

# Lean on me persuasive essay



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East Side High School was labeled a “cauldron of violence.” After they were designated this harsh term, Joe Clark becomes the head principal and changes it all around – or does he? Lean on Me is a story of hope, development, love, hate, and dependence. As a father figure and friend, Clark’s strict disciplining and harsh attitude helps heal, strengthen, and bring to life a struggling high school in New Jersey. But is this plot just a story for the movie screen? Did the true story really happen like this and end like this? Lean on Me might be moving and powerful, but we must look deeper into the real personality of Joe Clark and how he treated others.

“Crazy” Joe Clark does not get his name from out of the blue. He is violent, angry, and set in his own ways and beliefs. His wife that left him and the one friend that he has are all reflective signs of his horrendous behavior. He walks around the school with a baseball bat, rather than a clipboard or briefcase. The fear that he “earns” is more prevalent than the respect that the students and teachers have for him. He likes to be known as “HNIC” – the “head nigger in charge.” His absurd manners are strongly disliked by his fellow colleagues. He insults teachers in front of students and fires them when they do not comply with his harsh rules. The first disturbing aspect of this movie is Joe Clark’s personality; although he changes around the school, he does it in a bizarre and vicious manner.

Another bizarre aspect of the movie is how the director, —, portrays East Side High. After there is a time change from the 60s to the 80s, East Side transforms from a nice, well-kept, and clean school to a graffiti filled, prison-like, school that resembles an alleyway, not a high school. There are fights in the hallway and the bathrooms every time class lets out. Drug dealers are let

in by other students to exchange money and drugs. East Side is portrayed as a rundown and scary - to say the least - learning institution. For one person, let alone a group of people, to turn it around in under a year, like Joe Clark does, is unimaginable and almost impossible. The school song is an important symbol throughout the movie. It is metaphoric of the change that East Side undergoes. As they tune up the song, they tune up the school. The song goes from a piece of garbage, to a song that is sung in harmony and tune by the students.