

Palm Beach Dramaworks is committed to using drama as a tool to raise awareness about teen human trafficking in South Florida. In an effort to support education and awareness at the middle school level, this tour uses the power of storytelling and the performing arts to draw attention to the severity of this issue.

The Characters

ALISON: A brash, go-for-broke girl; 15

MAKAYLA: A shy, smart girl with big dreams; 15

ISABELLA: A soft, determined girl originally from Guatemala; 15

The Setting

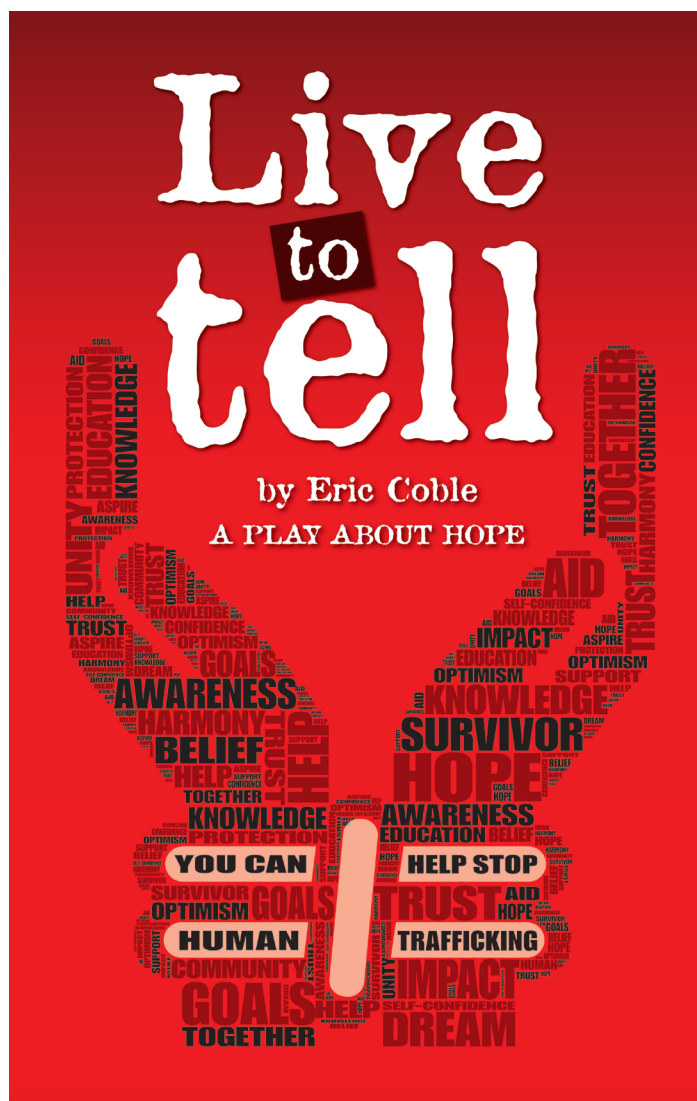
In a police investigation room and in the characters' memories

Time

Now

Production Note

Three vulnerable teen girls, Alison, Makayla, and Isabella, share their firsthand stories of being trafficked over three years. The play is told in direct address style, and the girls' stories are revealed reflectively and not through explicit action. No literal scenes of sexuality or violence will be portrayed on stage.



Detailed Synopsis for Educators

The following is a thorough, moment to moment retelling of the story.

In a prologue, the three actresses explain that they are actors and that they are portraying characters in a fictional play. They also tell the audience that if anyone becomes upset during the performance they should speak to any teacher immediately.

Alison, Makayla and Isabella sit frightened in separate rooms at a police station, independently wondering if they are under arrest and if the other two are nearby.

Each girl begins telling their personal story, starting with their relationship with their families. Alison describes a non-caring, absent mother, who drinks too much and dates a lot of men. Makayla describes how her affluent mother and father are very busy and don't understand her. She is an excellent student and plays sports, and isn't clear why her parents' rules unjustly target her maturity. Her brother, Troy, appreciates her, but he's consumed with playing Fortnite. Isabella's mother and father

live in Guatemala, and due to safety issues in their country she's been sent to the United States for safety. Isabella says her parents paid \$3,000 to transport her to Florida and they were confident she would quickly earn the money back by working in a restaurant or as a housecleaner.

Alison describes herself as smart about people, art, make-up and animals, but is not strong in academics. Unable to face her mother because of a poor report card, Alison sat idling in front of a convenience store when a man in his twenties pulled up in a sports car and asked if she was waiting for someone. They began a conversation and he offered her a beer. She scoffed and told him that she was only twelve. He replied that she looked eighteen. He purchased her food and an energy drink, and they discussed a shared dislike for their mothers. Alison wished her friends could see her talking to this man. He then tells Alison that he moved out of his home at fifteen, and suggested that if she didn't want to go home and face her mother she'd be more than welcome to stay at the apartment he shares with his girlfriend. She agreed and got into his car.

