

"Causing Fear, Causing Alarm": On Akosua's Political Cartoons in Contemporary Ghana.

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Historically in contemporary Ghana, political cartoons have not conventionally figured in the country's political and democratic discourses. The absence of this discourse can be perhaps attributed to the fear of 'dictatorial' democratic governments, and military juntas who have repeatedly disrupted democratic governance in the country. Common to these governments is how they ruthlessly deal with open critiques of their governance. However, with the advent of democratic dispensation, (that begun in 1992 with its concomitant liberalization of print and media houses), political cartoons, especially in private daily newspapers, have begun to emerge. These cartoons are now discussed on various FM radio stations as part of daily newspapers reviews. In this paper, I examine the works of *Akosua*, one of Ghana's celebrated satiric political cartoonists. Utilising ethnographic insights from Ghana, I specifically investigate thematic issues inherent in *Akosua*'s work such as suppression of press freedom under democratic dispensation in Ghana; the acrimonious relationships that exist between Ghana's current living ex-presidents; homosexuality, and religiosity in Ghanaian politics. From the analysis of these themes, I argue that *Akosua*'s rendering of these issues as humorous is a potent route of refocusing audiences' attention on these serious national issues. From this perspective, I note that her cartoons act as an important alternative media discourse that contributes to the overall democratic political dialogue in Ghana.