# The Keep Them Safe 2010 Project: using story to structure a programme with sustainable impact for 7 000 children

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## Introduction

During the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup South Africa's schools closed for five weeks, from 9 June to 12 July. All over the country the need for programmes to keep the children safe from human trafficking, substance abuse, commercial sex trade and homelessness was recognised. In Stellenbosch a partnership was formed between the municipality and SASCOL (South African Sports coalition) to organise a four week holiday programme for kids across the greater Stellenbosch district. Over 30 other organisations including the Stellenbosch University, businesses and NGO's came on board and funded their own involvement in the project.



The *Keep Them Safe 2010 project* employed 250 volunteers and reached 7 000 children over 13 communities in and around Stellenbosch.

While the main aim of the project was to keep kids safe and off the streets, the second objective was to do it in such a way that all these children will remain safe after the world cup fever has left the country. When this paper therefore refers to the 'sustainability' of the project, it means the ability of communities and partners to keep projects running in the

various communities for children during holidays when they are at risk to fall prey to homelessness, substance abuse, commercial sex and human trafficking. It was of great concern to us that the energy and input created by the world cup fever was channelled and used in such a way that infrastructure and running principles would be created for the continuous repetition of programmes for kids and young people in their communities. We wanted the impact of the world cup to last and do so on all three levels of sustainability identified by the United Nations in 2005: social, economic and environmental.

With this goal in mind, community leaders were identified and inspired to put teams of six volunteers together in their own communities. Then these leadership teams (PITCH teams) received intensive training over a period of three months. The plan was to make sure the right people were selected and enabled to socially sustain the project. At the same time we encouraged the idea that all resources come from the communities themselves so that dependence on external funding would be minimised ensuring economic sustainability. For all creative projects we used recycled containers and materials gathered in communities adding to the environmental sustainability of the project. In this category we also organised specific activities like cleaning rivers and collecting garbage as part of the programme.

These same PITCH teams had by the time this article is being written also successfully run holiday programmes over the December 2010 holidays and at least four of them had begun extracurricular programmes during school terms.

This paper is interested in those elements of the process that fed into this success, especially those aspects that relate to the way in which the project was designed from the start using story structure. It was this structure and especially the elements of liminality in story that enabled us to work through the moments of conflict and growth needed for sustainable transformation. I will explain this in more detail shortly.

I was fortunate enough to be involved from the start in designing the entire project as a journey of transformation for everybody involved. This paper explains how the stages of the classic hero's journey and the archetypes that populate the journey landscape were used to:

- Design the entire project as a hero's journey of growth and transformation for all involved. From the Call to Adventure to the Return Home the project was designed so that change and transformation are lasting and sustainable.

- Co-ordinate the design of every workshop that was presented to young people between 12 and 18 so that it followed the pattern of the hero's journey too. In every workshop - be it sport, entrepreneurship, arts and crafts or performing arts - every participant came closer to being the main character of his life story

Each of these two processes implies a different story: the first involving the leaders and the organisers, the second involving the participants. These two stories will be discussed concurrently. The five stages of story as we used it are as follows.

- Call to Adventure

- *Preparing for the Journey*

- The Journey

- *Ordeal and Reward*

- Return Home

In this discussion, attention will be given specifically to the in-between stages of the Journey (presented in italics), what I will call the *twilight zones*, as these stages hold the key to lasting impact and sustainable transformation. These are also the phases where conversation and tension become the pivotal forces for change. The twilight zones are the liminal spaces where art and theatre become the most effective means for negotiating meaning. Victor Turner points out that both ritual and theatre, and I also include story here, arise not from equilibrium, but from conflict and the desire to resolve that conflict or "to supply the current hunger for meaning with reliable nutrients" (Turner, 1990: 13).

In fact, conversation or dialogue in particular was the driving force of the entire project. At no point did story structure become a dictating voice. Sometimes story structure helped us to design the elements of the process such as workshops for leaders. At other times it helped us simply to describe what we observed happening. While the structure enabled us to steer in some respects, in others it helped us to respond. All the time it served as a means, not for dictating the process, but for directing our improvisation amidst the chaotic forces that play together in the context of a community project of this nature.

It is here in the weaving of dialogue and the coming together of many stories that our vision for using the arts for transforming the landscape of our communities becomes central. In keeping with the intention of the *Drama for Life Conference* of 2010 we believe that the notion of education and development must be fundamentally changed in order to bring healing to our communities. Indeed, we must find a way to embrace varying voices and conflicting views in order to weave a path towards lasting change. The classic hero's journey with its emphasis on bridging opposites and its integration of contrasting worlds becomes an intriguing conversation partner for this process. Are we not all searching for a 'sacred marriage' (Campbell, 1988a: 109) between African and Western, rich and poor or script and improvisation?

The five stages of our journey as outlined above become just that: a safe structure akin to a script that still allows for the flexibility and integration of varying voices that is part of the art of improvisation.

The process of how we came to use the five stages above is subject for an entirely different discussion. In summary, they have been distilled as result of an intensive study of story and transformation including the work of Robert Landy (1993, 1994 and 1996) on the process of Drama Therapy, Augusto Boal's (1979 and 1992) work on structuring forum theatre, Victor Turner's (1968, 1982 and 1990) work on social drama, Dorothy Heathcote's work on mythic journeys for structuring Educational Drama (O'Neil, 1995 and Kanira, 1997) and the writings

of Joseph Campbell (1988a and b) and Christopher Vogler on the hero's Journey. The five stages are also very clearly outlined in an article by Hartman and Zimberoff (2009): The hero's journey of self-transformation: models of higher development from mythology.