Isabella describes the journey to the United States, and of being hidden for months in a variety of vehicles, sleeping in houses with drugs and rats, and always hungry and scared.

Makayla says her trafficking experience began when she asked her mother for a pair of new, expensive shoes. She wanted pink Gucci sneakers to make her feel more confident at school, but her mother told her no and that she wasn't allowed to spend her allowance either. In frustration, she posted videos on TikTok expressing a frustration with her parents. Everyone responded positively to her posts, and a twenty-year-old man, "Mr. Music" (real name Marquan), commented on her videos, telling her he thought she was funny and talented. She looked him up on Instagram and saw that he appeared successful. When she told him she was twelve, he told her she looked much older, and they conversed online for hours.

Isabella reveals that during her journey across the United States, others traveling with her were dropped off along the way. She was the only remaining person when she arrived in Florida. Exhausted and scared after the long trek, she was taken to a strip mall and told there was a problem with her parents' payment.

Alison reflects that she loved hanging out with Anthony and his girlfriend, Genevieve, at first, and that they ate pizza and watched a funny movie. After sleeping on the couch and eating waffles for breakfast, Alison said that she felt that this was how families should interact. She mentions that her mother had no idea how to create a home like this.

Makayla and Marquan began communicating daily over private messaging apps, and sending one another "goofball" photos. He told Makayla that though he had to soon leave town for work, he wanted to meet her at the mall. Makayla told her mother she was going to a friend's house, but met Marquan in the mall's food court. There, he presented her with a gift for "his girl," the Gucci shoes she wanted so badly. Makayla remembers that she was in shock but so happy, especially because he called her "his girl."

After arriving, Isabella met Senor Cortez who ran the massage business in the strip mall. Though her parents paid \$3,000, he told her that all the paperwork, transportation, and documents actually cost \$30,000. She told him that if she could call her uncle, he would help pay. Senor Cortez said no, she had to work off the \$30,000 debt herself, and then she could call her uncle.

Alison said she thought about calling her mother, but she really liked living with Anthony and Genevieve. "Geni" took her shopping for stylish clothes and makeup, and spent time at a salon having their hair and nails done. Alison didn't miss going to school because she felt like she was learning to live like an adult with Anthony and Geni.

Makayla says that she started meeting Marquan a few blocks from her home, where he would pick her up in his car and take her to restaurants. She says that at their fifth meeting, Marquan told her he'd begun having serious feelings for her, that he knew her parents weren't there for her, and he wanted to be the person to protect her. He wanted to introduce her to all his friends and take her to concerts and clubs. Makayla says she became very emotional and told him that she would like that. Marquan then asked Makayla to audition for his friends who make YouTube videos, and he wanted them to see pictures of her. Though reluctant, she agreed to go to his hotel room and allow him to take photos. She said he presented her with revealing clothes, but when she told him she was uncomfortable, he gave her alcohol to relax her. It was the first time she'd tried alcohol. He encouraged her by telling her that he wanted every man in Hollywood to be jealous of his beautiful girlfriend.

Isabella recounts that the person who was in charge of her, Mamacita, was a frightening older woman who ran the massage parlor where she was held captive. She says that Mamacita was stern and terrifying. She took Isabella to a room in the back with a mattress on the floor; a room that she shared with a girl from Mexico and a girl from China. Mamacita made her ramen noodles and hot chocolate, and sternly gave her the rules; the most important being she wasn't allowed outside or the police would deport her or send her to jail for life. Mamacita told her she would be safe there until her debt was paid off. She then learned that Senor Cortez had a knife and would hurt her if she didn't obey the rules. Mamacita told her that men would visit her, pay her, and reduce her debt. When she met the men, the rules were that she must spend 20 minutes with them.

Alison reveals that Anthony and Geni began casually giving her alcohol and drugs. Anthony told Alison they were short for that month's rent, and asked if she would step up and help. Alison agreed to contribute. Anthony told her he had a friend who had heard she was cool, and wanted to meet her. Alison nervously agreed to meet the friend.

Makayla admitted that Marquan began giving her large quantities of alcohol. He then told her that a big music producer wanted to meet her and spend a little time with her. When she fearfully said she didn't want to meet with him alone, he sternly told her that if she was serious about her career, she had to act like a grown-up. He reassured her by saying that whatever happened between her and his friend was just business; whatever happened between she and Marquan was "for real."

All three girls reveal that they were given new names: Alison became Crystal, Makayla became Angel, and Isabella became Rio. Each describes the man they met that first night: average looking, older men. They all recount that it was a horrible experience, but each tells of the praise they received afterward from their "boyfriends" and Mamacita. Makayla and Alison then relate that Marquan and Anthony introduced them to more friends, and Isabella says she had to spend more and more time with strange men. Each reveal that they weren't allowed to say no, and that the men were cruel and violent.

Their stories jump forward two years.

Makayla: I still got me.
Isabella: I still have my song.
Alison & Makayla: I'm going to be okay.
Alison: I have the right to say "No."
Makayla: I'm going to get my voice back.
Isabella: After everything that's happened...I still have my song.

