

Article: One Day at a Time

Netflix's *One Day at a Time* is an incredibly sweet and poignant sitcom with a fresh perspective on the modern Latinx family and incredibly charismatic, complex characters. While it utilizes a traditional sitcom format and contains seemingly infinite jokes, the show always takes the opportunity to explore difficult issues facing Latinx families and makes sure to never neatly resolve conflicts for the sake of a punchline.

The show centers around the Alvarizes, a Cuban family that lives in Los Angeles headed by two strong matriarchs Penelope (Justina Machado) and her mother Lydia (Rita Moreno) and their lives with Penelope's children from her recently ended marriage. Both Penelope and her ex-husband served in Afghanistan, and after their tumultuous separation, Penelope must face the challenges of reintegrating into civilian life as well as those of being a single working mother. The show does an excellent job of consistently addressing both the mental and physical consequences that come with being a veteran coupled with the strain of divorce on a family without either issue completely upstaging the other. Penelope has a lot on her plate, but she handles it with good humor and patience—even when she cannot fully understand her children and what they're going through.

Her mother Lydia, who is fiercely proud of the family's Cuban heritage and who perfectly embodies everything there is to love about Abuelas brings a heartbreaking honesty to the show regarding the immigrant experience and her generation's difficulty in accepting the expansiveness of modern Latinidad. She often clashes with her eldest and incredibly socially-conscious grandchild Elena (Isabella Gomez), over social justice issues ranging from the environment to sexuality, but the resolutions to their conflicts never feel preachy or overwrought—there's love and genuine acceptance even if they don't perfectly see eye to eye by the end of the episode. Then there's the youngest child, Alex (Marcel Ruiz) an over-confident yet charming 12-year-old who feigns disinterest in anything to do with emotions but always pulls through for his family in new and unexpected ways.

One Day at a Time also has a small cast of predominantly non-POC supporting characters who often struggle to comprehend the family's culture—in fact, most of them are flawed without being made to seem purely antagonistic and they can behave in ways that reveal their complete lack of knowledge regarding Latinidad. This is especially true of the well-meaning landlord Schneider (Todd Grinell), who gets chastised by the family in one episode over wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt without being fully aware of his historical significance. The show isn't afraid to call out micro-aggressions and portray non-POC characters that push back when called out on their ignorance. Perhaps that is one of the strongest parts of the show: Even when the characters think they have it all figured out or are finally getting to the bottom of something, they step back only to realize they haven't even scratched the surface. Even though the show is a comedy, it is completely devoid of fully fleshed out epiphanies and strictly saccharine happy endings. Instead, the show gives us bitter-sweet buttons that are grounded and cautiously optimistic.