To focus the project, we used *The Princess of the African Savannah* by Emily Bornof as a means to explain the design to leaders and partners. The version that you find here is shortened and paraphrased from the original.

**Why use story?**

The story structure of a mythic journey has as its main purpose the transformation of the hero, also called protagonist. The entire story is designed to fulfil this function and every character in the story play his or her role in such a way that the hero can grow. The only difference between the hero and anyone else in the story is transformation and everything and everyone else is there purely to contribute to this (Vogler, 1998:36).

Characteristics of this transformation are that it typically involves the hero integrating seemingly opposite sides of himself[1] into a sense making whole (Landy, 1993: 54). This is what Joseph Campbell (1988a: 109) calls the 'sacred marriage'. Furthermore, the transformation is also characterised by a moment where the hero faces own core values and must decide who they want to be and what they want to stand for (Vogler, 1998: 188). This moment often results in a radical change of perspective. Finally, the transformation of the hero also always has a direct effect on his or her community so that the change in the one becomes a metaphor for the change of the group. This is why the sacred marriages of the princess and the paupers typically lead to the prosperity of the people.

It follows therefore, that it may be possible to use the structure of story to design a journey of transformation for other people. If you understand how to design a story so that the hero transforms, you can use this knowledge to design events and programmes that would let the participants transform and grow. This is what we did for *Keep Them Safe* (KTS).

Using the five basic stages of the mythic journey as well as its subcomponents, we designed such a journey of growth. As you read about this process, keep in mind that the same principles will be true for any other programme or event you want to design. Whether you are a teacher interested in crafting a series of impactful lessons, or a community worker looking to address conflicts in your neighbourhood, an activist looking to spark change or a theatre practitioner trying to plan an ethical yet powerful intervention, this structure may help to simplify some of the complexities of your endeavour.

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[1] From here onward I will refer to all hero's fictional or real in the generic male gender, with the understanding that it also includes female heroes of whom there were many in this project. I make this choice purely to improve the ease and flow of reading.

**The title of the story**

Before getting to the first stages of a journey, we first determined the title of the story. A title typically refers to the protagonist and the challenge of the journey. To keep titles short, one or the other usually falls away eventually, but to get to the final title, both elements need to be clarified. A good example is *Sleeping Beauty* or *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.*

Many stories only have the name of the protagonist e.g. *Hansel and Gretel*, others only have the challenge e.g. *Titanic*. Of course stories have other titles too, but the most common titles are the ones referring to the protagonist and his challenge.

Early on we discovered that The Keep Them Safe project has two titles referring to two different protagonists and two different challenges. Since then I realised that this is true of most projects and it is essential to take the two (and sometimes three) stories apart. This separation of stories is very useful in understanding the focus of marketing messages and for structuring the content of programmes.

*For us the stories were:*

**Keep them Safe**: The story of community leaders working together to keep their young people safe. This became the title for the entire project stretching over nine months.

**The Perfect Pitch**: The story of young people creating a perfect pitch for their own lives and their communities. This was the title for the holiday programme devised for the children running for only five weeks.

**Stage 1:  The Call to Adventure**

*Once upon a time in the African Savannah there was a princess who was as beautiful as the landscape. Her eyes shone like the night stars, her hair was curly as the thorn trees and her skin as dark as the soil. She was beautiful, happy and friendly. Her Father was a good king.*

*One day a prince came from a faraway country. He was handsome, young and courageous. The king invited him into his home. Soon the prince and the princess grew very fond of each other. The people who like to sing and dance and tell stories around the fires at night nudged each other saying: one day those two will reign over us together...*

**Beauty with a problem**

Every story starts with a tension between potential and an underlying problem. At the same time there is a Call to Adventure that invites the hero to address the underlying problem (Vogler, 1998: 81-106; Hartman and  Zimberoff 2009). In this way every Call to Adventure contains three essential elements:

- An introduction to the *protagonist* or hero – *once upon a time there was …*

- A description of their *Ordinary World* which includes a problem which they are either unaware of or unable to overcome – *every day they would…*

- A once in a life time *opportunity* that promises a solution, or a way out – *then one day…*

Our princess was beautiful and happy, but she was not yet fit to reign over her people. They thought she needed the help of the prince. She was not enough by herself. The coming of the prince was her call to adventure. Answering the Call would mean to change forever (Vogler, 1998: 99). Turner describes this type of opportunity for change in a community as a breech or braking of a rule in a public setting  (1990: 8). For us the Fifa world cup would be just such a breech...

In KTS our Call therefore came in the form of the World Cup holiday. For many it held the potential for wealth and financial gain. For others it held the danger of human trafficking, drugs and crime. We saw it as the chance to grow the leadership of our communities so that they could discover their own wealth as well as connect with one another around a common goal: keeping the children safe.

But like the prince in the story, the opportunity would not be lasting. Neither the money nor the bonding energy of the World Cup could last, so we had to make it work for us in setting up leaders and processes for the future.

We issued our Call to Adventure in two main ways from September 2009 to March 2010. **First** we drank hundreds of individual cups of coffee in one on one conversations with everyone we identified as possible partners – possible **protagonists** for this story. In these meetings we would share our common concerns about the youth – their **Ordinary World** and the problems they face. Then the dream was introduced. Everyone who identified with the dream took ownership of the project and joined the team. After every conversation the dream was adapted to incorporate the strengths and vision of the prospective partner. The conversations were not just vision casting sessions, but also vision forming. It was important that every person who became involved was able to put their unique spin on their share of the project. This would mean that they would take ownership of it for themselves and this in turn would impact sustainability.

