

Like Newton Area, when 77<sup>th</sup> Division entered service in 1925, its namesake was that of the street which it was located on. The original building, at 235 West 77<sup>th</sup> Street, remained there and received a remodel in 1953. In 1997, it relocated to its current location at 7600 South Broadway, where it is home to 77<sup>th</sup> Area, Operations South Bureau, and the 77<sup>th</sup> Area Jail.

77<sup>th</sup> Area also remained one of the few stations that African-American officers could work during a time of racial segregation in the United States. When the desegregation of the Department occurred in the 1960's, African-American officers were no longer limited in locations where they could work. A 1973 lawsuit by Sergeant Fanchon Blake resulted in strengthening and ensuring this right to all members of the Department, along with no longer limiting what ranks members of the Department could promote to based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other protected classes.

The 1965 Watts Rebellion occurred within the geographical boundaries of 77<sup>th</sup> Area at the time. Now under the responsibilities of Southeast Area, the civil unrest lasted from August 11-16, resulting 34 deaths. While longstanding social issues between Los Angeles residents and government were the contributing factors, the week long violence began during an evening traffic stop by a California Highway Patrol Officer, resulting in the attempted arrest of an individual for drunk driving. During the arrest, allegations of excessive force were not addressed, and a growing crowd which included individuals carrying out acts of violence against officers and vandalism grew out of control of the police abilities at the time.

77<sup>th</sup> Area experienced the loss of two officers belonging to Air Support Division on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991. While patrolling the area near Normandie Avenue Elementary School by air, Officers Gary Howe and Charles Champe experienced an engine failure of their helicopter. The helicopter dropped towards the ground, killing both officers on board. In the wake of the accident, it was determined that the officers managed to control the helicopter enough to avoid impact into the occupied elementary school, choosing to crash land into the intersection of Vernon and Normandie Avenue.

The intersection of Florence and Normandie is noted as being the flashpoint of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising. During the late afternoon of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1992, a growing crowd formed protesting the not guilty verdicts of four officers who were videoed assaulting Rodney King on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1991. Officers in the area attempted to arrest an individual from the crowd who threw an object at their vehicle. The crowd objected to his arrest and grew violent. Officers requested assistance. The responding supervisor elected to withdraw all officers from the location and not return. The crowd continued to grow and carry-out acts of violence, looting, and vandalism including the assault of Reginald Denny, a truck driver passing through the intersection. Simultaneously, other acts of civil unrest were occurring throughout the City at locations like Police Headquarters and Lake View Terrace.