

Leave It to Pever



Gooding

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Back in the benighted 1950s, America was a tyrannical place indeed. People were so uptight, they had no tolerance for anything but absolute conformity to rigid social norms. Anybody who deviated from these rigid social norms was viewed with skepticism at best, with contempt or even hatred at worst. What an awful place America was then! A particular television program famously depicted American life as it was supposed to be, and an entire generation of good little American boys and girls learned acceptable behavior from that program. Because their own lives were nothing like the lives of the characters in the program, though, their self-esteem was grievously damaged, and they grew up justly blaming their parents for foisting false notions of social acceptability on them. They vowed that their own generation would undo the gross injustice their parents' generation had done. And they've been working at it really hard.

Fortunately for us all, their hard work has not been in vain. Such a long way they've brought us! Following the examples set by other enlightened nations, America is finally learning to appreciate and even celebrate its own diversity. Gone are those rigid social norms that kept us living in intolerance and hate! Today's America betokens a marvelous future of mutual acceptance and respect—or else! How lucky we are to be living on the cusp of such a Brave New World! With the able assistance of many visionary leaders, the American people are finally opening their eyes to the glorious place that America has the potential to become and the glorious future that awaits coming generations of good little boys and girls.

With that glorious future in mind, and because we now realize that all good little boys and girls learn acceptable behavior from the television programs they see, the producers of this particular program for an enlightened television-viewing public proudly introduce to you *Leave It to PCver*, the story of a typical suburban family living in enlightened times. Don't look for those old stereotypes from the 50s in this show. We here at *Leave It to PCver* recognize that stereotypes are bad—except when they're the right stereotypes—and we are pleased to inform you, the viewer, that only the best of stereotypes will be used in the making of *Leave It to PCver*. No 50s anachronism is this—please sit back and enjoy the finest PC entertainment the producers of this program are capable of providing. We promise our show will not merely entertain you; it will also educate you. That, after all, is a television program's job, isn't it?

[Cue the ever-popular program theme music. The announcer introduces the show's main characters. Each character is caught "off guard" in a brief but charming head shot, *faux natural*, and feigns mild embarrassment on spotting the camera.]

Announcer [Intones.]: With Ellen Regenerate [brief head shot], Queen LaTuna [brief head shot], Clint Coiffure [brief head shot], and Jiff Hooterman as the PCver [longer head shot to capture the boy's goofy irrepressible charm].

[The opening credits end with the title of tonight's episode freezing momentarily on screen: "The PCver Learns a Valuable Lesson about Social Justice."]

Scene One: [The kitchen and dining nook of the family's stylish suburban California home—uncharacteristically stylish given the family's modest joint household income. The table is set for breakfast and Juanita, the family's hired domestic engineer, bustles back and forth from the kitchen to the table as she lays out an all-organic breakfast repast. The PCver enters from off-camera, to loud canned applause, makes a face when he sees the breakfast, and pauses for a moment to stand there and exude irrepressible boyish charm.]

Juanita [Sees him.]: Ju're late. [Shakes her head.] Como siempre. [Laugh track titters.] Seet jursel down right now and comete jur breakfast. Ees good for you.

The PCver: Aww, geez, Juanita, I don't wanna be late for school. It's important to be there on time.

Juanita [firmly]: Seet jursel down. Ju got time si ju stop making excuses and eat. [Looks heavenward imploringly.] ¡Ay, Dios mio! ¡Qué familia más tonta! [Laugh track guffaws.]

The PCver: Geez, Juanita. I really don't like soy milk. Tastes sorta like the water in the bathtub when I take my bath—after the bath, not before. [Laugh track guffaws.]

Juanita: Ju're telling me. Tastes more like de cow make pee-pee in its own milk, if ju ask me. I don't drink de stuff. I don't eat none of dees stuff. I got tamales in de car for when everybody's gone. [Laugh track laughs uproariously.] But jur peeples says ju got to drink it, so drink it. I got me a good theeng here; I don't wanna mess it up. [Laugh track titters.]