Note here how a Call cannot occur in a void. It always comes in response to what is already apparent in the Ordinary World of the protagonist. It is therefore crucial to know the protagonist and understand their strengths and needs. In this way the Call can build on the protagonist's strengths and address the needs they themselves feel. Since we were taking on the role of Mentor for the protagonists, the community leaders, we had to respond to their problem and not come with our own agenda. In fact the entire project was born in the midst of a conversation between concerned individuals in the community. It was merely our job to

take the Call to as many people as we could find who also already felt the need. These initial conversations laid the ground work for the sustained impact of the project.

The **Second** way we issued the Call was more formalised. In March 2010 we launched a "KTS Taster". The aim of this event was to gather all the coffee drinkers into one space. We wanted to launch the dream formally and explain it to as many people as we could gather. This included community leaders, potential partners and some kids and young people.

Representatives were brought in from all over the Stellenbosch district and put in one room to get all the hot coals together and to start a bonfire.

By now everyone had had time to ponder over the project and some concerns, doubts and reservations had begun to surface. We were moving into the next stage of the story: preparing for the journey.

## 2. Preparing for the Journey

*Then winter came and with Winter came the dry season. The prince became restless and frustrated: "I can't stand the dust and the dry grass. Out there are many lands waiting for me to discover them, I must leave."*

*"Oh, how I would love to come with you," said the princess, "but my place is with my people. We know that the dry season will pass and the rain will come again in summer."*

*"I must leave", said the Prince, "but I will return with the summer rain".*

*"And I will wait for you...."*

*She waited all winter and the next summer, but he did not return. She waited another winter and a summer and yet another. Still he did not come back.*

*One day an eagle came and sat on her shoulder.*

*"Why are you sad Princess?"*

*"My prince has not returned. Please go search for him and when you find him remind him that I am still waiting."*

### Debate and mentorship

The preparation phase of a journey is the first of the two twilight zones. I call them this because they are riddled with doubt and debate.

Peter Block, author of *Community – the Structure of Belonging (2008)*, teaches the importance of allowing people to raise and share their doubts and reservations. Unless room is given for people to identify and share their concerns and fears, they are unable to move

beyond getting excited about something and taking action to make that thing happen. Doubts and reservations should always be allowed into the space and accepted for what they are. This step is crucial for the sustainability of any project. This is because, if doubts and reservations are glazed over, people will lose interest and feel their concerns are ignored. This is not healthy for dialogue and for the coming together of diverse voices.

This marks the first of three elements that make up the second stage of the story: Preparing for the Journey:

- *Refusal of the call*: When the internal doubts and reservations are too strong and the protagonist does not feel like he has what it takes (Vogler, 1998: 107-116).

- *Meeting the Mentor*: The introduction of a guide that sees the potential in the protagonist and is willing to offer training and mentorship that would enable them to meet the challenge (Vogler, 1998: 117-126; Kanira, 1997) .

- *Crossing the Threshold*: The protagonist must perform a clear action that proves commitment to the adventure. (Vogler, 1998: 127-133).

As the protagonist sorts out his **fears, objections and doubts**, he becomes more and more ready to make a commitment or not. The princess in our story only had a few initial doubts, but they carried far into the journey itself before she fully committed to the transformation. We found the same happening with the particular doubts that were aired during community conversations.

We formalised this stage at our Taster launch. We divided the group according to their area of interest: Performing Arts, Arts and Crafts, Entrepreneurship, Sports, Education and Community Wellness. Next we used questions[i] to facilitate in each of those groups a conversation around doubts and reservations as well as the solutions the group could come up with together to address those problems. We knew that if the questions were not heard and answers didn't not satisfy, the commitment would have been absent. In the same breath, if doubts remain after sufficient attempts to overcome them, the person is not right for the particular adventure.

For Keep them Safe we had two main objections: 1) where will the resources come from? 2) How are you going to ensure sustainability? Our answer to both was the same: to ask the people how they could help us with these problems. Those who could not volunteer their time were encouraged to see where they could find resources. Those who did not see themselves committing to the dream long-term, were not the right people for the job. Our entire strategy focused on balancing the dream with the cost. If the potential partner 'buys' the dream, they will 'pay' the price. This was also our sustainability plan: if a community could find the resources (time, money, skills, equipment etc.) amongst themselves they will be independent

from outside funding and resources and will therefore be able to find it time and time again for every holiday programme to come. Their independence makes it sustainable.

Of course many said 'we are from a poor community, we have nothing to offer' and we would say: 'we will help you to find what you need'. We offered training in project management, leadership and fundraising. We also offered training and support for workshops and programmes. We partnered with individuals and organisations, our **guides and mentors,** to provide for every lack.

At our Taster launch we therefore included an entire programme of introductions where partners and organisations presented their offerings of training and support. It was a dialogue between the fears of the teams and the offerings of the guides. This dialogue continued for the next two months as teams received ongoing training and support for planning their programmes.

By the time Keep Them Safe was over, every community had a trained team that would co-ordinate and run their own holiday programme with resources from their own community. We called them *PITCH teams*. These teams were the focus of the Keep Them Safe story. The second story that we titled The Perfect Pitch, was being designed in conversation with these teams as a journey for the children in their communities.

During the two month training period, we needed all teams to **prove their commitment** and so we issued their first challenge: within the next two months they would have to run a Compassion Day programme once in their communities. They had to identify a need within their community and organise the kids and youth to address that need with resources from within their own community – or resources that they found themselves outside the community. Again we would provide training and guidelines.

