



NightwoodTheatre ● ○ ||

School Girls: or, the African Mean Girls Play

By Jocelyn Bioh
Directed by Nina Lee Aquino

Produced by Obsidian Theatre in association with Nightwood Theatre

Resource and Background Material



Created by Sadie Epstein-Fine and Marina Gomes
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Community Engagement Partner



INTRODUCTION

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 Minnesotaraised bi-racial 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 and wanted to explore how the Western idea of colorism infiltrated into African society.

Also, my mom was a (proud) mean girl when she was a student at Aburi Girls boarding school. So, there's that.

THEMES

Standards of Beauty, Shadeism, Racism, Coming of Age, Group Dynamics

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Drama; Gender Studies; English; Healthy Living; World Cultures; Fashion; Sociology

CHARACTERS

PAULINA SARPONG (pronounced PAUL-LEE-NAH / SAAR-PONG) - 18 years old; most popular girl in school and knows it. She is beautiful, talented, vindictive yet somehow loveable.

ERICKA BOAFO (pronounced BWAH-FOH) - 18 years old; Light/fair skin; ****NOTE**** Should be played by a fair skinned biracial (Black and White) woman. She is a transfer student and is new to school. She is seemingly nice but people do not know much about her.

AMA (pronounced AHH-MAH) - 18 years old; the sensible, smart one of Paulina's pack. Is not afraid to say it like she means it.

NANA (pronounced NAH-NAH) - 16 years old; the simple pseudo dumb one of Paulina's pack. She struggles with her love of food and snacks. Very sensitive.

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 - 40's; the Headmistress of Aburi Girls Boarding School; loves the girls but is also constantly exhausted by them.

ELOISE AMPONSAH (pronounced AMM-PONE-SAAH) - 40's; Extremely poised and well-mannered former Miss Ghana 1976. She now is a recruiter for the Miss Ghana Pageant. She speaks with a slightly affected British accent and prides herself in always being a lady.

CAST AND CREATIVE

Playwright- Jocelyn Bioh

Director- Nina Lee Aquino

Performers- Akosua Amo-Adem, Allison Edwards, Melissa Langdon, Bria McLaughlin, Tatyana Mitchell, Natasha Mumba, Rachel Mutombo, Emerjade Simms

Set Design- Rachel Forbes

Costume Design- Joanna Yu

Lighting Design- Michelle Ramsay

Sound Design and Composition- Reza Jacobs

Stage Manager- Emilie Aubin

Assistant Director- Tawiah Ben M'Carthy

Assistant Stage Manager- Ada Aguilar

Head of Wardrobe- Chantelle Laliberte

Head of Props- Vanessa Janiszewski

Dialect Coach- Ausar Stewart

Production Managers – Alanna McConnell and Rebecca Vandavelde

About Obsidian Theatre

Obsidian is Canada's leading culturally specific theatre company. Our threefold mission is to produce plays, to develop playwrights and to train emerging theatre professionals. Obsidian is passionately dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice. Obsidian produces plays from a world-wide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights. Obsidian provides artistic support, promoting the development of work by Black theatre makers and offering training opportunities through mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging Black artists.

About Nightwood Theatre

Nightwood Theatre is Canada's leading producer of contemporary theatre created by women. Founded in 1979 by Cynthia Grant, Kim Renders, Mary Vingoe and Maureen White, it is known as the oldest professional women's theatre in Canada. Since its founding, Nightwood has created and produced award-winning plays, which have won Dora Mavor Moore, Chalmers, Trillium and Governor General's Awards. Today Nightwood remains at the forefront of developing and disseminating new work by female playwrights in Canada, with a legacy of nearly four decades of propelling women's voice. As a feminist theatre, Nightwood creates a forum for a vital conversation about women's lived experiences to a broad and engaged audience. It brings together diverse female-identifying artists and provides them with unparalleled opportunities and essential resources to develop and produce widely acclaimed, provocative, entertaining and socially relevant theatre. Committed to artistic excellence, the avid promotion of gender equity in the arts, and the successful training and development of emerging female-identifying talent, Nightwood has become an established, nationally respected theatre.

