

DATE: 2014-11-27

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: LIRA

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA (INTRODUCTION)	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA (GUEST SYNOPSIS)	Joining us in the studio today is multi-Platinum selling and ten times, South African Award winning Afro-soul vocalist, Lira who is collaborated with world renowned musicians and is actively pursuing her international career with shows in Europe and the U.S.A. Earlier this year she released her debut American album, Rise again. Last year she celebrated her ten year anniversary in the music industry, with the release of her autobiography, titled, Making her story. Welcome to the show.
LIRA	Thank you it's good to be on the show.
DR. MALKA	Now since embarking on your career nearly a decade ago, you have blazed an astonishing trail of accomplishments that few artists in the history of the entire continent can lay claim to and you've received a multitude of South African music awards, MTV African awards, Motor awards, Glamor magazine's Woman of the Year, Fashion and Lifestyle magazine covers and Platinum albums and many more, all of which have left an indelible impression on Africa, at large. Can you please share with us a few of the landmarks in your career?
LIRA	It's tough to pick a few out of a ten year career but I'd say, performing for South Africa and America's first black Presidents was a highlight for me. I was also invited to speak and perform at the Oprah Winfrey School and she's a big icon for me and I got the opportunity to meet her, very unexpectedly, but I remember she took my hand and led me so we could have a private conversation and the title of the function was called, Be the change you want to see and it was just amazing how she came back to me and she said, I am so inspired by what you said, you know, that you had an intention to be a positive influence on your community and the country, and so intention really pinpoints your end result and so just by, you know, following my heart I was able to have such amazing experiences. Of course, I've had multiple tours, actually, global tours, I've toured in the States, in Europe and of course the African continent and being somebody who loves travelling that's probably the highlight experiences of my career.
DR. MALKA	Certainly with the music career like you've had, it absolutely takes you to places that are expected and unexpected.
LIRA	Indeed, indeed.
DR. MALKA	And some of the unexpected experiences?

LIRA	I landed up in Beirut for a performance. There was military all over the place but I strangely felt secure and it was amazing how people just love songs that they don't understand but they feel the music. I was also in Egypt, in Cairo. I performed in two places there, in Dubai, you know, I wouldn't, Europe loves Africa so that's different. The States are quite open because of course, we have the African diaspora but certain areas like that. I have been to Fiji as well.
DR. MALKA	And how was that experience?
LIRA	It was amazing, actually. I remember them teaching us how to dance some of the local moves and low and behold we found South Africans all the way out there because it is so far from home. You wouldn't think so but it's really been phenomenal. You know, like I say, it's so difficult to pinpoint just a few. It's really been a rich experience in terms of everything that I've had throughout the whole decade.
DR. MALKA	Now, The Star, tonight, newspaper wrote that you were certainly South Africa's biggest, star and you follow in the footsteps of giants, such as the late, Miriam Makeba and the legendary, Letta Mbulu. What's your take on this?
LIRA	It's a great honour to be compared to such legends. I'm still young and I feel like I'm starting out on so many levels but I have broken a lot of records, you know. We've set the benchmark for DVD and live show production on the African continent. It took a lot of guts, I remember, people that have been in this industry for twenty, thirty years telling me, this is not a good idea, you know, you're wasting money, don't put up so much money to put on a show but I felt, I was never just doing productions just for South Africa. It was really to set a quality that would be of a global standard and that's always been my mission. It's always been my passion to create a global African brand and I couldn't do that by playing just to South Africa, if you will and ja, just always having that willingness to even invest in myself. We always wait for record labels or somebody else to rescue you but I was fortunate enough to plan properly from the beginning so that I could put the bets on my own brand, if you will.
DR. MALKA	And I think the cultivating your brand is critically important as an individual.
LIRA	It is and you know before the artist would need the record label to pay for the studio time which is expensive to find, stylists, producers, food, accommodation, transport, marketing. We would even pay for being on radio or putting your stuff up all over the place. So that's money that somebody has to upfront and so for that risk, the record label would then claim that 90% and that's how those numbers were worked out. However, things have changed now, like we do so much of the work so it makes no sense to give up 90% of the product.
DR. MALKA	Absolutely, it's your hard earnings.
LIRA	Exactly, but, before, like I'm saying, you know, the artist would have to be put together, it's like, sure you can sing, but you know, but you have to be put together and there are a lot of artists that still are like that, where somebody has to think about how their image must be, what music they must sing. You know what I mean? So with artists like that they really can't argue a better rate, if you will. But the game is very different for us

