



Reassignment

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In the last school year, I was handed over the billet of Executive Officer in Westview High School's MC-JROTC unit. Wow, what an experience has it been. It is unlike anything else I have ever experienced in my life. The importance for strong leadership is apparent and it has been a challenging position to hold.

I believe that this chapter in my time in JROTC really hit me leading up to the start of the 2022-23 academic year. It was no longer about getting my past job completed as the Operations Officer, but now a position of making sure jobs were getting done by Company Staff and reporting to my Commanding Officer: Cadet Major Anali Ramirez. Now, I truly know what it means to have pride in the position you hold and on top of that the importance of showing your subordinates respect to show that their billets have value.

MCJROTC has made me a better leader overall, not only within the unit, but also in my absolute favorite thing to do outside of school: forming part of a choir. Now for a bit of context, I have participated in choirs since I was about 9 years old. In every choir I've been in, there have always been struggles with old broken equipment and a lack of proper music education in the parts of the county of Los Angeles where a many people were immigrants who came from Mexico or people like myself who were first generation Americans. The choirs were in Spanish with older men who played guitar/bass and women who would sing their hearts out in what musicians might call a "lyrical" style which basically means uneducated. My father had taught a few chords on guitar, but I had a desire to

improve so I began to learn bass guitar, mandolin, and piano mainly by ear. In school, I would slowly learn about music though euphonium in an educated and professional environment.

Due to a situation, my dad's company relocated to Goodyear and I joined a choir at Saint John Vianney Parish. There I was enthusiastic because the director of the choir was educated and was very good at paying attention to detail. All was well until Covid struck. Unfortunately, a choir of seven was reduced to only one person, myself. Many others had been wanting to leave the commitment and saw the pandemic as a good opportunity to relieve themselves from it. So, at the age of 15 I began to play piano and sing at church services by me. Eventually, one member of the original choir joined me again and a few months later another person left their choir to join ours.

Now, with what I have learned in MCJROTC, I asked the 2 other members if they would be willing to open up the choir to more people. I explained to them how we would have structure and expectations, but through scariness of it all our collaborative hard work would pay off. My SMI: Captain Francisco Cardoza explained to me what he looks for in a leader. So, I evaluated myself for a few months. He explained that there are the capable and the willing. There are capable people who are not willing to lead, and the incapable who are willing to learn. I found myself in a situation where I was definitely willing but now exactly fully capable. I felt low after that, but then I remembered that as an officer you must know yourself and seek self

improvement. My Senior Marine Instructor who I look up to did not start off as a Captain where he is now. He too had to start as a Second Lieutenant before he could become the Captain that he is today and through the time he took to develop, he assures his subordinates that they had a reliable leader. With what I had began to learn in both leadership and musicianship, I had the willingness and some ability to lead as director.

It has now been a few months leading the choir. I am extremely proud to say that we have made monumental improvements. The vocalists now know how to control their voices a lot better, perform songs that they could only dream of performing. We now get contracted for weddings to raise funds for sound equipment and even iPads for a digital database. There is no longer a sense of “winging it”, what we do has purpose, direction and motivation. Most recently I opened up a music theory class for free. I don’t know everything, but all knowledge great and small has value. The area where we serve is in the rougher part of Goodyear and the people have so much appreciation and willingness to learn. The choir has grown from one person to ten committed musicians. The members thank me a lot for what I have shown them about music, especially when I am only

seventeen, but I say this, “Thank you to MCJROTC for teaching how to lead, although in a few months I will have to leave my billet in the hands of another, as my time in the unit is coming to an end, my job as a leader will not end. I think of it only as a reassignment. My mission to accomplish will be in music and I will carefully take care of the wellness of the choir or “troop” that I lead. As a leader, I will not stop looking for ways to improve, I now have my goal set to one day hold a masters in Music Education. I feel that my life has a greater purpose in helping others, direction in following my passion and the motivation I have with music is held dear to my heart. It is truly incredible to see how the leadership taught in MCJROTC can be applied to all aspects of life. Gunnery Sergeant Gonzalez, thank you. Captain Cardoza, thank you. Marine Corps, thank you. Semper Fi.”

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