This stage of the story is one of the most nerve racking and tension laden stages. This is where protagonists test the mentors to see if they trust them and the vision. It is also where the mentors test the protagonist to gage if they have what it takes to carry the journey to fruition. Our most important learning moment of this stage came when one of the partners had anti Muslim messages embedded in their training material. We nearly lost one of our community leaders because of this. We also had to confront the particular partner and insist that they remove these sections from their otherwise effective programme. This entire event led to a conversation about diversity, tolerance and inclusion that could set the standard for the rest of the project. In this way tension and debate leads to the purification of a project's intention. It also leads to dialogue that helps unify the diverse partners in the implementation of the vision.

Thanks to the room and openness created between partners for debate, no one felt that the project was held up by the conversations. This was in part also specifically thanks to the participative structures and methods we employed for dealing with the debate and conversations. There were two workshops specifically designed using process drama (O'Toole, 1992) and improvisation games to surface feelings and questions and to allow participants to communicate their view points through drama. In the first we unpacked the

stages of the mythic journey as they related to the story of *The Princess of the African Savannah*. In doing so we were able to come to a shared experience of what the story meant to us. It also helped us to create a language for some of the tensions and roles that we could identify (Heathcote, 1980). The power of these processes are partly thanks to their ability to allow every diverse voice to be expressed while at the same time creating a safe space for conflicting views to coexist (O'Neil, 1995)

The second workshop specifically used Improvisation Theatre games to create a climate for accepting each others' ideas and building on it. We wanted to create a 'yes and...' ethic as opposed to a "yes but..." ethic. What I mean is that we wanted to encourage participants to listen to each other, accept each other's ideas and build on them (*yes and...*) rather than criticise and block one another's creativity (*yes, but...*), (Izzo, 1997). In this way theatre arts helped us to move past the debate stage with all our ego's intact and all participants felt that they could express their views and that they were heard.

The third workshop started with more drama structures, but soon we found participants really just wanted to talk and solve practical issues. We had moved past the doubt and debate phase into problem solving mode. For the rest of this stage we could focus on specific training and preparation for the Perfect Pitch Programme.

## 3. The journey itself

*The Eagle searched far and wide and when he was about to give up, he found the prince in a mountainous country by the sea. The prince was still young, courageous and handsome, but also had an embarrassed look about him.*

*When the eagle told him who he was, he dropped his head and said:*

*"I made promises that I did not know I would not be able to keep.*

*I was foolish and did not know I would find this beautiful land where my heart wants to stay forever. Please tell the princess I am sorry."*

*The eagle returned to find the princess just like he left her, waiting.*

*When he told her what the prince had said, she grew very angry: "You are a lying and deceitful bird. You were too lazy to do as I asked, and now you are making up stories! Go away and never return!"*

*The princess waited three more turns of the season and then she realised that the eagle had spoken the truth. And then she began to weep.*

**Teams tackling tasks**

Of course journeys do not always end up in tears like this one. But it always involves great obstacles and usually a fair amount of pain.

For over three months we recruited, trained and nurtured about 200 adult volunteers to get them ready, so that *they* can get *us* ready. Then the time for preparation simply ran out and the Journey was upon us.

On 11 June Bafana Bafana scored the first goal of the Fifa Soccer World Cup and the following Monday, 14 June, KTS kicked off. It was rainy and freezing cold but all over Stellenbosch courageous teams stood ready for kids who needed warm food and entertainment. But where did the kids come from? How did they know to come and where to come to? How did they know what they would find when they got there?

While the journey started for the adults and organisers, the kids still needed to be Called to Adventure.

As mentioned earlier we were designing two journeys simultaneously.

- **Keep Them Safe**: a story about adults putting together a holiday programme for kids during the Fifa Soccer World Cup

- **The Perfect PITCH**: a story about kids and young people playing and working to express themselves through art, culture, sport and entrepreneurship

In fact, this meant we were designing a journey within a journey. The four week's programme for the kids would be itself designed according to story structure, but would coincide with the larger structure of the story for the leaders that was already under way.

The Compassion days which each community had to organise in preparation for the holiday programme also functioned as marketing events for the kids and young people calling them to adventure. Many communities followed these up with various events like talent shows and modelling competitions to get the kids' attention. At the same time, us as the back bone team, appointed a group to run a marketing campaign in schools to advertise the programme

At all these events the three elements of the Call to Adventure were being taken into account. We found these elements very useful in designing our marketing efforts.

- Who is the target audience? What are their characteristics, strengths and weaknesses?

- What does their Ordinary Worlds look like? How are they stuck?

- What is our promise to them?

But something went wrong with the marketing... when the programme commenced, only young kids arrived. There were very few, if any, young people older than 11. What happened?

One reason was that the schools that were visited with the marketing group were mostly primary schools, so the older kids never heard the Call. Although all Secondary Schools were also targeted, few opened their doors for the marketing group.

Secondly, the holiday programme was designed so that young kids would play from 9:00 to 12:00 and the older ones from 11:00 to 14:00. This was hard to advertise and communicate it seems. Youngsters who did arrive came early with the little ones and then left when they saw too few of their own age there.

When PITCH teams saw this trend, many came up with good ideas in the first week to get youngsters on board. Some paraded through the streets with music and mega phones calling the kids out of their homes and out of the streets. Others changed their programmes by using the older children who came early to assist with the young ones. Eventually in some communities the two separate programmes fused into one.

We noticed that the best Call to Adventure for the older children was the content of the programme itself. The longer it ran, the more friends told each other and the more kids and young people pitched for the perfect PITCH. The Perfect PITCH programme was its own 'perfect pitch'.

