

**SCHOOL
GIRLS; OR,
THE AFRICAN
MEAN GIRLS
PLAY**

BY JOCELYN BIOH



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY
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*To JC—thank you for fighting for me and this play.
It worked.
Love you girl.*

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY had its world premiere at MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, and William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) on October 16, 2017. It was directed by Rebecca Taichman, the set design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume design was by Dede M. Ayite, the lighting design was by Jen Schriever, the sound design was by Palmer Hefferan, the dialect coach was Deborah Hecht, and the production stage manager was Laura Wilson. The cast was as follows:

PAULINA SARPONG	MaameYaa Boafo
ERICKA BOAFO	Nabiyah Be
AMA	Níke Kadri
NANA	Abena Mensah-Bonsu
MERCY	Mirirai Sithole
GIFTY	Paige Gilbert
HEADMISTRESS FRANCIS	Myra Lucretia Taylor
ELOISE AMPONSAH	Zainab Jah

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

In 2011, the Miss Ghana pageant officials, in an attempt to become the first West African country to have a viable and perhaps winning contestant in the Miss Universe pageant, named Yayra Erica Nego (an American-born and Minnesota-raised biracial woman) the winner of the Miss Ghana pageant. Officials claimed that her father was from the Volta Region of Ghana (a region that is considered extremely obscure, and rarely have people ever emigrated from there) but never confirmed his name or whereabouts before procuring her as a contestant for the Miss Ghana pageant. She beat out two of Ghana's most famous models at the time. Erica went on to the Miss Universe pageant that year where she did not place. I thought that story was pretty damn interesting... So I wrote a play inspired by it.

CHARACTERS

(All characters are of West African descent and are to be played by African and/or Black actors. Thank you.)

PAULINA SARPONG (*Paul-LEE-nah SAAR-pong*). 18 years old; the most popular girl in school and knows it. She is beautiful, talented, vindictive, yet somehow loveable.

ERICKA BOAFO (*BWAH-foh*). 18 years old; Light/fair skin. She is a transfer student and is new to school. She is enchanting, sweet, elusive. (*NOTE: Should be played by a fair-skinned biracial [Black and White] woman.*)

AMA (*Ahh-mah*). 18 years old; the sensible, smart one of Paulina's pack and has the honor of being her best friend. Her loyalty to Paulina is starting to fray, and she has to work up towards being the girl who is not afraid to say it like she means it.

NANA (*Nah-nah*). 16 years old; the quiet, simple, and sensitive one of Paulina's pack. She never means any harm and strives to do the right thing. She struggles with her love of food and snacks.

MERCY. 16 years old; the witty sidekick to Gifty and will do and say anything to stay a member of Paulina's pack.

GIFTY. 16 years old; the "Frick" to Mercy's "Frack"; loves being part of Paulina's pack and will do anything to be considered cool.

HEADMISTRESS FRANCIS. 40s; the Headmistress of Aburi Girls Boarding School; loves her students and will do whatever she can to both uplift and protect them.

ELOISE AMPONSAH (*Ell-oh-eez Amm-pohn-saah*). 40s; Extremely poised and well-mannered former Miss Ghana 1966. She is now a recruiter for the Miss Ghana pageant. She speaks with a slightly affected British accent and prides herself in always being a lady.

SETTING and TIME

Aburi (*EHH-bree*) Girls' boarding school—located in the Aburi mountains in central Ghana. The year is 1986.

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PART ONE

Breakfast at Aburi Girls School. The “crew”: Paulina, Ama, Nana, Mercy, and Gifty sit at a lunch table. They are The Popular Crew and everyone knows it.

PAULINA. Seriously Nana? After all I’ve said, you are still eating porridge?

MERCY. Yeah, is this your idea of a diet?

NANA. Well, it’s a smaller portion.

PAULINA. Are you determined to look like a cow?

ALL GIRLS. (*Except Nana.*) Ha!/A cow!/Farm animals!

The girls all giggle.

