

# THE KYEREMA

FSB LAW CONSULT'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## *In this issue:*

- ◆ Have we changed in 35 years?: Revisiting echoes from the past.
- ◆ Our new digital street names: Let's do it right.
- ◆ FSB News

# Have we changed in 35 years?: Revisiting echoes from the past.



By: Francisca Serwaa Boateng, Esq.

*The excerpt below is culled from the speech delivered by the late distinguished Supreme Court judge, Mr. Justice J. N. K. Taylor, at the Annual Conference of the*

*Ghana Bar Association in Kumasi on 4th October,*

*1988<sup>1</sup>. The contents echo the*

*dilemmas of lawyers today as it did almost a third of a century ago when the speech was made. By revisiting some of these speeches from the sages of old, it will hopefully throw light on where we have come from, where we are today, and the urgent need to chart a new paradigm for ourselves. Apparently, 'sycophancy', 'fawning for favours,' 'shameless ruffians,' 'merchants of evil' and 'political parasites' in our body-politic are elements rooted in history. Happy reading.*

"The lawyer is a necessary adjunct to the machinery for the proper and fair administration of law and justice. The prevalent public disapproval of his role when he defends an unpopular man or cause is not healthy for the law and does not advance the course of justice... It is my well-considered opinion that this belief and erroneous view so embarrassing to lawyers, creates a dilemma and conscience crisis and if not checked or eliminated from the body-politic may deter the good lawyer from representing unpopular causes. And in a country like Ghana we must appreciate that sycophancy and pandering to the official view is fast becoming fashionable and often the common past-time of the failures in our society who walk the corridors of power, kowtowing to officialdom, fawning for favours and largesse and fanning the flames of tendentious popular views which they imagine the wielders of power are probably holding. It seems to me that every leader we have had from the indefatigable Nkrumah, to the revolutionary JJ have not been isolated from these political parasites, and the downfall of many a leader can be traced to over-dependence on their irresponsible and selfish antics. Perhaps we need an institutional mechanism to protect our national leaders

from the dilemma posed by the machinations of these shameless ruffians. This is necessary because by the experience of hind-sight it is possible to know the reality that motivates and is behind these merchants of evil and nation wreckers. Consider their past exploits in studied sycophancy and their slogan slinging expertise reminiscent of the horrors of the Nazi propaganda machine: note how they attempt to manipulate our leaders: Nkrumah is the Osagyefo who never dies, Busia is the unchallenged champion of our rural folks, Colonel Acheampong is the 13th January man who will catapult us to capture the commanding heights of the economy and, more recently, the sonorous and endearing appellation JJ, was blasphemously translated to 'Junior Jesus'.

We must beware of these elements in our society who will seduce legality and exploit our dilemmas. With their holier than others antics, virtue can easily be denigrated by them. It will then surely degenerate and sustain irreparable damage in the hands of such rascals. The damage they thus cause may take generations to put right, because the popular view, it must be remembered, is not necessarily right and in the so-called old democracies and even in Ghana, it is not unknown for popular views to be discredited by the passage of time and the way paved for the right but previously unpopular view."

*Postscript: In the 4th Republic, we have had our fair share of the slogan slinging expertise; 'Kufour, the gentle giant,' 'Prof. Mills, the 'Asomdwoehene,' 'JDM, the gentleman,' 'Nana Show Boy, Champion President'. Even the try-and-miss types have not been left in the cold: 'Paa Kwesi, Edwumawura'... Do you remember any others?*

1. Source: For the full speech delivered by Justice Taylor at the GBA Conference, see: "Dilemmas of Law and Lawyers in Contemporary Ghana" (1987-88) 16 RGL 19



**Sylvia Mends, Esq**

We are pleased to announce that Sylvia has been successfully on boarded as an Associate Counsel at FSB Law Consult and will handle all cases in our different areas of practice.

She successfully completed her 6-months pupillage with the Firm on 6th April, 2022.

Welcome aboard Sylvia!



**Victoria Foli**

Victoria joins the FSB Team as a Facilities & Security Support.

She is responsible for maintaining the office facilities and for providing security at our firm's premises at all times.

Victoria attended Kpeve Senior High School.

We welcome Victoria to Team FSB.