The reason for this may be drawn back to the idea of the twilight zone of doubt and debate. Kids, but especially young people, are full of fears and doubts and it takes time for them to overcome these and commit fully to the adventure. Although we designed every four week workshop programme as a journey making room for participants' reservations, we did not quite anticipate how much marketing and coaxing and trust development it would take to gain the support of the young people. Fortunately, thanks to our understanding of the importance of this twilight zone, we were able to persevere it and find more and more ways to draw them in.

With 13 communities running four week programmes at the same time there were many more on the fly adjustments. Crises popping up everyday where food was not delivered on time or materials did not arrive for the activities.

But it was the clear design and structure of the programme itself and the leadership support that kept the whole thing together. A good journey helps to focus the heroes' attention with clear tests and trials that challenge the hero's character and strength of his allies (Hartman and Zimberoff: 2009). The task and the team form the two basic elements of any journey that seeks to bring about transformation (Kanira, 1997):

- *The team:* Through the journey the hero needs to learn to work together with his/her team as well as to figure out how he responds to competition.

- *The task*: Every hero needs a series of challenges to hone his skills and test his/her commitment.

On the PITCH leaders' **team** was what we called the *back bone* as well as individual mentors. The backbone team of about 15 worked full time on the project and helped wherever possible

– transport, resource distribution, communication, overall events planning and workshops co-ordination. We also assigned an 'eagle' to each leader to mentor him and support him throughout the four weeks.

Of course, each PITCH team also had to work together and sort out their roles and manage internal conflicts.

On the kids **team** was the support of the PITCH teams, as well as student volunteers and workshop facilitators. But they too had to work in teams to complete the challenges we set for them. They also had to figure out how to compete in a healthy manner with the other communities in the many competitions we set up. Finally, in a spirit of togetherness they had to learn to play and interact with kids from communities culturally very different from their own.

It may be helpful here to take apart the different archetypal roles that were played by the parties. According to Phillips and Huntley (2004), there are four essential archetypes that ensure the dynamic movement of the story and the potential for transformation in the main character. These are the protagonist, the antagonist, the guide (or mentor) and the contagonist. As the protagonist and the antagonist work against each other, so do the guide and contagonist. The protagonist moves toward overcoming the main challenge inhis story. The antagonist work directly against this goal. The mentor supports the protagonist by opposing, or managing the impact of the contagonist whose role it is to distract, hinder or tempt the protagonist so that he is frustrated in his attempt to reaching the story purpose.

Looking at the children as the protagonists of the story entitled 'The Perfect Pitch' the force that stands directly in their way is poverty, hopelessness and a lack of opportunity for learning. This is what surfaced during conversations around the story of the Princess in one of our process drama workshops. The guides to support the kids are clearly the PITCH teams who were presenting the holiday programme. As guides, they were working to fight against the distractions and obstacles that could confuse or tempt the participants from attending: homelessness, commercial sex, human trafficking and especially substance abuse and the accompanying gangsterism.

For the PITCH teams' journey in which they were the protagonists, the gangsterism and substance abuse, the human trafficking, commercial sex exploitation and homelessness were the antagonists. This was clear from the start as even the SA government identified these as the most important threats to deal within our communities. The back bone team and the training partners (most of whom had representatives on the back bone team) were the mentors for this group. Also in this category were the 'eagles' we appointed for each PITCH team leader. These were counsellors who were tasked to check in with the leaders weekly for a one on one support session. These were meant to give the leaders spiritual support for their work. The term 'eagle' was derived from the story of the Princess of the African Savannah as someone who will check in regularly from outside to help them to 'look up and see' what they have created. These eagles still function today as part of the support team for leaders still running projects and programmes in their communities. The contagonist proved to be the

challenge to find enough time and resources to serve all the needs. Our biggest obstacle was finding the people, the time and the resources that could help us sustain the project in the future. And as the eagle in the story we often had to return with the message: 'there is no prince to save you, find the answer inside yourself'.

This analysis of the archetypal forces that were at work greatly helped us not to cast others in the role of antagonists. We could recognise that at its worst, many of the obstacles we faced were mere hindrances coming up to challenge our intentions, clarify our motives and train us for the challenges still lying ahead. This perspective also helped teams when dealing with internal conflict not to oppose one another, but to find the common ground needed to attack the real enemies.

Apart from the team, the actual tasks set up as part of the journey also functioned to challenge and train participants. These **tasks** structured the entire four week programme as a journey within a journey. Each workshop series, be it sport, entrepreneurship, arts and crafts or performing arts, all were designed as tasks building to a final product. There were go-cart rallys, local talent exchanges, the writing of business plans, soccer and other sporting games and the making of various art works. Both leaders and participants had worked together to complete each of these successfully.

For us, the most important thing that stood out was that, while teams and tasks can be structured and planned, the real challenges and relationship conflicts are not planned or controlled. For one team putting together a graffiti canvas may be an easy enough task, but arriving on time and not letting each other down is the real challenge. Perhaps building a go cart comes easy, but interacting with other cultural groups on the race course can create conflict. Yet, without the structure, the unstructured and often most valuable challenges do not necessarily occur. Some of these stories are related in the next section.

Everyone now faced the Ordeal and Reward of week four, the last week of the programme.