[The PCver sits down reluctantly at the table and exudes more irrepressible boyish charm. Meanwhile one of his two principal caregivers enters the kitchen—to more loud canned applause—eyes him suspiciously, eyes the magnificent breakfast repast, and sits down. She pulls out a newspaper that was folded to her side, spreads it open in front of her, and begins to peruse its contents.]

Juanita [Scolds.]: Jur breakfast getting cold, Rasheeda Mohammed. Come ya.

Rasheeda [without looking up from her paper]: Nuttin' but a grapefruit for me this mornin', Juanita. I got to watch my diet. Just cut one in

half an' serve one half to me on a saucer. No azúcar, por favor. Wrap the other half in a baggie an' I'll take it with me to the homeless shelter. Some poor oppressed soul gon' eat like a healthy-livin' king this mornin'. [Laugh track guffaws.] [Rasheeda glances over at the PCver.] Eat your breakfast, boy. Don' you know folks is starvin' in Africa this very minute?

Juanita [Scowls at Rasheeda's back.]: ¡Ay, qué tontería! ¿Para qué pierdo tanto tiempo en hacer un desayuno si nadie lo va a comer? [Laugh track laughs uproariously.]



Juanita feels unappreciated.

Rasheeda [chuckling and turning to another page of her newspaper]: Aw, Juanita. One o' these days I'm gon' learn your whole language so you an' I can communicate proper. Muchas gracias, I reckon. [Laugh track chortles.]

[The other two members of the family, Emma Goldman Sanger-Smith and Malika (known to the family as Mali) Jones, the PCver's brother in spirit if not in flesh, enter the kitchen almost simultaneously, again to loud canned applause.]

Emma [to the PCver]: Eat your breakfast, boy. [Laugh track guffaws.] [Then Emma turns to Mali.] You don't have to eat anything if your stomach's still upset, Mali.

Mali: Gee, thanks, Emma. Maybe I can manage something after school.

Juanita [shaking her head as she clatters around in the kitchen]: ¡Por supuesto!

Emma: What was that, Juanita? We've got to work on our Spanish in this house. It's the least we can do. [Nudges Rasheeda.] She's such a hoot. All

those fancy *words* she uses. [Bends and gives Rasheeda a peck on the cheek.]

The PCver: Geez, Emma, geez, Rasheeda, how come Mali doesn't gotta eat anything?

Emma [in mild irritation]: Mali has a sensitive stomach, PCver. He's a sensitive boy. We don't force him to eat if he's not hungry.

Mali: Yeah, PCver, golly. You wouldn't want me gettin' sick all over the place, wouldja? [Laugh track chortles.] I can't help it if my stomach's not made out o' cast iron like yours is. [Laugh track laughs uproariously.]

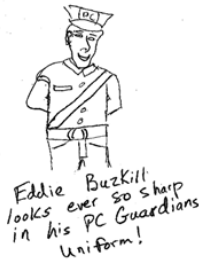
Rasheeda [without looking up from her paper]: Jes be thankful you got breakfast, boy, when so many in this world ain't.

[A knock comes from the back door, just off-camera to the left. Before it can be answered, the boys' longtime friend and companion Eddie Buzzkill enters the room, to perhaps the loudest canned applause so far. Eddie is smartly attired in a stiff, green, military-style uniform, complete with a thick black belt around his waist and another, the belt for his holster, diagonally across his chest. He wears knee-high black leather boots to complete the impressive look of a young man of considerable status in the world he inhabits. A few whistles and catcalls are heard from the canned boys and girls who clearly admire him. The crew occupying the kitchen are clearly impressed as well.]

Rasheeda [eyebrows raised]: Da-a-amn, Eddie. [Laugh track guffaws.] An' how did you get so high an' mighty?

Eddie [beaming]: Morning, Ms. Emma. Morning, Ms. Rasheeda. Morning, Ms. Juanita. Top o' the morning to all of you.

The PCver: Golly, Eddie, knock it off. You know you're not foolin' anybody.