PAULINA. Listen Nana, I don’t know how many times I have to say it:

She snaps at Mercy to cue her.

MERCY. “We have a reputation to maintain.”

GIFTY. “To stay fit.”

MERCY. “Looking fine-fine.”

GIFTY. “All the time.”

PAULINA. Listen, I get it—you never got to eat what you wanted when you were younger—

MERCY. But you can’t make up for lost time now.

GIFTY. Yeah, the time is lost.

PAULINA. So...do you want to be fat-fat? Or fit and popular?

MERCY and GIFTY. Yeah, choose your choice.

NANA. Umm...popular.

PAULINA. Good... Then let me help you make smarter choices. I need an apple anyway.

MERCY. Oh, we can get it for you Paulina.

PAULINA. No, no, it's fine. I'm trying to burn some more calories.

Paulina leaves.

MERCY. Sorry Nana.

GIFTY. Yeah, sorry.

MERCY. We just don't want her coming after us.

NANA. No, I get it.

AMA. She has been acting so crazy lately.

MERCY. I know—this pageant! She's always judging everything.

GIFTY. (*Imitating Paulina.*) "You like your hair like that?"

MERCY. "Those shoes are hideous."

GIFTY. "You know girls... Apples are a very good source of fiber!"

MERCY. Like we know what fiber is!

NANA. She's just looking out for us. Like she always has.

AMA. Looking out for us? Please!

MERCY and GIFTY. Oooh, yeah.

MERCY. I still can't believe you were able to forgive her, Ama.

GIFTY. Forgiveness.

MERCY. Had that got back to your father—

GIFTY. A pastor—

MERCY. Who knows what would have happened.

GIFTY. Crucifixion!

AMA. Can we not bring that up right now?

MERCY. Fine.

GIFTY. Sorry.

AMA. She's just acting up because her and Kofi broke up again.

NANA. No, she told me they're back together now.

AMA. Whatever. I can't keep up anymore.

MERCY. Well, she promised me and Gifty dresses for the audition. So I won't ruffle too many feathers before then.

GIFTY. "Feathers."

AMA. (*To Mercy/Gifty.*) But your father can afford to get you and Gifty any dress you want already.

MERCY. But you know he won't get us frivolous things!

GIFTY. And to him, dresses from America?: Frivolous!

MERCY. We know we won't be picked, but we can at least look good.

AMA. Whatever. Paulina only made us all sign up to audition because Headmistress said there needed to be at least five names on the list.

NANA. But we could have a chance.

AMA. Please Nana, no one ever stands a chance when it comes to Paulina.

Paulina reenters.

PAULINA. And don't you forget it!

ALL GIRLS. Paulina! / Welcome back! / We missed you.

PAULINA. (*Hands Nana an apple.*) Here you are Nana.

NANA. Oh, thanks Paulina.

PAULINA. I got you the smallest one. I can't say it enough ladies: Regulation is your friend.

AMA. Totally.

MERCY. Our friend.

GIFTY. Our best friend. Other than you of course, Paulina.

PAULINA. Awww, you are so sweet Gifty.

GIFTY. Thank you Paulina.

PAULINA. (*Takes bite of her apple.*) You know girls, apples are a very good source of fiber. My American cousins told me there is a parable there that says: "An apple a week keeps you from being sick."

NANA. (*Takes a bite.*) Yeah... They're really good.

GIFTY. (*To Nana.*) They keep you from being sick.

PAULINA. Portion control Nana...

Nana stops eating and puts the apple down.

(*Moving on.*) Ugh... I'm so tired this morning. Can you see it under my eyes? (*Pulls down her "eye bags."*) Tired, right?

MERCY, GIFTY, and AMA. What?! No!/Are you kidding?!/You? Never!

PAULINA. Really? Well, I was up all night writing a letter to my Kofi.

The girls all swoon.

MERCY. Oh, how is he? Is his training going well? I'm glad you're back together.

GIFTY. Don't you miss him?