## 4. Ordeal and Reward

*She wept without restraint. Her father tried to cheer her up with beads and new clothes. The people tried by singing songs and telling stories. Still the princess wept.*

*Soon the tears formed a puddle by her feet. The puddle became a stream, the stream turned into a river and the river transformed the landscape into a wet land.*

*With the water came the fish and then the water birds. Soon the large game came like the hippo and the crocodile.*

*Still the princess wept.*

*The people built canoes and began to fish in the water.*

*They cut the reads and started to make baskets. They hunted the large game that came to drink. Mothers washed clothes and children played in the water.*

*One day the eagle returned and sat down near the princess. When she saw him, she asked: why did you come back after I was so rude to you?*

*Shhhh, just look up and see what your tears have created.*


**Night before day**

The Ordeal and Reward stage is the second of the twilight zones. This stage is difficult to control because experiences of great turmoil and conflict happen to different people at different times. Yet it is important to make provision for these eruptions because in our experience they have lead to the most growth and to sustainable transformation. These moments are akin to Boal's notion of the Chinese crisis. This is where the protagonist finds him/herself in a situation where there is both danger and opportunity. If the hero chooses to take the opportunity presented to him/her, danger can be avoided and success is immanent.

This same moment is described by Vogler as the moment where the hero dies to a one-sided interpretation of life and is reborn to a new multidimensional perspective (1998: 177). The hero sees his place in the larger scheme of things and finds the courage to face his own fears. His acceptance of his core value and his willingness to act upon it in his darkest hour inevitably leads to reward.

> They see who they are and how they fit into the scheme of things. … The scales fall from their eyes and the illusion of their lives is replaced with clarity and truth. (Vogler, 1998: 188)

I believe it is this kind of experience that leads to the formation of expressions like *every dark cloud has a silver lining* or *the night is at its coldest just before dawn breaks* and even *every sacrificial death is followed by a resurrection.*

This is also related to Landy's concept of role integration (1993: 54) where you gain enough perspective on yourself so that you can let go of roles that no longer serve a purpose in your life. An example would be if you overidentified with a victim role or a beggar's role and you are able to move beyond these and become a victor or a giver in the midst of circumstances that are difficult and threatening.

Just like the tasks and teams we found it to be important to organise a structured ordeal and reward event to create enough dramatic tension so that unstructured ordeal and reward experiences can be instigated, experienced and framed for reflection. This framing can happen in an organised manner using dramatic structures like Boal's Image Theatre or Rainbow of Desire (1995). We found, however, that it was difficult to get people together for such debriefings in the heat of the happening. We were able to structure two debriefing sessions with PITCH teams that were highly explosive and at the same time very fruitful. The first was a debriefing halfway through the four week programme and the second two days

before its end. Both included participative exercises and games, but they were not strictly based in theatre or arts. Even so, they all aimed at helping participants to see the bigger picture so that they could move beyond the roles they over identified with, beyond their fears and reconnect with their core values. We hoped that in each crisis situation, they could hold on to the opportunity presented to them instead of falling prey to the dangers of old mind sets and roles that have outlived their use.

Like the princess, leaders became angry and desperate as the tension mounted. The soup that was donated for the programme became one such **unstructured source of frustration** directed at the Backbone team. The soup was bland, tasteless and relentless. Yet, it was the only food we were able to get sponsored in huge quantity. Most of the first leadership debriefing mentioned earlier centred on the food. Some felt kids should be thankful for what they got, others said it was unreasonable to ask them to eat the same food every day etc. The conversation was heated and opened up many differences in framework and paradigm amidst the different communities. Ultimately it led to greater understanding and acceptance not to mention creativity.

The back bone team had the same message as before: 'there is no prince to save you'. Soon communities found all sorts of ways to get food for their kids. I visited one of the most dissatisfied communities once near the end and there were two moms making vetkoek for all 250 kids. They were working through their frustration and finding their own resources. They could stop holding out their hands as beggars and become providers. Kids from another team turned the soup issue into an inside joke calling themselves 'Soupa kids'. This group in turn accepted the soup thankfully without bitterness and anger continuing to discolour their fun.

Similarly, the uneven spread of volunteers became another sore point. Some communities were able to get outside churches and student bodies involved with 20 or 30 volunteers. As the programme went on, some communities were over extending their smaller resources and felt very dissatisfied with this arrangement. Once again through teamwork and conversation some found their own solutions such as involving teenagers to help out with the little ones. So doing they created more interest for some of the older kids. In this manner they could grab the opportunity presented to them by the situation instead of falling prey to the possible danger within it.

The final leadership debriefing session was structured entirely around games and experiential exercises. There was a treasure hunt, a Survivor style puzzle and some reflective writing. This far into the programme (two days before its end) there was still mounting frustration over the last hurdle, namely the final round of the performing arts competition. Yet the games and exercises helped everyone to regain perspective on what really matters and the core values that we shared. A ritualised washing of hands in the Eerste River helped us all to reconnect with each other and the dream that was *Keep Them Safe*,.

I remember sitting with Doreen from Cloetesville next to the river washing her hands in the clear water. She talked nonstop for the first few moments and then fell silent. As she took my hands to return the gesture. We were completely quiet tears burning behind our eyelids. That

evening many tears were shed and many laughs broke the silence as people moved beyond the frustration and the tension of the project and reconnected with the bigger picture on the other side of conflict.

Still, we also designed **a structured ordeal** for the final week: the arts competition. The tension built to breaking point as communities descended on the City Hall for the semi finals of the arts competition. On one hand there was the Performing Arts productions[ii] that were show cased. On the other hand there were large graffiti canvasas that were created for the backdrop of the final performances.

One director threw in the towel the night before. One group refused to rehearse because of fear of giving away secrets – with disappointing results (their backing track skipped during the performance and their final dance was ruined). Another group took it so hard when they did not go through to the finals that it seemed like all the good of the project was lost in anger and bitterness.