SYNOPSIS

PART 1

PAULINA and the rest of her group (AMA, NANA, GIFTY and MERCY) discuss the upcoming auditions for the Miss Ghana Pageant. PAULINA is going to lend all of the girls dresses because she has cousins in America who send her clothing. The girls notice that PAULINA has been particularly mean and judgmental to them as the audition approaches. Halfway through lunch HEADMISTRESS FRANCIS lets them know that a new student, ERICKA, will be joining them from America. ERICKA is light skinned, which the girls comment on immediately. All of the girls immediately take to ERICKA, and as they get to know her they find out she is funny and generous. The only person who ERICKA does not win over is PAULINA. PAULINA makes a plan to dig up dirt on ERICKA.

PART 2

The recruiter for the Pageant, ELOISE, arrives early and visits HEADMISTRESS FRANCIS as she takes inventory of the cafeteria. We come to learn that ELOISE and FRANCIS were school mates at Aburi (the boarding school) before ELOISE became Miss Ghana 1966. ELOISE wants to recruit the next Miss Ghana, because it will mean a promotion for her, and FRANCIS wants the winner to come from Aburi so the school can get some money. It is clear the two of them do not see eye to eye, and at the height of their bickering PAULINA walks in. Once PAULINA realizes who ELOISE is she tries to impress her, but ELOISE does not want her- she wants the light skinned ERICKA.

PAULINA dismisses NANA from her group after NANA gets her ERICKA's school file. While PAULINA is reading the file ERICKA walks in. They try to engage in small talk, but it does not work. Finally PAULINA informs ERICKA that she has been running the school up until now and warns her not to get in the way. ERICKA is not threatened by her. All of the girls (except PAULINA) prepare for a makeover party. ERICKA reveals that a lot of what PAULINA says about her relatives in America is a lie. They all get really excited for the audition.

PART 3

It is the morning of the audition and all of the girls are dressed in their Sunday best. As they all convene in the cafeteria the tension between them mounts. All of the girls have abandoned PAULINA for ERICKA. As they comment on how each other looks nasty comments get passed around, and eventually AMA confronts PAULINA about the lies and gossip she has been spreading. Things take a nasty turn as AMA and PAULINA reveal each others' deepest secrets.

ELOISE and FRANCIS enter and the girls compose themselves. They sing a song they prepared for the audition. PAULINA is good, but ERICKA is better. As ELOISE is about to pick ERICKA to be Miss Ghana PAULINA reveals that ERICKA was not born in Ghana and therefore is disqualified. She reveals secrets from ERICKA's file that she had NANA steal for her. As all of the girls finally turn on PAULINA, her face starts seriously bleeding from the bleaching cream she has been using. As the audition erupts into chaos FRANCIS steps in, apologizing to ELOISE for the girls' behaviour.

FRANCIS reprimands PAULINA and ERICKA and makes them apologize to each other. Once left alone the truth of each of their hardships is revealed.

ELOISE reenters and reveals that she has chosen ERICKA to compete for Miss Ghana. After making sure no one will reveal ERICKA's birth status she leaves with ERICKA.

EPILOGUE

The girls prepare to watch ERICKA in the Miss Universe Pageant. All of the girls are back to normal except PAULINA, who no one has talked to since the audition. PAULINA finally appears, but it is clear that no one wants to be friends with her.

They watch as the top 10 Miss Universe contestants are revealed. ERICKA does not place and all of the girls are shocked and disappointed.

END OF PLAY

Questions for discussion:

1. What character did you most relate to in the play?
2. What lesson do you think Paulina learned by the end of the play? What lesson did Ericka learn?
3. What did all of the characters learn about themselves? What did they achieve?
4. Why do you think that Ama stayed friends with Paulina for so long?
5. The play only took place in the cafeteria. Why do you think the playwright chose to do this? Did you think this was a strong choice? Did you wish there were other locations shown?
6. Are the conversations the students had in the play similar to the conversations you and your friends have? How are they different?
7. While this play takes place in the 1980s the themes still resonate with our current global social and political climate. What issues do the characters deal with that we are still dealing with? What elements felt dated?

