

AOL





C O N T E X T

Across the county of Los Angeles, many children are exposed to severe trauma: physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, drug addiction, neglect, mental illness, and poverty.

As a result of this trauma, they may become violent at school, involved with law enforcement, and are building criminal records. When teachers, school administrators, and staff are unable to educate students traumatized to this degree, the students are sent to Non Public schools. Non Public schools are state schools for students impacted by learning disabilities, trauma, and mental illness who were unable to succeed in the public school system. The high stakes and intensity of this school experience changes more than the students - the teachers, administrators, therapists and staff are changed as well.

When Students Are Traumatized, Teachers Are Too.
This is the subject of AWOL.



Avol



A U D I E N C E

Our show speaks to those who experience trauma, poverty, and racism, and to those that only read about it in the news.

It's for the voyeurs, the curious, and the empaths.

Our show is for the student, the parent, the teacher, and the soul searching millennial. Our plot line touches on every aspect of human suffering, while also highlighting **resiliency**, **strength**, and **humor**.





THE STORY

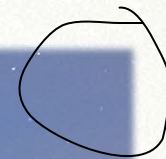
AWOL is the story of Christian, an idealistic, inexperienced school aide's introduction to the city's most problematic, violent and demanding students at a failing Non-Public School.

Christian is a high-achieving recent graduate who hopes to 'reach back' into the school to help the most challenged youth. He applies to Garden Grove Academy and is thrown into the dichotomy of The White Savior and The Maginalized Family, The Traumatized Student and The Underpaid Teacher, and the divide between Hope and Apathy in an at-risk educational system.

During his job interview, an alarming incident on campus both draws him in and leaves him questioning if he is truly cut out for the position. Before he can decide, he is hired and immediately part of our story.

AWOL is a term heard frequently at Garden Grove for when the students leave their designated area. It is also a term that reflects how our students and staff find other ways to escape their daily experiences - if only for a brief time.





FROM THE DIRECTOR

I grew up in Los Angeles, California, and at the age of three my mother was deemed unfit to care for me.

Being separated from my mother was traumatic and though I was resilient, it was not until high school that I became confident and ambitious.

I graduated from Morehouse College with a Bachelor's in Political Science and completed my graduate studies in my hometown at the University of Southern California with a Master's degree in Fine Arts. After graduation, I took a position at a local high school to give back to my community. I had never heard of a Non-Public School before being interviewed for the job and it was wrenching to hear the stories of the students I worked with every day. I learned a lot about myself through the eyes, tenacity, truth, love, and grit of kids who experience daily truths tougher than I had. This experience forced me to revisit and finally address my own trauma. AWOL the series illustrates the process of addressing trauma - both the students and the staff.





PRODUCTION

For the required authenticity, shooting in and around the Los Angeles area is vital.

In line with the strong social message of the series, it is important to show the inner-city scarcity of resources and the contrasting affluence of Los Angeles. Shooting will take place at various schools, churches, and parks.