## Our new digital street names: Let's do it right.

### Introduction

Digitalization has now found a permanent home in Ghana. At the last check, all roads, streets, houses, kiosks, halls and chambers were all going to be given addresses. How was that going to be done, considering the fact that in parts of our country, especially in the so-called cities, someone's kitchen may very well be the passageway to another's bed room? The solution was simple: we were going digital. Great stuff. Not a bad idea at all.

### The stated economic benefits

Arguably, the best reason put forward to encourage the national addressing system was the economic benefits citizens, and Governments, were certain to enjoy. The argument was made, and with much force, that with each person having an address where they could be located, banks and financial institutions will be more than excited to give loans to peeled-orange sellers and roasted groundnut vendors who could show proof of their addresses, that is, digital addresses. Their tables by the road side, and mostly obstructing pedestrians, were to be given digital addresses. Great innovative stuff. Once they got the gleaming silver plate fixed on the side of their table-top enterprise, mango tree or kiosk in the middle of the night by some unknown persons, they became full-fledged citizens (of course, with their equally sparkling Ghana card). And most importantly, government will reach them to collect its taxes, e-wise or otherwise. Fair deal.



**By: Francisca Serwaa Boateng, Esq.**

The fact is that, our perennial porous address system had been the subject of many articles and theses. So, not much could be said against the new drive to properly address the address system (pun intended, with relish). The initial digital address plates with addresses generated by Ghana Post GPS came without any street names, whether the streets were already named or not.

### New street names: By whom and how were they created?

In time, new address plates started surfacing but this time, with street names. It is a refreshing sight to see street names on neat address plates gleaming in the sun and adorning the giant and mighty front walls of the newly-minted rich and famous in Accra. But a close reading of the names give off strange vibes. For one thing, the names are mostly different from the already existing names of the streets. So, for instance, if a street was previously known as 'A Street' and there is a sign to that effect on the street, and the homeowners have neatly written it on their walls, the new digital address will come with its own street name, for example, 'Bosc Street.' For another thing, most of the names are meaningless, unintelligible and have no bearing at all with our identity as a proud people with diverse rich cultural, historical and geographical heritage.

**Continue on next page**

These days, it is very common to see a street with a beautiful sign post displaying the street name. But the house address plates display a different street name. That will not be much of a problem if the new names reflected our history, culture and other attributes. Most of the new street names, sadly, appear generic and have no links to us. Some of those street names include the exotic but meaningless: 'Spindle,' 'Gingerale,' 'Hawthorne,' 'Agate,' etc. There are also the colonialism-is-dead-but-ruling-us-from-the-grave types such as 'London,' 'Liverpool,' 'Manchester,' 'London House' etc. We also see the brainless types such as 'Banana St.,' 'Apple St.,' 'Ant St.,' 'Berry St.,' 'Oat St.,' etc. Most of us have seen different variations of these names in our neighbourhoods and cities.

As stated earlier, the new street names we see around now have no bearing with our identity as a people. What we need to see as our street names are our local festivals, rivers, towns, historical legends (males and females), past traditional rulers, names of African countries and their capital cities, former Ghanaian and African Heads of States and other information of historical and touristic significance as part of our identity projected through our

street naming strategy. Those we had in the past are now being quietly replaced with generic names on digital address plates. By law, the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies are responsible for naming our roads and streets. It is recommended that the Assemblies must take a keen interest in how this is done to ensure that it boosts our tourism potential. Considering the great shot in the arm tourism has received after the 'Year of Return' celebrations, it will be very refreshing for tourists arriving in our beautiful country to learn about us even from our street and road names, and not to be confronted with meaningless names at each cross and turn.

## Conclusion

The introduction of the digital address system has improved our national life by making the location of persons and businesses much easier. But we must make a conscious effort to ensure that our streets and roads are named in ways that reflect and promote our socio-political-cultural, historical and Pan-African identity. We must not just make do with any kind of names at all just because that is what a digital service vendor might be selling to us.

# Meet the Editorial Team!



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**Our Areas of Practice:**

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- (Wills, Probate & Divorce)
- Property/Real Estate Law
- Technology law (Data Protection, Privacy, E-commerce)

**FSB Law Consult's lawyers are based in Accra, but act for clients nationwide.**