



Portland

BWW Review: Milagro's **BROKEN PROMISES** Takes on the Hidden Problem of Teen Prostitution

by

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Here's something you might not know about Portland: We have one of the highest rates of sex trafficking and child prostitution in the United States. **BROKEN PROMISES**, a collaboration between Milagro Theatre and Planned Parenthood, aims to provide education and spark conversation around this difficult topic and to provide hope for young people who may feel like they have no other choice. Following its world premiere, **BROKEN PROMISES** will go on a national

tour of schools, bringing awareness to the teenagers who are most at risk.

In the play, Adriana, a high school sophomore who has just moved to a new school, becomes romantically involved with Esteban, a junior with no solid plans for the future. To escape her abusive father, she moves in with him. Esteban and their friends convince her to make a porn video to sell online, which she does only as a way to save money for college. Videos quickly lead to prostitution, and soon Adriana is trapped in a life that seems inescapable -- she's alienated from her family, her boyfriend has become her pimp, and her college dreams are shattered by failing grades. It all seems to happen too quickly, but this story isn't as far off of the truth as we'd like to think -- [Confessions of a Teenage Prostitute](#), a 2010 feature in the Portland Mercury, describes a true story of a girl who, in about three months, went from normal 16-year-old to turning tricks on 82nd Avenue.

BROKEN PROMISES is a difficult play to watch (the show started with a trigger warning),

but it's an important one. And playwright Olga Sanchez has taken care to present the subject matter in a way that's relatable for the show's target audience -- by incorporating hip hop and rhyme, Sanchez brings the play into the modern urban teenage world.

I was very impressed by the four young actors, especially Monica Domena in the role of Adriana. The character personifies the conflicts of teenagehood. She's both strong and weak, both wants to be left alone and wants to fit in with her peers, and Domena balances these characteristics well. Her Adriana is believable both as someone who -- through a series of small decisions -- could find herself in this horrible situation, and as someone who -- through determination and resourcefulness -- will find her way out. Geo Alva is also excellent in the role of Esteban. It's easy to see how Adriana could be seduced and manipulated by him.

Not to be a total spoiler, but the show ends on a somewhat ambiguous note. Adriana knows she needs to get out, but doesn't know how. While the audience at Milagro may desire more closure, the ending is perfect for presenting this in schools, where hopefully it will start a conversation about different ways Adriana can regain control of her life.

BROKEN PROMISES plays at Milagro Theatre through January 23. See it for yourself, for your own children, and for the many young women who are trafficked in Portland every year. Learn more about Milagro Theatre and buy tickets at <http://milagro.org/>

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