Suggested activities:

1. Create a short play about 6 friends in your school in the cafeteria. What makes this play interesting? What are the stakes?
2. Create a 7th character who could be friends with the students in the play. This is your character. Write a monologue from their perspective.
3. Step into the shoes of one of the characters in the show. Write a diary entry or a monologue from their perspective about an event that happens or is mentioned in the play.

I just wanted to be the right kind of black

Society just starting to unravel complex politics of colourism.

By Kathleen Newman-Bremang

Published: September 5th, 2018, *The Hamilton Spectator*

Questions before reading the article:

1. What is the definition of shadeism (colourism)?
2. In what ways have you seen it portrayed in your local community? In the media? Nationally? Internationally?

Like so many other little girls, I used to watch my mom intently while she got ready for a night out, like her beauty routine was my favourite TV show. I would sit on the side of her bathtub while she admired herself in the mirror, combing through her soft, long, curly hair.

She hated putting on makeup, so when I got old enough, I did her makeup for her. I'd smile while I applied her honey-hued foundation, secretly seething with envy. My mother is mixed race, Jamaican and English, with a skin tone similar to Sade. On a shade scale that ranges from, say, Meghan Markle to Lupita Nyong'o, I'm closer to Kerry Washington.

Now, I have a deep, unabashed love for my skin and the story it tells of my ancestry, but for much of my youth, I felt betrayed by my genes. They hadn't given me my mother's "good hair" and fair skin. Instead I got my Ghanaian (on my dad's side) aunties' noses and darker complexion. I got their kinky hair that I never saw portrayed on screen or in magazines as beautiful or even normal. I dealt with constant petting by my white peers who thought my hair was more fascinating than our second-period science experiments. It's not that I wanted to be white like them, I just wanted to be the kind of Black that mainstream culture had deemed beautiful.

I didn't learn the term "colourism" until high school, when I was searching for texts to stay woke, before staying woke was a thing. Colourism was coined by famed author Alice Walker to explain the prejudice placed on Black people with dark skin and the privileges afforded to those with lighter skin. The ramifications of this prejudice have been felt since slavery when light-skinned slaves were given preferential treatment, until now, when dark-skinned men and women are predominately depicted in pop culture as damaging stereotypes such as gangsters or hookers or, conversely, as asexual, one-dimensional caregivers. They're rarely the love-interest or the flawed hero.

If we never see anyone darker than Halle Berry (or younger actresses such as Zendaya, Yara Shahidi or Amandla Stenberg) in these roles, is it any wonder why black women are the least preferred women on dating apps, according to a study by OKCupid?

Is it really surprising that black girls as young as 5 are perceived as older and more likely to be seen as guilty when suspected of a crime, according to a 2017 study by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality? The images that we grow up with matter. I don't think it's a stretch to connect the injustice

happening in real life to the representation we see in pop culture. Representation affects how people view us, and it also affects how we view ourselves.

When I call Sharon Lewis, the first woman of colour to host two national live TV programs in Canada, and now an accomplished director, she tells me that colourism is still plaguing the entertainment industry, an industry in which I work as a TV producer.

"I grew up with — I call it shade-ism — where lighter was better, straighter hair was better," Lewis says. "I really wanted to redefine what beauty looks like."

Lewis says that this bias in casting is why she made a point to cast a dark-skinned black woman, Mouna Traoré, as the lead in her sci-fi film "Brown Girl Begins."

Over the phone, Traoré shared anecdotes about growing up with dark skin that were heartbreakingly relatable. When Traoré was around 10, she saved up money to buy a skin brightening cream. Now, she's less appalled by the little girl who desperately wanted to change her skin colour than by the older Jamaican woman at the counter who encouraged her to buy the cream. I'm appalled that in 2015, a report by Global Industry Analysts found that the skin lightening industry was expected to be worth \$23 billion by 2020. It's not just black women buying these products. Cultures all over the world perpetuate the myth that beauty is defined by the lightness of our skin.

"A lot of my issues and insecurities came because I saw what other people responded to," Traoré tells me. "I don't know if I, necessarily, thought that dark skin was ugly. I think that I thought other people thought it was ugly."