	<p>now, in that you roll up your sleeves and you do the work and you even put up money for your own brand and so you deserve a better return and so a lot of us are going independent for that reason and it's really, for me, I always say, there is no formula. The old way of approaching the music industry is really falling away. The industry itself is changing, including the market, how people purchase music, engage with the music industry as a whole. So the old way of doing things is completely falling away. So now we're looking for alternative ways of selling our music, of putting our names out there and the internet has been a wonderful free tool, you know, to get your music and your sound out there and the thing that will never change it's always about the song. You still have to write good music that people connect to, that people want to hear and want to buy and furthermore, there are artists who are great at recording and writing music but terrible at performing it live. So the two go hand in hand. Musicians have always made money from performing but in order for people to come to your shows they've got to hear it on radio, the internet. It's got to be out there. So it's quite a monster of a machine to tackle but once you know what's it's like then you find ways of manoeuvring.</p>
DR. MALKA	It's creating the package that's working the brand.
LIRA	Absolutely.
DR. MALKA	And cultivating everything. You mentioned the element about live show production. Can you expand on that a bit?
LIRA	<p>I found that previously people would pay their ticket and come to a show where the sound is terrible, where the lighting isn't good, or sometimes the sound system is under speced for the size of the venue. So little things like this were just taken for granted and I did not want that. I wanted for everyone to have a first class experience in the room so the sound had to be perfect. What you saw on stage had to be perfect. It had to be a show, a spectacle and I've always prouded myself on that. The first time we did it I was terrified. It wasn't a popular thing to do and often we would wait for corporate productions to be able to do, like a big show and I wanted to be able to control and tell my own story in a musical fashion and so the first attempt was in 2009 when I recorded my first DVD. But before then I had had so much practice, you know, putting on shows, albeit on a smaller scale so by the time we did this big show, I was more refined as a performer, called in a lot of favours but also really organised. I remember we had a big screen where we created animation. I had to do things pre the show to create that environment because essentially you creating an experience and that's always been the thing for me, you are creating an entertainment experience for your audience, something memorable, and it requires a lot of upfront investment on my part, actually, my whole team and so it's risky in some ways but it's also incredibly rewarding.</p>
DR. MALKA	It's a real alternative, in terms of different live performances and having that as a slick production people can take away with them.
LIRA	Very much. Yes.
DR. MALKA	Now in one of the articles that I read about you, it said that you mentioned that your growing up in a Daveyton township, in Johannesburg's East Rand was shaped by the harsh realities of South Africa's racial and socio-economic