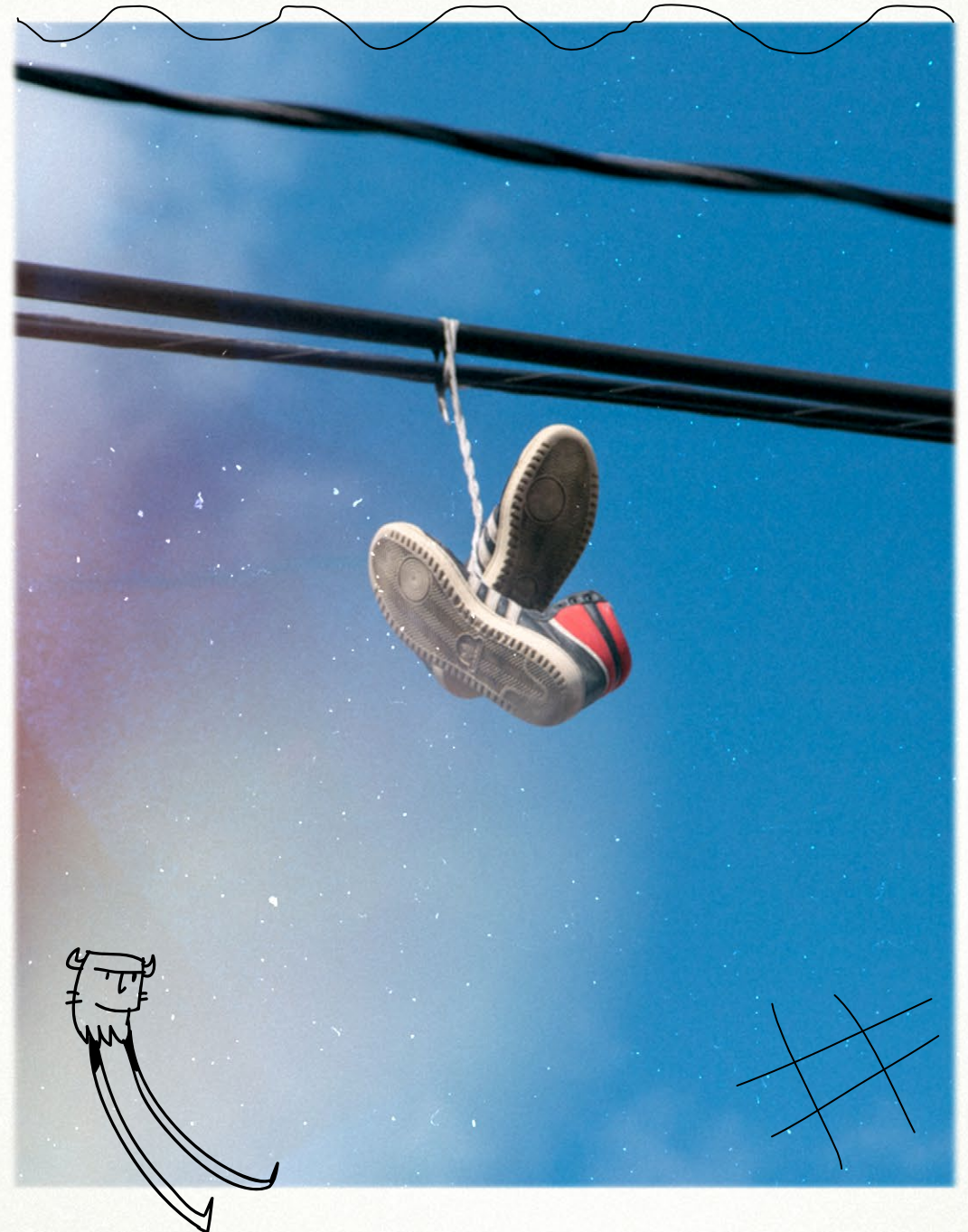
DISTRIBUTION & MARKETING

Language - This series will be in English with a heavy emphasis on Los Angeles' inner-city colloquialisms and slang.

Film Festivals - It will be submitted to the most popular film festivals in North America and France including Sundance, Tribeca Film Festival and the Festival de Cannes.

Television - The producers aspire to pitch this series to premium network channels and streaming services such as HBO, Showtime & Netflix.

Education - The AWOL series seeks to educate viewers on the scarcity of resources and services for traumatized youth and the resulting school environment. Additionally, the series serves as a window into the subculture of families in continual crisis and generational poverty.





Christian

Newly hired one-to-one aide

Due to his own childhood trauma, Christian is driven to make a positive change. Navigating the politics among staff, and seeing the severity of trauma within the students, proves more challenging than he expected.



Solomon

Lead Behavior Staff

Once a highly-respected staff member, Solomon's focus is now on his emerging career in the music industry. He relies on his charm and looks to get the most out of a situation by doing the least amount of work.



Ally

Director of Mental Health

Therapist, mother, and wife: from the outside, Ally has it all together, at work and at home. However, she is putting tremendous energy into leading a double-life that is starting to unravel.



CHARACTERS



Trinity

Assistant Principal

Bright, strong, and direct, Trinity runs a tight ship. Because she has little interest in gossip and drama, she often finds herself on the social sidelines.



Damien

High School
Teachers Assistant

Solomon's antagonist, Damien is competitive and antagonistic. His desire to be the "alpha male" often undermines his true intentions.



Amaya

Residential Student

Outspoken and smart, Amaya was forced to raise herself with no parental guidance. This made her a keen observer, and now it is the staff she observes.





Trayvon

Student

Trayvon is a natural leader among the students, and acts as the puppeteer behind much of the mischief that occurs on campus. Though he is intimidating in size, his tough exterior masks a young boy who struggles with hidden insecurities and fear.



Marcus

Student

Marcus is a leader among the outcasts. His intelligence, resourcefulness and creativity makes him invaluable among his peers.



Puck

Student

Autism hasn't stopped Puck from being one of the most popular kids at school. His irreverent yet lovable personality has brought him acceptance among the drug dealers and gangbangers on campus. He is the comedic bridge between two starkly contrasting populations of students.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

AWOL is designed to bring awareness to the effects of childhood trauma, the scarcity of resources and services for traumatized youth and the resulting school environment. By bringing awareness to these issues, we hope to raise action in our community to make immediate improvements.



THE TEAM

We all come from different backgrounds in social work, art, music and entertainment, and together we want to bring our passion project AWOL to life.

Our core team collaborating on this project recognizes there is a problem in how we are raising our youth, and know that by educating the community of their struggles, we can work toward healing and change.

Kyle Harris works at a Non-Public School. He is committed to providing extra care and assistance for his students with special needs.

Christian Henley wanting to give back to those who gave to him, took a position at a Non-Public High School in the community in which he grew up. After spending a year working as a one-to-one aid for students he decided to marry his interest and begin working with a trusted team to develop the series, AWOL, based on his unique experience working within The Los Angeles Unified School District.

Joshua Patterson was brought up in a community built around music, leadership, youth development and faith. He uses that foundation in his daily work as a lead behavior staff in a special education school, and as a youth development counselor in a locked residential facility.

Emily Margolis has worked the last 9 years in a school environment, using Art Therapy to help treat children with early childhood trauma, mental illness and other disabilities that impact their ability to learn.

Angie Williams has an educational background in both psychology and human development. She has worked with children for years and her passion is to provide the youth with a voice and a clear path so they can thrive.

Jermel Brooks pursued a degree in Psychology after graduating high school and is passionate about music, sports, and helping kids. He is currently a Teacher's Assistant at one of Los Angeles' non-public schools.

Rich Cortez has been a recording engineer for years working around Los Angeles. He has also been working for many years as a tutor, group leader, and camp counselor for many community youth centers as well as an instructor for the Peace Project.