Overcome with recognition of this sentiment, I nod so hard that I almost drop my phone. But while I may recognize the emotions Traoré felt, my experience is not the same. I know that black women darker than me have faced colourism worse than I ever will, and that I benefit from my own medium-skinned privilege. I can at least find my shade of foundation (usually) at the drugstore. Traoré tells me that her favourite Japanese beauty brand discontinued the one shade that matched her skin. Both Traoré and model Alud Deng Anei share stories about makeup (and praise Rihanna for creating Fenty, a line that offers 40 diverse shades and finally makes them feel seen instead of erased). Anei says she didn't wear makeup for years simply because she couldn't find her shade.

Now, Anei's act of rebellion against the colourism she faces in the modelling world is to stop bringing her own foundation to shoots. If a makeup artist doesn't have the tools to paint her face, she says it's on them. "It's unprofessional (for a makeup artist) to show up to a shoot and be like, 'I don't have your shade.' You have to hold people accountable for what they're supposed to do."

Jayd Ink, an artist who just garnered national attention on CTV's "The Launch," is hoping to hold people accountable through song. She wrote a song called "Darkskin" with lyrics inspired by her own experiences

with colourism: "I wear weaves and rock my natural/ Can you believe he says I'm pretty for a dark skin/ And he was dark skin?"

"Men who were trying to give me compliments would say, 'You're pretty for a dark skin girl,'" Ink explains. "It was confusing at first being a young girl, you think, is that a compliment?"

Hint: it's not a compliment. Ink's song speaks to all the little girls who never see themselves reflected in music videos or at the top of the pop charts. She's hoping it sparks a conversation. "(The song) is not about pitting light-skin and dark-skin women against each other. It's about educating people, to let them know that all races are beautiful."

I wish I had Ink's songs, Lewis and Traoré's movies and Anei on the cover of magazines when I was growing up, envying my mother's skin on repeat. I wish I had Danai Gurira and Lupita Nyong'o in "Black Panther" or Viola Davis in "How to Get Away with Murder" to look to as reminders that every kind of blackness is beautiful.

Maybe I would have believed my mother when she'd look up from her mirror to tell me I was beautiful, too. Maybe the next generation of little girls will, too.

Questions after reading the article:

1. Singer Jade Ink speaks in the article about people trying to compliment her by saying "You're pretty for a black skinned girl". Why is it problematic to say "You're pretty for a (insert identity here)"? What could be the potential impact of this statement on people who are told this?
2. Why is model Aluad Deng Anei rebellious for not bringing her own makeup to photoshoots?
3. Relate this article to the characters in *School Girls*. What are comments they make that reflect and perpetuate ideas of shadeism?

Barbados: What's the Controversy Over White Miss Barbados?

By Ian Walcott-Skinner

Published: September 20th, 2016, *The Burton Wire*

Questions before reading the article:

1. When you think of the winner of the Miss Universe beauty pageant who do you think of? What does she look like? What country do you think she is from?

In less than 48 hours after Shannon Harris was crowned Miss Universe Barbados 2016, the Facebook post of *Barbados Today's* (popular online newspaper) Facebook page congratulating this young beautiful Barbadian lass has turned into a national debate on race, color, privilege, class, beauty standards, culture and fairness (to mention a few of the sub-themes). The post now has a reach of 146,000,000 views and ongoing commentary at the time of this TBW post.

First of all, I wish to congratulate all 14 delegates for their courage to even think about entering such a show in Barbados. And of course, I congratulate our winner Shannon on her achievement.

I must admit that I did not want to be publicly drawn into this debate but I felt compelled to give my two cents worth having worked closely with this 'industry' on a few occasions in varying capacities, mainly as a stage manager and background coordinator. Having said that, I must also admit that when I looked at the photos and the hype leading up to the show, I too (like the judges) placed all my bets on Shannon.

Similarly, I was living in the pageant-loving country of Venezuela in 1998 when I placed my bets on Wendy Fitzwilliam from Trinidad and Tobago who eventually won the Miss Universe show that year.

As you can see, Shannon is a white Barbadian and Wendy is a black Trinidadian. (For my readers outside of these two countries, Barbados has a white population of 4% and Trinidad and Tobago has a black population of 37.5%.)

The following year, 1999, Miss Universe was held in Trinidad and for the first time in its history, young women of African descent won the show in two consecutive years as Wendy handed over her crown to Mpule Kwelagobe of Botswana.