	<p>arbiter at the time. But although there were subtleties in our environment that bred a sense of helplessness and desperation we became very integrated with not only other black cultures but people of all backgrounds and made us thirsty to integrate into the world. Can you please share with us some of the moments while growing up that impacted on you the most?</p>
LIRA	<p>There was, I mean, I don't know if I was specifically told how to behave but there are certain things we just knew. One of the things is when we went into town, we would say, white South Africans would be there. We would never look them in the eye. You would just know, you keep your head down, 'cause you don't want to cause trouble. You keep your head down and you move out of the way and I remember how the little white children were also told to just smile, you don't want to aggravate so there was always that tension. But now that breeds an impression to a child of how your world is. We belong to that corner, those people belong to that corner. You could see they were treated better and what I found was growing up, I actually grew up in my formative years in Wadeville and to get to Benoni, which is where the white South Africans were, you'd have to go through the Indian area called, Actonville. So you could see the difference, the Indians were better than the black people but not quite as good as the white people. So already there's that classism.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Lived in parallel universes.</p>
LIRA	<p>It was crazy and once you crossed to the one area, you adjust your behaviour and you cross over to the next one you adjust your behaviour some more and you do this automatically and it's only when I got older did I realise, oh, my God, this isn't how life is supposed to be with the transition from you know, the apartheid South Africa into a democratic one. Suddenly we were allowed to go into mixed government schools, for example, and I remember the first thing that overwhelmed me was the people that I was so trained to avoid now I am sitting in class with them. And my default behaviour is to disappear into a corner and not be seen and so for me it took a while to be comfortable with who I was. To accept that I was an equal. It really took a while. But then I realised every time I went into town, to school and came back into the township, again, two different worlds, you know, you behave in one way in one environment and you behave in another way in another environment and I wanted to balance that scale, I wanted to feel like myself all the time, to not have to play certain roles and I realised how that upbringing influenced how I saw myself. I really saw myself as less than others and so it influenced my level of ambition. So I didn't think I could achieve certain things but it also gave me drive. Once I knew I was not limited, I wanted really to push to be the best I could be in my chosen field.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>That's a great point as you mentioned with Oprah. It's about having intent.</p>
LIRA	<p>Intention. Absolutely.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Focussing on that intention.</p>
LIRA	<p>Absolutely. Absolutely.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Focussing on that intention to overcome.</p>
<p>AD BREAK</p>	

DR. MALKA	<p>Now picking up on our discussion. In our previous segment of the conversation we were talking about your education, your upbringing and the point of doing that transition, within your formative years of going through, Bantu schooling and now onto mixed, multi-racial schools and the impact that that had on your life, in terms of opening up your mind and knowledge base. One of the things that touched me was something that you wrote and I quote, "My generation was the first to break free of our mental limitations and physical boundaries and set ourselves free, in a true sense, it celebrates the human spirit, which can never be caged completely. A person can put you in a cage and hurt you but they can't touch your spirit and your mind.". Now, today, twenty years after our first democratic election. Can you take us back to some of your personal experiences where your spirit overcame those moments.</p>
LIRA	<p>I am just trying to find, I would say, when I had quit my job, some of the things that had me confused. I was 22 years old and I spoke a little bit of Afrikaans, a little better than my colleagues who were also black South African and before I knew it, I was getting invited to certain office, or rather certain company events and I would be like, the only black person there and this confused me greatly, you know, it just seemed like, just because I speak the language then I have crossed over to the cool club as it were.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Language became a definer of inclusivity.</p>
LIRA	<p>Because they felt, I could relate, I suppose on their level and then I was promoted twice. I was a hard worker, those I really feel I deserved but there were just certain things that confused me. I didn't know whether it was because of my own ability or because I was the token darkie, if you will. It really played my mind for a long time, you know, you want to be validated for who you are and not for other conveniences and so I think some of those things added to me wanting to just find more fulfilment in my life and so of course, I went into music. The music industry proved exceptionally challenging and at my darkest hour, I realised that I had been so used to blaming the system, that for the first time, I had to take responsibility for my own perceptions of how my life had been. So now there I was, really depressed and wanting to point the finger outward and in that instant, I think taking responsibility made me change my attitude. I was going to be responsible for everything that was happening in my life because I have the freedom to choose how to react. That one moment changed my entire life, because to this day, it does not matter what's happening, how the industry is, how other people are acting, I literally take responsibility and for me that's probably the best description for my freedom, is you cannot change what life throws at you, but you have the freedom to choose how to respond. And since then, I remember looking at what I could change and I stopped moping about what I could not change. And I literally, it's as if my mind then looked for solutions immediately and in that instant I literally began finding clients, for example that would appreciate my level of professionalism and my level of work. I literally found clients and I would do work and I started getting referrals so of course, I wasn't making a living at that time as a musician and within three years, I was a fully-fledged entertainment powerhouse, if you will and it gave me a great sense of pride. That's actually how I started my business is because I just met that need of becoming a professional service</p>

