

LbE

Nr.4 Civil Society and political commitment

Satirical press – Senegal

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Editor: Sandrine Blanchard

Translation: Anne Thomas

1 female off voice (Featuretext + Outro)

2 fictional characters (Intro+ Dialog) :

- **Philomène (name can be changed):** young woman who knows a lot,
Alphonse's big sister

- **Alphonse (name can be changed):** young man who is more naive,
asks a lot of questions, Philomene's younger brother

3 voice overs: - Omar Diakité (man)

- Omar Diarra (man)

- Soro Diop (man)

Teaser LbE

INTRO :

Philomène :

Hello everybody, hello Alphonse!

Alphonse :

Hello Philomène!

Philomène :

Today in our Learning by Ear program on civil society we're talking about the satirical press.

Alphonse (*intrigued*) :

The satirical press? I've never heard of it...

Philomène (*smiling*):

Well maybe you don't know what it means but you must have seen satirical newspapers before.

Alphonse (*taken aback*) :

Really? Maybe...

Philomène :

It's a form of press which mixes humor with social or political criticism...

Alphonse :

Like caricature for example?

Philomène :

Exactly! Caricature is one aspect of it.

Alphonse (enthusiastic):

Cool! I love it...

Philomène :

So let's open our ears wide and we're off to Senegal!

REPORTAGE :

1. Clip: Omar Diakit  (French)

"This is my material -- my blank sheet of paper, my markers, gray crayons, my mechanical pencils, a felt-tip for fine lines. I'm scared of the blank sheet of paper because I have to attain something presentable, something that's pleasant to read and also comprehensible. Caricature is a whole. You need the drawing and that drawing has to transmit information and on top of that you need a little touch of humor so the reader can mock or smile derisively. When all that comes together it means it's a success."

Reporter:

Omar Diakit  is a cartoonist for the Senegalese daily "Le Quotidien". His job consists of making people laugh with his drawings whilst transmitting a message, a piece of information.

2. SFX Sound of a felt pen drawing

3. Clip: Omar Diakité (French)

"It takes me about an hour to do the drawing itself but much longer to come up with the idea. You have to figure out in your head how it will all come together. Once I've drawn it in my head, I put it on the table so to speak"

Reporter:

Over time, Omar Diakité has developed his own style. His drawings shed light on current affairs or important issues in contemporary Senegalese society. He uses humor to denounce the absurdities and injustices that he observes around him.

4. Clip: Omar Diakité (French)

"I've got the whole press at my disposal. And I'm lucky enough to have the Internet. So I go to Senegalese sites and international ones to see what's going on in the world."

Reporter:

The satirical press has become a constituent element of the Senegalese media landscape. Many readers have become accustomed to getting their information from critical or satirical newspapers. Omar Diarra for example:

5. Clip: Omar Diarra (French)

"I think that the satirical press is particular because it has a different take on society compared to what you usually see in the mainstream press."

Reporter:

The interest in satire is not new in Senegal. Senegal was the first Francophone country in Africa to liberalize its political landscape after the wave of independences in the 1960s. From the mid-1970s, Léopold Sédar Senghor,

Senegal's first president, allowed critical voices in the country to express themselves reasonably openly.

6. SFX (sound of offsets)

Reporter:

"Le Politicien", which means "The Politician", first saw the light of day in 1977. Founded by the journalist Mame Less Dia, it was Senegal's first satirical newspaper. The journalist Soro Diop recalls:

7. Clip: Soro Diop (French)

"His chosen satirical method was to depict political figures as animals. The former president Abdou Diouf was a giraffe, his follower, Abdoulaye Wade, was a "njombor", a hare. The giraffe was characterized by its length, the hare by its mischievousness, its slyness in Senegalese society and that's how Mame Less Dia was able to transmit certain messages without crossing the censor."

Alphonse :

It's like in fables where animals symbolize a particular character trait...

Philomène :

Exactly. Let's come back to this in a moment if you don't mind.

Reporter:

The newspaper "Le Politicien" filled a gap in the Senegalese media landscape. And soon it attracted imitators. Soro Diop runs the political desk at the "Le Quotidien" newspaper.