Now back to Barbados. Shannon certainly is not the first white Barbadian to represent our country at these shows and hopefully, she will not be the last. So the question is what is so different this time around? Many are asking why are we still having this furor on race in 2016? Rather than venture to answer this complex question in an overly simplistic way, I will dare say that there were similar uproars in the world of international pageantry when racial or ethnic minorities were selected to represent their country of birth or residence. There are now several examples of this. Venezuela had a similar reaction and uproar when they selected their first black Miss Venezuela, Carolina Indriago in 1999, so did Italy, Holland, [France](#) and more recently [Japan](#).

Whether or not a country picks a woman from a minority group or a majority one, there seems to be a standard look, a default position that we have all come to accept as beauty and this is what ultimately must be interrogated. What are some of the prerequisites of this globalized standard of beauty?

From a very basic observation point, there seems to be a demand for tall slim women under 130lbs regardless of race. There seems also to be a demand for long hair and some degree of facial symmetry (whatever that is). In fact, in the pageant world, it is rumored that the famous and controversial Cuban-born queen-maker of Venezuela, Osmel Sousa, once said that Miss Universe is not a show about natural beauty but one of "perfect beauty".

Therefore, let's examine this so-called concept of perfect beauty. Who sets these standards? Are these standards racially biased? Had we chosen a black woman on Saturday night, what standards of beauty

would she have fit into? Would she be under 130lbs, tall, with symmetrical features and long hair or would she have looked like the typical Afro-Caribbean “girl next door?” Do these beauty queens ever look like the typical “girl next door?” Does a Japanese beauty queen ever look like a “typical Japanese girl?” We can go on and on and ask this question for any country?

Furthermore, do we really want our beauty queens to be truly representative of who we are? And who are we? This is where we need to be honest with ourselves in this hushed national debate. Who are we?

Certainly growing up in Barbados, I can vividly remember our black womenfolk spending long hours in hair salons straightening their hair with harsh chemicals. I also remember them ‘pressing’ their hair with hot irons to make it straight as they are now wearing long hair weaves that are not naturally theirs. This, I might add, became very much an ingrained normalized behavior. It is only in the last twenty years or so that we saw the emergence of what is now known as a “natural hair salon”. Therefore, these are deep-rooted issues that need to be addressed in our post-colonial existence and minds.

So this brings me back to why I chose Shannon to be this year’s winner and Wendy to be the winner of Miss Universe in 1998. From the naked eye, they both seem to fit the same mold and that same standard mentioned above (be they Black, White, Asian, Indian, mixed or other).

I will end with questions rather than answers. Are we programmed? Are we programmed by mass media, pop culture and a hegemonic worldview that dictate for us what is beauty? When we pick the ‘winner’, what are we programmed to see? These are the real questions that need to be answered and I truly think that it goes beyond black and white. There are multi-billion dollar industries that benefit from their capitalist agenda, creating and pushing beauty products, magazines, TV shows, movies, music and fashion all geared towards an aspirational ideal that can never be reached by the vast majority of humankind.

Yet, the billions who will watch these shows on TV (and now on their mobile phones) will aspire, in one form or another, to be just like the beauty queens, models, sports and/or movie stars. They will want to wear similar clothing or drive similar cars. But again I’m going off topic. Let’s all plead guilty to being programmed by this capitalist agenda. We cannot hide from it. It’s in our faces – the car ads, the movies, the Internet. Who’s pulling the strings and who is programming our minds to fall in line?

Who is setting the agenda of this globalized economy? Who is really pulling the strings? Who controls what?

I can only now say best of luck to you Shannon, and I hope this controversy catapults you into the top five as it did for so many others who suffered a similar fate of such negative public outcry from their own countrymen and women.