Yet, because of the nature of performing arts, the show had to go on. In spite of setbacks, children who had never been on a stage were able to perform their own creations in front of large audiences in the Stellenbosch and Franschhoek city halls. Also, thanks to conversations with the disappointed groups who did not make it to the final, we were able to adjust our judging criteria on the final night to be even more inclusive and rewarding of authentic community creativity. It turned out that, even though our judging criteria[iii] were work-shopped with the directors working in each community, they could have been more inclusive. Since then we have revisited the entire judging system[iv] for the Performing Arts Extravagansa of 2011, thanks to the conflict conversations.

It was mostly thanks to the innate power of the Performing Arts to bring a diverse group of people together to share a common goal, frame their perceptions of the world and present this to an audience that the final Ordeal could lead to the final reward. The personal power that a performer gains from being on the stage is difficult to parallel. As Turner (1990: 13) explains, this is the moment, the ultimate liminal experience where a community can see itself for who and what it is and reflect on its own place in the universe. Or as Landy (1993) might see it, it is the power of the dramatic paradox where you are both yourself and not yourself where aesthetic distance can lead to catharsis and transformation.

Finally, more than 1 000 children and adults were packed into the Stellenbosch City Hall. This was the most representative audience I had ever seen in the city hall, (I have lived in Stellenbosch on and off for 20 years) – not just one community, one political party or one interest group, but every sector, every class, race and creed of the Stellenbosch and surrounding area was represented. And in the front row sat the mayor and his wife with a number of other VIPs. Evidently *Keep Them Safe* had brought unity of focus and togetherness across barriers.

Once again these rewards that we could not control came out as result of the **structuring of the reward** ceremony. It was not the Go cart rally winner, the first prize for the best graffiti, or even the winner of the performing arts competition that truly mattered. (Incidentally, there

were so many prizes every one could get something). But the **most rewarding moment** of the entire evening was the election of a six-year old mayor. Like most of the valuable moments in the project this one too was wholly **unplanned**.

Near the end of the event the MC called upon the mayor on stage to dance the 'waka-waka' a dance and song from *Shakira* and *Freshly Ground* that became popular as part of the world cup hype. The mayor got up and walked past a group of kids that had gathered on the floor in front of the stage. In passing, he picked up a little 6-year old who had been dancing every time he got a chance. He put the boy on stage and hung his own mayor's medallion over the boy's chest.

One MC caught the moment and introduced the boy as the new mayor. The other MC proceeded to call one of the dance groups onto the stage to dance with the boy. The entire audience lead by the children and the six year old mayor all danced to the Waka-waka.

I salute the mayor for handing this moment to the children. This symbolic act cemented the central message of the entire KTS project: Keep the Kids safe because any one of them, no matter how seemingly insignificant, could be a future mayor.

**The big question left to answer**: how do we sustain the good work that has now begun?

How can the KTS spirit be maintained as everyone returns home to their ordinary lives after the world cup holiday is over?

## 5. Return

*The princess looked up and saw the people working and playing. She saw the landscape that had changed and said: I want to go out in a canoe with my father.*

*When she saw all there was to see, she realised, that although the land was very different from what she remembered it to be, it was just as beautiful.*

*While the princess was always beautiful and friendly, over time her happiness also returned. But she was now also wise. When her father passed away some time thereafter she could be a worthy leader for her people. It was well with them and their land.*

**Elixir**

The final stage of a journey has three aspects like the first one:

- *The Road back*: In the absence of the special circumstances of the journey, the hero must retain change inhis ordinary world (Vogler, 1998: 193-201).

- *Resurrection*: As proof of transformation the hero acts according to new beliefs (Vogler, 1998: 207; Hartman and Zimberoff, 2009).

- *Return with the Elixir*: In response to transformation in the hero there is healing for the community (Campbell, 1988a: 172-192; ;  Turner, 1990: 15).

The **Road Back** is a lonely one and evidence of the hero's successful transformation is only visible as he begins to act in accordance with the change. To assist with the transition, the project leader Henko Janse van Rensburg had individual meetings with each of the PITCH team leaders to debrief them and ascertain future commitment.

As the weeks after KTS passed, evidence of **resurrections** was everywhere. Separate from the group, hype partners were starting to continue their work in communities where they had built relationships during KTS. The *Exercise Teachers Academy* who co-ordinated the sports workshops planned a sports day event before the end of the year. *The Asset Builders Network* who co-ordinated the press and marketing, held an awards ceremony. *Business Partners* who helped with the Entrepreneurship is continuing their training of the prize winners. This training was recently completed and micro MBA certificates were handed to the successful participants. The director, who was so frustrated at his piece not being chosen for the prize giving, started his own drama group in the same community. He vowed that they will become so good, they will never lose again. In 2011, partners are working together to take part in a local arts festival. They have auditioned over 250 applicants from all the different communities and are using as many of them as they can accommodate in a huge performing arts extravaganza.

Most significantly, some of the partners have come together and holiday programmes were being organised in seven of the 13 communities for December with the hope that more communities will join the effort. The dream is that holiday programmes, youth camps, after school activities and the leadership training that enabled the PITCH teams, would become part of the Stellenbosch community culture. This is the **elixir** that is transforming the landscape of this Boland town: leaders that are trained and empowered to run their own programmes in their communities – worthy leaders *so that it will be well with us and our land.*

**<u>Conclusion</u>**

The success of the Keep Them Safe 2010 Project was mostly due to the conversational or dialogical nature of the approach. Most specifically it was thanks to the attention given to the twilight zones in the story of KTS that its sustainability is maximised.