8. Clip: Soro Diop (French)

"I would borrow [the French philosopher] Voltaire's definition of satire as being a way of punishing customs by laughter. It's essential in our societies with respect to delicate questions that the traditional press cannot approach in such a raw manner as it might approach certain current affairs. There are subjects which are more or less sensitive in terms of morality, customs, and bans in our societies. It's possible to use satire so information can be transmitted -- satire and laughter."

Reporter:

The cartoonist Omar Diakité says most famous people in Senegal accept criticism with good humor:

9. Clip: Omar Diakité (French)

"They quite like being caricatured. If there's a drawing about them they think it means that they're important. So they like it because it means they count in the system."

Alphonse :

Personally, I can picture myself being depicted as a lion...

Philomène :

But Alphonse, generally it's the cartoonist who decides what animal he wants to depict you as. And not everybody has the same sense of humor. Sometimes jokes are offensive, hurtful -- even unintentionally. Listen to what Omar Diakité says:

10. Clip: Omar Diakité (French)

"Yes, there's also a limit, as you know the freedom of one ends where that of the other begins. It's also true that there's freedom of speech, the freedom to depict everybody because everyone knows that caricature is mocking and grotesque. A drawing has to go a long way, further than journalists go in their articles but there are some things that can't be touched."

Reporter:

Humor allows certain taboos to be transgressed but religion remains the taboo of all taboos as Soro Diop explains:

11. Clip: Soro Diop (French)

"Our society is very sensitive when it comes to religion. In Senegal we're facing a brand of Islam which is divided into brotherhoods. It's really sensitive because what we call the Talibes -- the disciples -- who are absolutely devoted to the authority of the Marabouts, are people who have no hesitation about attacking journalists."

Alphonse :

Why do things sometimes degenerate to this extent? Satire is supposed to be funny, isn't it?

Philomène :

Well, this brings us back to how humor is received, not only by those directly targeted by satire but also by the readers...

12. Clip: Soro Diop (French)

"Senegal's satirical press, I have to admit, is generally aimed at a certain category of Senegalese who have a high enough intellectual level to understand. Not everybody can understand caricature or satire. Satire should

not be interpreted at face value, it has to be taken with a pinch of salt and only then can it be understood."

MUSIC

PART 2 : DiALOGUE

Alphonse :

And I thought that the satirical press was just to make people laugh...

Philomène :

Well not only -- often humor and irony transmit serious messages.

Alphonse :

What's irony?

Philomène :

It's when we say the opposite of what we want the other person to understand. For example, we make so many compliments that we end up ridiculing the person we're complimenting.

Alphonse (joking, exaggerating on purpose):

Ah! As if I were to say something like "my wonderful big sister whom I love so much and who will always be my role model all my life because she's so perfect in every way"??

Philomène (a bit cold) :

Yep, something like that even if you're example isn't very funny.

Alphonse (mocking) :

Oh ,what's up Philomene? Have you lost your sense of humor?

Philomène (relaxing):

You're right... but you see how you have to be careful because even if you're joking people might take it the wrong way.

Alphonse :

OK, but tell me more about the satirical press in Africa.

Philomène :

Often the satirical newspapers publish humorous drawings, caricatures, funny articles, cartoons and also information.

Alphonse :

But it would seem that some newspapers also use humor as a pretext for provocation. They make fun of people, bordering on pornography or ending up abusing people verbally.

Philomène :

It's all a question of balance. Satire is a very demanding genre. It's true that not all journalists can write something profound or criticize society with a light tone.

Alphonse :

At the beginning of the program we talked about a newspaper which talked indirectly about politicians by telling stories about animals.

Philomène :

Yes, this helps journalists make fun of situations, of people in power, of opposition members, of stars, or other famous members of society. Satirical newspapers do this to their hearts' content.

Alphonse :

I'm not sure that satirical journalists would like to be made fun of in the same way.

Philomène :

I wouldn't be so sure -- often they make fun of themselves -- it's called self-irony.

Alphonse :

Clever! If you criticize yourself it's easier to criticize others.

Philomène :

Yes, it creates a strong affectionate link with the reader. Satirical newspapers often use language which can be understood by everyone on the street. Others mix official language with local dialects or slang. So their language is more alive, more acerbic, more understandable than the language journalists use in mainstream newspapers.

Alphonse :

The next time my teacher tells me off for my language I'll tell him I'm using slang and practising to become a satirical journalist!

Philomène and Alphonse laugh.

Outro

Reporter:

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