	provider, providing entertainment for all kinds of environments.
DR. MALKA	I think you raised a really important point there which I feel comes a lot with maturity, of being able to realise that, taking responsibility for your personal actions, taking responsibility for where you are going and what your direction is. It's very easy to blame systems and processes, but it's about being able to work them and take charge of your own life.
LIRA	Very much and of course, like I'm saying, I got so used to blaming apartheid. I could see in my behaviour how it influenced a lot of things that it became habit and the minute I stopped there, and said, fine, it's there so what. So what now? Okay, like how do we move on now? And I promise you now, that made all the difference. I am a completely different person because of that simple change.
DR. MALKA	Well done.
LIRA	Thank you.
DR. MALKA	Now, you studied financial accounting and auditing at the Vaal Technikon in South Africa and I am sure that your financial skills have served you well in your career. Can you expand, in terms of the importance of achieving your academic qualification, given your background, given where you came from and how it contributed to your career, but also for young girls that are listening on the continent who may be at crossroads in their life, where they thinking, should I continue with my studies, or should I go and do something else and they not certain about the role that academic education in their lives.
LIRA	In the simplest terms, education refines the mind. It is so important to have a sense of completion, in terms of your academic studies. Believe it or not, you will always use it. It will refine your mind, it will train your sense of reasoning and your logic and it's a tool that you will always use. Nobody can take that away. It's knowledge that you acquire and you will use it one way or another. So it is important. Once you've started it, I urge you to complete it. What I recognize now, is one might think, finance and music aren't even related but, oh, my word, I have discovered that the process of doing one's books, for example, it teaches you to investigate solutions. It teaches you to think logically and systematically and now, it's the beautiful thing about life is that, once you learn a certain thing in one area it becomes a ripple effect in other areas of your life.
DR. MALKA	Transferable skills.
LIRA	Completely.
DR. MALKA	And I think this helps you in terms of, a bottom line on what you're doing, what your outputs are and what your inputs are.
LIRA	For the first time you actually able to make sense of that. What am I giving in and what's coming out. You learn to balance your life as you balance your balance sheet. You begin to take responsibility for what you're doing with your money. I actually even wrote a song called, Money and I discuss it at every concert that people complain about, they work but they always talk about how they don't have money. The truth is you have money but you spending it frivolously and you cannot account for what you did with your money and then you throw your hands up and say, ahg I don't have money. If you sit and account and take responsibility for

	<p>what you're actually doing with your money, you'll recognize how much waste you actually go through. So for me, being able to account taught me long ago to be careful what I do with my money and especially with, as a musician, you tend to live from hand to mouth. You receive your money this week and then you do a whole bunch of things, by the end of the month you not really sure where it's all gone but you remember receiving the money and I learnt a very important skill, that I suppose nobody will teach you at school, but it works beautifully when you are a musician, don't touch that money rather pay yourself a salary and be disciplined to live within those means. Whatever is left over, you will use to save, because you never know what tomorrow might bring so now you know you give yourself a bit of a cushion for the dry season, if you will. Some of the money you will use for marketing yourself. You'll need to move around, create new pictures, take on an opportunity that might require you to invest. Even putting on a show sometimes that might not give you the returns, is a marketing exercise. So now you start apportioning your money but if you look at it on a monthly basis, then it makes better sense because if you look at per gig you won't see how you can do it.</p>
DR. MALKA	Also the time frames are too short.
LIRA	It's too short.
DR. MALKA	You can't possibly review the patterns and look at what the expectations are how things are going to pan out.
LIRA	And education even enabled me to think that way so then you start saying it's a useful tool that nobody can take away from you.
DR. MALKA	I think that that's one of the most important parts, that once you have it, it's something which cannot be re-claimed or claimed by anybody else.
LIRA	Absolutely.
DR. MALKA	Building female leadership capacity, I consider is really important for the future of women to our country and as a role model to so many young South African women, but also to other women across the continent and in fact, across the world given your international footprint. How do you see female leadership in our country?
LIRA	It's so important, firstly and I'm excited to say that I've had a lot of female role models in this country and for me, it was always like, when I saw women doing amazing things, it gave me the strength and the confidence to say, okay so this is possible for me and that's one of the most, that is a big responsibility. If you are in a position where you can go beyond the norm, do it, because the likes of us are watching and it gives us a sense that we can do better. And so, even for me, my favourite saying is, be the change you want to see in the world. Actually, as I said that, I just remembered, two days ago, I was sitting in my house and I've got all the pictures there, you know sometimes you just get used to, I've got to be there, I've got to do that, I've got to prepare that, you just constantly running.
DR. MALKA	You running on the treadmill.
LIRA	And I stood for a moment, and I mean it brings tears to my eyes when I