During the **first twilight zone** (Preparation for the Journey - debate and mentorship) we allowed time for doubts and reservations to be debated. We also provided mentorship and training to help protagonists to find their own answers to their doubts. This allowed each participant (including ourselves) to take ownership of their part of the project and to find their own resources to sustain their involvement.

During this twilight zone it was dramatic structures from the world of process Drama and Improvisation Theatre that enabled the airing of the conflicts and dissipation of the frustrations. Thanks to the safe and non-judgemental nature of these processes coupled with

their ability to let every voice express itself, these arts based structures added to the sustainability of the project.

In the **second twilight zone** (Ordeal and Reward - Night before Day) we structured events that would create pressure and tension. This allowed room for the arising of unstructured conflicts and eruptions of emotion that could be aired and worked through in conversation. These conflicts both impacted the protagonists who found resources within themselves that they did not need before the Ordeal hit. It also impacted the project which responded to their needs and became more inclusive and open to the context of the protagonists.

Thanks mostly to the structured Ordeal of a Performing Arts competition, participants were able to push themselves and their teams through great moments of tension to come to an appreciation of the bigger picture: when young people (protagonists) can overcome poverty and hopelessness (antagonists), they may find the personal power and motivation to withstand the distractions of substance abuse, human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (contagonists) – especially if they have the ongoing support of mentors who create opportunities for them to stay off the streets.

When a process makes room for debate and conflict, transformation is made possible. Some of the most useful tools to air and dissipate these conflicts are found in dramatic arts based structures from the fields of Process Drama and Improvisation Theatre and other experiential exercises. Yet, the power of the classic theatrical moments of a performance on a stage can never be overlooked. If such structures further form part of an overall design of a process based on the mythic journey, they find their rightful place in the sequence of growth that enables sustainable transformation.

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After each interest group (Performing Arts, Arts and Crafts, Sport, Entrepreneurship and Community Wellness) were clearly briefed on the plan for the holiday programme relating to their interest, the following questions were asked to air doubts and reservations and at the same time invite commitment.:

a.i.1.     Why is it important for you to be part of this discussion?
a.i.2.     What doubts / reservations do you have about the plan?
a.i.3.     What possibilities do you see for this kind of workshop to keep kids safe?
a.i.4.     How do we make it sustainable?
a.i.5.     What would solidify your commitment?

There were **two types of performances** to be show cased and judged:

**A: Community performing arts productions**: 20-30min group productions put together and rehearsed during KTS as part of the holiday workshop programme.

**B: Local talent:** 5-10 minute solo or small group items that form part of an existing local artist/group that exist outside of KTS.

Semi-finals occurred on the Monday and Tuesday nights. The Friday night would show two finalists and a winner would be announced. On the same night art works produced over the holiday period would be exhibited. Also, over 15 different awards would be handed out as well as a number of other prizes such as micro MBA scholarships to some of the entrepreneurship participants.

Criteria for Performing Arts Productions

1. **Originality**: we would like to see original material developed by the performers themselves rather than work copied from well-known artists. (OF course they may incorporate the work of other artists, but then we want to see the material serve the inspiration and design of the local performers.)

2. **Presentation**: We would like to see a professional high standard presentation of the work. This includes costume, soundtracks, microphone handling, synchronised movement, clarity of speech etc.

3. **Integrity and unity**: We want to see how groups have created a golden thread that runs through the production. We want to see what they have done to put the pieces together in a way that creates a feeling of unity and integrity between the parts.

4. **Authenticity:** We want to see how the production draws on and reveals the group's particular community's character and identity. How do they see the community's problems and strengths and how do they use the art forms that are characteristic of their culture...

5. **Whole group participation**: Only applicable to A: Community productions. We want to see how groups have managed to integrate everyone into the final production as equals without compromising quality.

6. **Artistry**: Only applicable to B: Local talent. This is a general impression of the star quality of the work – connection with audience, stage presence, and overall brilliance.

*The next two criteria will require the input from stage managers and MC's (who also have worked with groups over the last four weeks)*

7. **Conduct**: We rate professional conduct in terms of punctuality, flexibility and good manners very highly. Being on time, being ready to go when it's their turn and treating everyone with respect and humility.

8. **Flexibility:** This relates to the ability of a performer/groups to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

The new judging system looks to audition kids for the final extravaganza in September of 2011. This time we are choosing between those who are ready to accept training and produce a good performance, and those who still need more basic skills and should receive another year's worth of practise. We can do this now, because we have structures in place for providing such opportunity for practise.

When we looked at talent to decide who should join the cast and who needs more time to develop, here is what we looked for:

1. **FUN**: Is the performer/s having fun? Do they look like they are having a good time and are they making the audience have a good time too?

2. **Presentation**: Do the performers present themselves with confidence? Are they dressed for the occasion with the best they could find within their means? Do they look the part?

3. **Originality**: Are they presenting their work or their own interpretation of someone else's work rather than copying without making it their own?

4. **Commitment**: Is the performer committed to the art form he chose, to the team and to presenting the work with the best they have in them? Will they overcome obstacles to improve and keep going?

5. **Values based**: Does the work encourage one or more of the values that KTA is trying to instil in the community (the teams each chose their own set of values) Do the performers honour these values in their work?

6. **Authenticity**: Does the production draw on and reveal the group's particular community's character and identity. How do they see the community's problems and strengths and how do they use the art forms that are characteristic of their culture.

We encouraged judges to **h**ave FUN and LOVE the kids enough to expect their best.