Eddie [smiling politely]: Whatever do you mean, Fyodor [uses the PCver's given name]? I'm merely showing the proper respect to three distinguished caregivers. It would behoove you to do the same.

Emma: Indeed it would, PCver. You could stand to show a little more respect. [Turns to Eddie.] You're such a wonderful role model for him, Edward. So . . . are we to surmise that you've been chosen to join the ranks of the Guardians?

Eddie [proudly]: That's right, Ms. Emma. I was personally selected out of my whole class. Me and four other guys. Sorry—four other guys and I. We were personally selected 'cause of our special qualities. That's what they told us.

The PCver: Geez, Eddie, nobody likes the Guardians. Everybody says they're like snitches or somethin'.

Emma: Fyodor! You watch your mouth. The PC Guardians serve an important function. They are role models for the entire school. It's an honor to be chosen a PC Guardian. Don't listen to him, Eddie.

Eddie [earnestly]: Oh, I never listen to Fyodor, Ms. Emma. [Laugh track bursts into laughter.]

The PCver: Oh, I know all about the Guardians, Emma. I seen what they do. Like when that guy was teasing Mali—on account o' he likes boys instead o' girls? That Guardian hauled him off to the principal facilitator's office.

Mali: Yeah, and then the Guardians took him out back of the school and beat the crap out of him. It was kind o' funny.

Rasheeda [petulantly, with a brisk rattle of her newspaper]: Serves him right for bein' so intolerant. He won't do that again.

Emma: But we don't condone violence, Rasheeda. Do we?

Rasheeda: Sometimes a foot upside yo head is just the right lesson for teachin' a little nonviolence. It's the only way to get through to some folks—teach 'em not to be so judgmental. [Laugh track laughs uproariously.]

The PCver: Yeah, I guess so. But the other kids still don't like the Guardians very much. George Dever says he hates 'em. He wants to throw a blanket party for some o' the Guardians. Do you know what a blanket party is, Rasheeda? I don't get it: If he hates 'em so much, why would he wanna throw 'em a party? [Laugh track erupts in sustained laughter. The PCver's charm is simply irrepressible.]

Rasheeda: I sho enough do know what a blanket party is. You bet I do. A blanket party is what George Dever might be gettin' himself one o' these days—if he don' start keepin' his damn mouth shut. The Guardians'll be the ones throwin' the party, and smartmouth lil' George'll be their honored guest.

The PCver: That reminds me. George Dever, I mean. Juanita, George told me I should ask you if you got your "papeles." You know what he means by that?

Emma: Fyodor! You tell George Dever to mind his own business! Juanita makes a fair wage for a fair day's work. What we pay her comes out to at least minimum wage—almost—by the time you account for the taxes and everything. I mean—Juanita doesn't have to pay income tax! Doesn't that count for something? You tell George Dever to mind his

own business, PCver. We've got a good thing going here.

Eddie [Has removed a notepad from his back pocket and is poised to write.]: George Dever. Can you spell that for me, PCver? [Laugh track laughs uproariously.]

[Fade to commercial.]

Scene Two: [Children shuffle patiently, submissively into the Dewey School for Cooperative Learning, where both Mali and the PCver are "learners." The camera captures the PCver shuffling along among his young peers, clothing in hand as he waits his turn to pass through the security checkpoint, a mildly pained expression on



his face. Then the camera cuts to the exterior of the school once the children are all safely locked inside and school is in session. Then it cuts to Rasheeda's office at the homeless shelter, where she sits at her desk behind piles of paperwork. The phone on her

desk rings and she picks it up.]

Rasheeda: Yeah? All right, let me talk to him. Principal Facilitator Hakim? Yes, this is Fyodor's principal caregiver, Rasheeda Mohammed. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I see. He did that to my *baby*? Why, that's awful! Where is he now? No, I'm comin' down there right this minute; I'll talk to him then. Awright. First I gotta call my life partner and let her know. We'll both be down there just as

soon as we can git. Uh-huh. Awright. [Hangs up phone and then immediately makes another call.]

