

Where There is a Will There are Plenty Ways

I had never seen a more determined pair like the two young men who sat before me in my office. Their mission was quite simple - they wanted a little advice on how best to go about printing their new magazine for next to nothing. I laughed.

But being a new publisher (At the time AWO was only two issues old), I understood the difficult task ahead, so I gave them the straight dope, the gory details on the dog-eat-dog world of publishing in Ghana. They were undeterred. They didn't even butt an eyelid. And I couldn't help but admire their reckless "no cash, no problem" attitude.

They left me with a dummy of the magazine for my perusal and promised to be back. I never heard from them again, apparently they had a nice long list of people they had in mind to torture for the greater good of their project. Poor wretches like their patrons - Profs Kofi Anyidoho and Kwesi Yankah and Mr. Isaac

Quist; a mile-long list of sponsors they had hit on for money; and of course their unwitting parents who were saddled with living with young relentless entrepreneurs who had not as yet come across the word "quit" in their vocabulary.

I had almost forgotten about these young Kamikaze until a couple of weeks ago when I saw a card addressed to me inviting me to the launching of Fila Magazine. I felt a surge of pride (as though I had much to do with it) and boy, was I thrilled that despite my reality check, they had forged ahead. Initially, they had planned to come out in January, but on Saturday, August 21, when I saw Mr. Kofi Totobi Quakyi raise the first issue of Fila Magazine in the air, declaring it launched, I knew it was better late than never.

It was a victory for that indomitable spirit of youth. Fila is a magazine targeted at the secondary school crowd. Their editorial board is made up of a dozen or so adrenaline-charged youth led by Elikem Kuu yehia as Founder/Managing Editor. I don't think that kid ever takes no for an answer. If you thought his lawyer parents were a force to reckon with, stick around and meet their progeny. Nineteen, going on forty-five years.

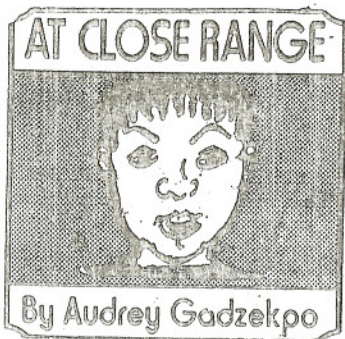
Oh, the frankness of youth. Right off the butt, they informed us who had determined that there was no better place to be on a nice Saturday than at the British Council Hall supporting young creative talent, that they had broken their piggy banks to finance the project and still had not finished paying the printers. I really admired them, their arm-twisting cum pulling at our heart-strings tactic and

wished that I could have had the guts to implore that when we launched AWO in March. Needless to say it worked. By the time they were through cajoling, threatening, pleading, reasoning and appealing to the very good in us, each man and woman had been parted with their money. Even the Information Minister, who had seen countless magazines launched in his day, was persuaded and agreed to be responsible for the production of the next issue. I have no illusions that Elikem and his band of young fearless warriors will be bombarding his "carpeted" office come time to go to press.

As we all happily sat and gave encouragement to the creative juices of these Secondary Schoolers, I couldn't help but reflect on the choices available to people of their age group - precious few, if truth be told. Yet they had decided to create an outlet for their exuberant, difficult-to-contain energies by putting together a surprisingly very well-written and edited magazine with which to communicate with each other. One of the parents at the launching hit on the mark when he said he would rather pull all the stops to ensure that Fila was a success than to see his son and his friends with so much potential succumb to the scourge of drugs, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and other destructive forces that lurk at the corner to entice young and not so young people.

Fila is an ambitious project that took a lot of courage, commitment, innovation (you won't believe some of the ways they raised money), character, creativity and hardwork - qualities that to me spell leadership.

Take a bow you all - Elikem Kuenyek' a, Kobina Daniel, Paul Nyame, Andrew Parkes, Nana Akua Anyidoho, Baaba Coker Appiah, Kwaku Hayford, Kofi Andah, Leslie Baksmaty, Sandra Kudolo, Eugene Akoto-Bamfo, Victoria Afari and Joseph Obeng.



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