



## **A provisional ideological manifesto for BTM Jozi**

Written aboard a flight from Jozi to Atlanta by Marc Loon,  
with reference to the ideas of Stefan Hermann and Samuel Sleeman

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1. Achieving maturity is an innate desire in a boy. Achieving wisdom is an innate desire in a man. Boys to Men is a community of boys and men who support each other in their journeys towards maturity and wisdom.
2. The physical journey from boyhood to manhood does not guarantee the psychological journey from immaturity to maturity: the latter requires, among other criteria, intentional effort and appropriate knowledge by those in the boy's care. The presence of relationships with mature men is a vital element for the boy's psychological journey. We endeavour to be those men.
3. Similarly, the journey of aging does not ensure the psychological achievement of wisdom. As the boy requires the mentorship of mature men, so the man requires the mentorship of wise men, both in terms of life experience and spiritual vision. We endeavour to be those men.
4. The journey from immaturity through maturity to wisdom is a necessary journey for a fulfilling life.
5. A map we find useful to conceptualise this journey is Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey", the basic outline of which Campbell summarises as follows:

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."<sup>1</sup>

Campbell illustrates how ancient and modern stories (folktales, myths, movies etc) as well as tribal rites of passage around the world naturally employ this Hero's Journey as a model. The metaphorical Hero (i.e. the human being) experiences a cyclical Hero's Journey of learning soul lessons through spiritual victories.

6. The man could contemplatively assess his own maturity, according to the following eight soul tasks of a man:
  - a. Complete with my Mother.  
I become empowered by the wound and the gift my Mother entrusted to me. This is my Feminine heritage, and I accept it gracefully.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, J. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

b. Complete with my Father.

I become empowered by the wound and the gift my Father entrusted to me. This is my Masculine heritage, and I accept it gracefully.

c. Free my Wild Man.

I acknowledge, accept, express and befriend the Wild Man inside me, that Wild Man illustrated mythically by the Grimms' folktale *Iron John*.

d. Honour my Soul.

Having listened to the dynamic movements of my inner self, communicated to me by my Wild Man, I have learned to honour my soul through caring for my body, listening to my emotional experience, and nurturing my healing process gently and earnestly. I bring personally meaningful rituals into my life.

e. Explore the Sacred.

I celebrate the creativity that emerges from within me, including the richness of my sexuality.

f. Confront my Mortality.

I have come to accept the inevitability of my death, whenever that might be.

g. Show up.

In my relationships, I make myself fully present, ready to do what it takes to listen for and serve the real needs of others. This will likely include mentoring children and youth as a mature father figure, and nurturing real friendships with mature and wise adults.

h. Listen for the Calling, and respond.

I have discovered my Vocation — my life's work — and I am focusing my energy to achieving it.

7. As mentors of each other, we support each other in achieving these eight soul tasks. As mentors of teenage boys, we model courageous authenticity by allowing them to witness our spiritual striving therein.

8. We earn our boys' trust by being fun and being authentic, inviting them to emulate us in our consistent efforts to achieve our soul tasks, to make positive shifts in how we show up as men; but we do not ask the boys to imitate our actions nor our thoughts.

9. We listen to the gifts of genius in each boy, following the advice of Malidoma Somè:

At the core of mentoring is the understanding that genius must be invited out of the person. People carry to this world something important that they must deliver, and mentors help to deliver that genius to the community. To see the genius in a young person is to give it the fertile ground required for it to burst forth and blossom, for it is not enough to be born into this world loaded with such a beauty. The newborn must be assisted to giving birth the genius that he is born with. Failure to do so kills that genius along with the person carrying it. The community responsible for the death of an inner genius is like an assassin. The community that is able to receive the person's genius gives birth to the adult who is able to contribute his or her healing gifts to that community.<sup>2</sup>

We celebrate the gifts of his unique magnificence, how ever they show up, and invite him to celebrate that magnificence with us. Once we have earned his trust, we encourage him to take the risk of speaking the truth of his personal experience of life, how ever painful it might be to do so. We challenge him, gently and earnestly, when we judge him to be lying to others or to himself, or denying his magnificence to others or to himself.

10. We are a community of men and journeymen, participating in the bringing about of a new dawn in the ways of being a man.

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<sup>2</sup> Somé, M P. 1999. *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose Through Nature, Ritual, and Community*. New York: Tarcher / Putnam. pp102-103