[The camera cuts to a squalid apartment where Emma is sitting among screaming children while their inebriated young parents battle each other in the background. Emma's changing an infant's diaper and has to wrestle with the baby while struggling to get her cell phone to her ear. This endeavor clearly amuses the audience, so the laugh track chuckles intermittently as the wrestling match continues.]

Emma: What, my dear? Yes. Well, I'm a little busy just now. Oh, nothing much. Just another day at the office. *What* happened? Oh no. Is he all right? All right. Yes. Of course I will. Just let me get these two signed up for parenting classes and I'll be right down there to join you. All right. See you then.

Scene Three: [Principal Facilitator Hakim sits behind the desk in his large office. He is a distinguished middle-aged man in an impressively tailored suit. Little Fyodor sits quietly on a child-sized chair along one wall of the office. One of his eyes is blackened, his upper lip is broken and swollen, and he is clearly in distress. The phone on Principal Facilitator Hakim's desk rings and he lets it ring twice before he picks it up.]

Hakim [authoritatively]: Yes? All right. Go ahead and send them in. [Hangs up the phone and turns to the PCver.] Your principal caregivers are here.

[Rasheeda and Emma bustle into the office and immediately charge over to the PCver to smother him with maternal affection. Rasheeda abruptly turns to the principal facilitator, who has stood behind his desk and is extending a hand in her direction. She seems not to see it.]

Rasheeda: I demand an explanation, Principal Facilitator Hakim.

Hakim: Of course. But won't the two of you sit down?

[He indicates two adult-sized chairs facing his desk. After Rasheeda and Emma have sat down in them, he sits down again himself.]

Rasheeda: Well, Principal Facilitator?

Hakim: Why don't you let the boy tell you himself? I'm sure he can do a better job of it than I can. Fyodor?

The PCver [his speech affected by the damage to his mouth]: Well, I was just walkin' down the hallway, on my way to class, when this big kid comes up and stops me and tells me he wants my lunch money. I told him I didn't have any lunch money, on account of I just gave it to George Dever, so he could give it to Eddie Buzzkill, so the Guardians wouldn't beat *him* up. George, I mean. [Canned sympathetic moan from the audience.] So then the big kid beats *me* up. [Another canned sympathetic moan.]

Rasheeda [indignantly]: Well, this is some fine school you're running here, Principal Facilitator Hakim. A little boy can't even walk the hall in safety.

Hakim: I *am* sorry, Ms. Mohmmmed. It's just that we can't afford security cameras for every single square foot of the school. And our funding just won't provide for additional security guards. We've got two per floor now, and that's just not enough. We rely on our PC Guardians to help us maintain civil behavior among the learners, but apparently they were . . . looking the other way . . . in this case. I'm really very sorry.

Rasheeda: "Sorry" is a good start, but we want something more than that. I see a lawsuit in your near future, Principal Facilitator.

Hakim [Shrugs as if to say “Oh well.”]: You’ll have to stand in line, Ms. Mohammed. And don’t count on getting much of anything. The public schools aren’t exactly rolling in green, you know. The City’s broke. The State’s broke. Where will the money come from?

Rasheeda [defiantly]: Well, we gon’ get *somethin’* for our poor child’s pain. [Turns to the PCver.] Who did this to you, son? What was the big boy’s name?

The PCver: Golly, Rasheeda. I don’t know. ‘Cept for Mali and Eddie—an’ a couple others—all the big kids are just big kids, to me.

Rasheeda: So wha’d he look like? Describe this big kid to me. We’ll see if there ain’t some justice to be found in this situation yet.

The PCver: Well, golly, Rasheeda—he sorta looked like you . . . and Principal Facilitator Hakim.

Rasheeda: Whadayou mean, he looked like me?

The PCver: Well . . .

Emma: I think I know. You mean his skin was the same color as Rasheeda’s and the principal facilitator’s, PCver?

[The PCver nods uncertainly, the nod suggesting he’s not sure it’s smart to divulge his assailant’s skin color—or perhaps any of the other details of his appearance.]

Rasheeda: Well, now we’re *gettin’* somewhere.

