

## Jorge Javier Rodriguez CO Bio

Originally from Puerto Rico, I was an Army Brat throughout my childhood. Suffice to say I was heavily invested in American mythology. After high school I attended the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was a philosophy class during my sophomore year, in which we attempted to justify war where I began to question everything. None of the justifications made sense. This, coupled with some of the borderline sadistic comments made by fellow cadets and even sergeants and officers, whether in bravado or otherwise, really hit me the wrong way. Was this what this Army thing was all about? Fantasizing about blowing people's heads up? About stabbing people? The thought was disturbing.

I managed to graduate West Point in May of 2016, albeit by the skin of my teeth. Did my Basic Officer Leader Course and set foot on Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in towards the end of 2016, where I was assigned to the famous 1-506 Infantry Battalion, the same unit that was encircled at the Battle of the Bulge. This is where I was confronted even more strongly by glorifications of violence, even by the Lieutenant Colonel that was in command. Within a year, with half of that year spent in Cameroon, I was at a tipping point. My mental health was in dire straits. Thankfully, in January of 2018, a light at the end of the tunnel appeared when I was put in contact with a West Point classmate of mine by the name of Matt Malcolm that had put in for Conscientious Objector status while at BOLC. I shed tears during our first phone conversation. It was a relief to finally hear someone talk in a way that made sense. I decided to do as he had done and apply for CO status. I got in contact with the good people over at Quaker House, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, who held my hand throughout the entire process and are still helping me ensure that this is being taken seriously by my command.

I turned in my packet on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. On November 26<sup>th</sup> of that year, it was sent from my Division Staff Judge Advocate to the Department of the Army Conscientious Objector Review Board. This week, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, after asking around it was brought to my attention that DACORB had no record of my having a file open with them. And, just today, the 31<sup>st</sup>, I received confirmation from my Division SJA that my file has been resubmitted to the Review Board.

From what my Quaker friends tell me, the Board should take between two and three months to reach a decision, although my good buddy Matt warns me that they took eleven months to reach

January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019

a decision for him. In the meantime, I'm playing things as though they may very well flat out reject my application, which, even after all of this, is still a distinct possibility. My Year Group's Captain Board File opens on February 9<sup>th</sup> and I've started preparing for it, just in case.