PAULINA. Of course I miss him. But if I'm going to be married

MERCY, GIFTY, and AMA. Oooh / Awww / Eh-eh, married where?

PAULINA. Well, eventually be married to a potential soccer player, then I have to get used to us being away from each other.

MERCY. But he's planning to come to the big dance, yes?

PAULINA. Of course! He can't wait. I am really looking forward to you all meeting him.

AMA. Oh, so he is definitely going to come this time? He's missed the last two.

PAULINA. Because he was busy—like I said.

AMA. Right.

MERCY. And what about you Ama? Is your Osei* going to come?

AMA. (*Blushing.*) Yes, he is.

The girls all giggle (except Paulina).

MERCY. I'm telling you Ama, Osei is so fine.

GIFTY. So fine!

MERCY. That skin, that smile, that body?!

GIFTY. Perfect.

MERCY. You are a lucky one, eh.

AMA. Thanks girls.

PAULINA. Yes, well let's just hope he keeps his eyes fixed on you this time.

AMA. Pardon?

* Pronounced "OHH-say."

PAULINA. Oh, I didn't want to make a big deal about it, but he was practically all over me at the last dance.

AMA. I didn't see any of that.

PAULINA. Well you wouldn't. He must be one of those slick ones—a womanizer.

GIFTY. (*Confused about what to say.*) Yeah... A womanizer.

MERCY. (*Let's change the subject.*) So, Paulina. Have you decided what you are going to wear for the Miss Ghana audition?

GIFTY. Are you making a dress for yourself again? Your designs are so gorgeous.

MERCY. Or are you wearing something you cousins in America gave you? I can't believe how many options they sent.

AMA. Yeah, it was a lot.

PAULINA. I know. Well you know my Auntie Salo works at that high class restaurant I was telling you about.

MERCY. Ah yes, White Castle.

GIFTY. A castle with food.

PAULINA. And she is always shopping for me at all the trendy American boutiques. Conway. Walmart. The list goes on. But since this is such a big moment in my life, she sent me an outfit purchased at the most famous retail place in all of New York City.

MERCY. (*Amazed.*) Where? GIFTY. Where is that?

PAULINA. Chinatown!

MERCY, NANA, and GIFTY. Wow/Oh my goodness/There is a China in New York?!

PAULINA. That's right ladies. I will be wearing my very own Calvin Klein dress to the dance.

MERCY. Oh my goodness!

GIFTY. I don't even know who that is!

NANA. I am so jealous of your life Paulina.

PAULINA. I know. I'm so blessed.

AMA. Yeah, you really are.

PAULINA. Oh Ama, don't worry. I know you can't afford to get a

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8 women

Paulina, the reigning queen bee at Ghana's most exclusive boarding school, has her sights set on the Miss Global Universe pageant. But the arrival of Ericka, a new student with undeniable talent and beauty, captures the attention of the pageant recruiter—and Paulina's hive-minded friends. This buoyant and biting comedy explores the universal similarities (and glaring differences) facing teenage girls across the globe.

"...fascinating... The nasty-teen comedy genre emerges wonderfully refreshed and even deepened by its immersion in a world it never considered. ... Beneath the infectious silliness of [the] play's adopted genre, the ugly question of internalized racism lurks. ... With no underlining and without sacrificing laughs, [Bioh] is able... to bring the audience to an unexpectedly ambivalent conclusion about the morality of cultural dominance."

—**The New York Times**

"...funny and fast-paced... brisk and clear... [Bioh] knows how to craft bouncy, juicy dialogue that performers can have fun with. She also knows that there's a sting inside all this fun."

—**New York Magazine**

"[SCHOOL GIRLS] is a ferociously entertaining morality tale that proves as heartwarming as it is hilarious. ... The clever writing features plenty of astute period-appropriate touches... SCHOOL GIRLS...arrives as a delightful surprise."

—**The Hollywood Reporter**

Also by **Jocelyn Bioh**
NOLLYWOOD DREAMS

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