

# THE 22 PROJECT

October 10, 2015

HELLO

MY NAME IS JAVIER GOMEZ, I AM A DISABLED VET DUE TO MY T.B.I., P.T.S.D. AND DELUSIONAL DISORDER. I SERVED AS A SNIPER FROM FEB 2004 TO APR 2010, WITH TWO TOURS IN IRAQ. I WAS HIT BY TWO I.E.D.S (IMPROVISED EXLPOSIVE DEVICE) AND AN RPG AMBUSH. THE RPG AMBUSH LEFT ME WITH FRACTURED RIBS AND A CONCUSSION LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ALIVE. THERE MUST BE A GREATER PLAN FOR ME.

I HAD BEEN BATTLING MY SYMPTONS VALIENTLY BUT FELT I WAS GOING NOWHERE; TAKING HEAVY MEDS SEEMED TO BE THE ONLY TOOL I HAD. I WOULD GET REALLY BAD ANXIETY ATTACKS THAT CONFINED ME TO MY HOME. FOR A WHILE I TRIED TO SELF MEDICATE BY USING DRUGS- THAT JUST TOOK ME TO THE WRONG PATH. I EVENTUALLY WAS HOSPITALIZED TWICE BY BAKER ACT. ON THE SECOND TRIP TO THE PSYCH WARD, I WAS DEALING WITH STRONG FEELINGS OF GUILT, AND I WAS READING THE BIBLE AND CAME ALONG A VERSE THAT SAID IF YOUR RIGHT EYE CAUSED YOU TO SIN CAST IT AWAY, REGRETABLY I TOOK IT LITERALY, AND REMOVED MY EYE WITH MY FINGERS- IT WAS GRUESOME. SO YOU CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE KIND OF TURMOIL I WAS FACING DUE TO MY TIME IN IRAQ. LIKE I SAID, MEDICINE HELPED MASK THE SYMPTONS BUT NEVER CURED ME. I ONLY CONTINUED TO RECEIVE SECONDARY SIDE EFFECTS, AND SOME SORT OF QUALITY OF LIFE THAT WAS ACCEPTABLE.

THEY SAY A PERSON ONLY CHANGES WHEN THE WORLD BECOMES SO UNBEARABLE THAT YOU ARE CAUSED TO CHANGE YOUR WAYS. THAT IS WHERE THE 22 PROJECT COMES IN. MY BROTHER RAN ACROSS COL. COLMENARES AND DISCUSSED MY SITUATION AND GAVE HIM A CARD. MY BROTHER AND WIFE CONTINUOUSLY ASKED ME TO CALL HIM, SO I DID. HE PUT ME IN CONTACT WITH MR. ALEX CRUZ FROM THE 22 PROJECT. IF YOU ASKED ME WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE OXYGEN TREATMENT I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU IT'S WORTH A TRY, ALL THEY'RE ASKING ME TO DO IS LIE DOWN AND BREATHE. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT WOULD HAVE HELPED. GRATEFULLY I ACCEPTED AND MY LIFE TOOK AN INCREDIBLE TURN FOR THE POSITIVE; I STARTED TO BATHE, I WAS ABLE TO HOLD A CONVERSATION WHICH SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE AT TIMES, AND GOT SOME SORT OF GRIP ON MY ANXIETY. IN THE PAST I WOULD RUN OUT OF MEDS THAT I WOULD TAKE DURING ANXIETY ATTACKS NOW I DEFINETLY HAVE THE TOOLS TO COMBAT THE ANXIETY.

I NEVER LOST THE WILL, I JUST LOST THE STRENGTH, BUT I STILL PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER, I GUESS SOME HABITS OF BEING A SOLDIER ARE HARDER TO GET RID OF. I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR THE LIGHT THAT THE 22 PROJECT HAS GIVEN ME IN MY DARKEST HOURS, LIKE THEY SAY "I SEE THE LIGHT".

SO IF YOU ASK ME FOR MY ADVICE; I RECOMMEND IT. IF YOU CHOOSE TO IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE- JUST LIE THERE AND BREATHE, EVERYTHING WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF. IF YOU ARE SOMEONE WHO IS GOING THROUGH THIS, JUST KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE. THE 22 PROJECT COMMUNITY WILL BE THERE AS YOUR BATTLE BUDY IN LIFE.

FROM ME AND MY FAMILY, ALEX, THANK YOU I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR THE HOPE AND 2<sup>ND</sup> CHANCE YOU'VE GIVEN ME. I'LL BE HAPPY TO LET EVERYONE KNOW I AM TRYING TO HAVE OUR 1<sup>ST</sup> BABY.

A GRATEFUL SOLDIER

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