Questions after reading the article:

1. How does the author define “perfect beauty” in this article?
2. Who benefits from this definition of beauty?

More Resources on Shadeism and White Beauty Standards:

VIDEOS:

Shadeism: Digging Deeper (Toronto, 2010)- A documentary discussing shadeism
(Part 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6oaEHsdhOs>

(Part 2)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBukJHyV_sk

BBC- Young people talk about how colourism affects them and society at large.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6V1AjDqXnk>

Decoded - Light skin privilege - This deals with how shadeism works in our media/culture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dE4Lo4Tlc8Y>

Decoded - White Beauty Standards (Told by women of colour. How representation matters.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySpytmtCB5o>

Decoded - This covers colourism in the Latinx culture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZsY1kYHT8A>

RADIO:

CBC Sound bite - From young Women of Colour (WOC) in Montreal finding that they are raised in a climate of Shadeism - The article can also be read. (2016)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/real-talk-on-race-colourism-1.3501700>

CBC - Racism towards mixed race women:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/real-talk-on-race-race-mixed-race-1.3497544>

ARTICLES:

The Star - Oshawa - Shadeism and Bullying (2016)

https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/05/19/students_in_oshawa_challenge_shadeism.html

Brief history of black make-up- before Fenty existed

<https://www.racked.com/2018/1/23/16901594/black-makeup-brands-history>

SCENE STUDY

EXCERPT 1

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!

PAULINA

Listen Nana, I don't know how many times I have to say it:
Snaps at Mercy to cue her.

MERCY

"We have a reputation to maintain."

GIFTY

"To stay fit."

MERCY

"Looking fine-fine."

1.

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 somemore 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 (CONT'D)

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.

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 5 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.

Questions after reading the scene:

1. Why does AMA continue to be a part of PAULINA's group even though she is obviously critical of her?
2. Why does PAULINA care so much about NANA's appearance? What stakes does she have in making sure her group fits with beauty standards?
3. How does the atmosphere shift when PAULINA leaves the room? How does this effect the other characters' bodies?

EXCERPT 2

ERICKA
Hey Paulina.

PAULINA
Hi... What are you doing here?

ERICKA
Just waiting for the girls. They told me to meet them
here so we could walk over to the dorm together.

PAULINA
Oh that's right. Your little "makeover party."

ERICKA
... Yeah... You can come too you know? Open invitation.

PAULINA
No, I'm okay. I have more important things to do.

ERICKA
Well, if you change your mind, you can always-

PAULINA
I won't.

ERICKA
....Okay.

*Silence. Beat. Neither of them know what to do. Ericka takes a bar of
chocolate out of her bag.*

ERICKA (CONT'D)
Want some chocolate?

PAULINA

No... Calories.

ERICKA
Right.

PAULINA
Also, you should know that any sort of sweet is not allowed on campus or in the dormitories. It's considered contraband.

ERICKA
Oh.. I thought we all just knew to keep it a secret.

PAULINA
Secrets, eh? Is that your thing?

ERICKA
No.... But it's just chocolate.

PAULINA
Right. Your daddy's cocoa. Do you have an endless supply?

ERICKA
Not really.

PAULINA
I've driven past that property. Nice mansion.

ERICKA
Didn't spend much time there.

PAULINA
Ah, yes. America. Ohio. Don't you think your friends miss you?

ERICKA
I don't know. I had a pretty small circle.

PAULINA
I know the feeling... It's not like we just let anyone into our group.

Ericka shifts.

ERICKA
Oh.. Is there a test you need to pass or something?

PAULINA
(*amused*)

Listen... Ericka. You're new here, so let me help you understand some things: I have been running this school for a long time. Nothing and no one crosses me.

ERICKA

Okay.

PAULINA

And no one cares about your makeup, or music and fancy American things.

ERICKA

Clearly you do.

PAULINA

Excuse me?

ERICKA

You're the one who keeps bringing it up. Why do you care so much?

PAULINA

I don't.

ERICKA

You sure about that?

PAULINA

Very.

ERICKA

Listen Paulina - I don't know what your problem is, but I'm not afraid of you, okay? It's going to take a lot more than some empty threats to shake me.

PAULINA

No threats here. Just a warning.

ERICKA

Sure.

Questions after reading the scene:

1. Do you think ERICKA is the only person who has ever stood up to PAULINA? How do you think PAULINA feels being stood up to?
2. At what point in the scene does ERICKA stop wanting to be PAULINA's friend?
3. What is PAULINA trying to achieve in this scene? What is ERICKA trying to achieve?
4. Do either of them achieve their goal?