Hakim: Ms. Mohammed, please. [Turns to the PCver.] Son, you have a fine non-traditional family here. I can see you have two principal caregivers who truly care about your well-being. But you have to understand something. We have many learners

at our school who don't enjoy the same advantages that you enjoy. They come from very unstable domestic situations where there's no one to teach them civil behavior. Do you understand what I'm saying?

The PCver: Golly, Principal Facilitator Hakim, not really.

Emma [indulgently]: I think what the principal facilitator is saying is that some of your fellow learners live in homes where their caregivers don't explain to them that violence is an unacceptable way to solve their problems, PCver. As a result, they sometimes do mean things when they come to school.

The PCver: You mean . . . like beat little kids up 'n stuff?

Emma [proudly]: That's exactly what I mean, PCver. And because they don't have caregivers who teach them about civil behavior, we can't really *blame* them for the uncivil things they do. Can we?

The PCver: Well, golly, Emma—seemed like this big kid was really kinda *happy* when he was beatin' me up. Like he was really havin' a good time. Kinda like those Guardians—when they were beatin' up that kid that made fun o' Mali—on account o' he likes boys instead o' girls? It kinda seemed like that. His friends were laughin' at me 'n everything. Seemed like he knew zactly what he was doin'.

Hakim: He has a lot of residual anger, Fyodor. Not at you *personally*, just at the way things are. He's just very . . . *angry*, I'm sure. It's hard to explain.

Rasheeda: Oh, for the love of—I can tell you folks *somebody* who's got a lotta "residual anger" in this room. An' it's buildin' up right now.

Emma: Please, Rasheeda, we can't teach the boy that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.

Rasheeda: I guess not—not unless you can get away with it, anyway.

Hakim [to the PCver]: There's a kind of justice in it, son. We call it "social justice." Some people in our society don't have the advantages that other people have. So they do things sometimes that the rest of us might not consider socially acceptable. And we sort of have to be tolerant of their behavior because—

Rasheeda: *Tolerant.* I'll show you *tolerant.* My little boy gets mugged in your school, and you tell him just to forget about it?

[The camera abruptly cuts away from the principal facilitator's office. The PCver's family is exiting in a hurry, Rasheeda in an indignant huff, Emma fretfully, the PCver with a peevish grin on his broken face. The camera then returns to the interior of the office, where Principal Facilitator Hakim sits behind his desk, one eye blackened, his upper lip starting to swell. His fancy tie is a little askew. He reaches for the phone on his desk.]



Hakim has a headache.

Hakim [his speech affected by the damage to his mouth]: Hold my calls for the rest of the day, please. And please don't disturb me. I'm very busy here.

[Fade to commercial.]

Scene Four: [Back in the kitchen and dining nook of the family's suburban home. Juanita has gone home for the day, so the family is feasting on Asian food from cardboard containers. The PCver looks irrepressibly charming as he struggles with a pair of chopsticks.]

Mali: Gee willigers, PCver, what happened to you today?

The PCver: I got beat up by this big kid at school, on account o' I didn't have any lunch money to give 'im.

Mali [Shrugs.]: Oh well, that's nothin'. It's happened to me before—millions o' times.

Emma [a little indignantly]: We're not talking about it, Mali. The situation wasn't handled very well.

Rasheeda [also indignantly]: Not if you're that Principal Facilitator Fancy Pants, it weren't. And Mali, I got a piece of advice for you to pass on. You tell that little snitch Eddie Buzzkill to keep his skinny little white ass away from my house for a while. If he wants to keep from gettin' that fancy uniform ruffled.

Mali [Grins.]: Golly, PCver, sounds like quite a day you had. So . . . did you learn anything from it?

The PCver [grinning painfully but pleasurably]: I sure did, Mali. I learned that if you want "social justice," all you gotta do is call Rasheeda, an' she'll come and get you some right away!



A Happy Non-Traditional Family

[Everybody at the table laughs—even Emma, though her laughter seems reluctant—and the camera cuts to the closing credits as the episode wraps up. And now a word from our sponsor!]