	think about it, I looked at one article, a cover that I did for Destiny magazine and I'm looking at this picture and I think, wow, I look very nice there and I look at the caption and I'm looking at other pictures, and I'm like, oh, my word, I became the woman that I always was looking up to. I did it but I never considered it all these years, until two days ago, so it's a powerful ...
DR. MALKA	Having that reflection.
LIRA	Was a powerful thing for me. So going back to what Oprah said is, intention. I thought back to the fact, that, that was my mission, that was my intention. I wanted to be, to set an example for what is possible, not only for myself but for the young African girl or boy who's watching, for me, my brand is always about creating possibility because I was in a position where I could take the leap and now I can confidently say to anyone who wants to follow their passion, it is possible, go for it, in fact, the only thing I will urge you to do is, yes, please get educated, get a skill, get knowledge and secondly, correct your thinking to align with the journey that you have embarked on. If you're going to go into thinking, oh, my God, it's too difficult, I'm not going to make a living, it's going to be too hard, you know, you're already setting yourself up.
DR. MALKA	Yes, you've got a negative perceptive and you're almost setting yourself up for failure.
LIRA	You setting yourself up for failure, so it's important to adjust your attitude, to adjust your thinking, bless your life, empower your life, empower your journey, speak positivity into your life, fuel it, make enough fairness, you know, be your own hero, be your own source of light in that sense. You have got to take responsibility for yourself in that way and that for me is the only prerequisite if you're going to follow your passion. If you want to be in a corporate space I found, sometimes you can sort of get by with just, you know, doing the bear minimum but if you're going to follow your passion you really have to show for it, mentally, spiritually, physically, financially, in all aspects of life and you go in there, one hundred percent.
DR. MALKA	There's such a difference between corporate and being solo. Here you've got to take complete responsibility for everything.
LIRA	Everything, every moment in the day.
DR. MALKA	I think those are really powerful words and powerful statements to pass on to our listeners.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	In our previous segment we were talking about points of education finding some passion, to be able to fuel their imagination and to fuel their intent and to visualise and contextualise their direction and where they want to go and to adopt and adjust the right attitude and the right way of thinking. Now, turning to the musical space, music has always been a huge inspiration to people and has occasionally been exploited to influence both political as well as social agendas around the world. How do you see the role of musicians in this regard and is there a fine line between what is positive or a negative influence on people's lives.

LIRA	I suppose there is certainly a fine line and each of us choose our own path. I can only speak for myself in that I had a clear intention from the beginning that I wanted to be a positive influence on the world and specifically on Africa. However, there are all kinds of ways that you can go, of course, there are people making music for the hits for now for the clubs and what not, so I know I feel a certain part of people's existence, so if you want to celebrate your loved ones or if you want to relax, or if you want to go for a long drive you'll typically listen to Lira music and I'm fine with that, that I don't feel a person's every day's sort of life. That's fine because of course my intention was very clear and not to even knock anyone else who does any other kind of music, I'm just very aware that we all have our own intentions out there. I do feel it's important to have a cause for everything that you do, to have an intention, to have a reason, a purpose for it and mine is clear. Mine has always been clear and I actually think back to when people say, oh, so how come we don't see you in such a such a tabloid, how come we don't see this being written about you, it's not in alignment with my vision. I am not likely to behave out of character or out of line with the vision that I've set for myself.
DR. MALKA	It's your vision, it's your brand and it's your authenticity.
LIRA	Very much and that's the only reason why you wouldn't see me in certain spaces, not that I'm squeaky clean or anything like that but there's certain things I will not do and I'm also aware that I've chosen to be a role model, it's something I've put under my own shoulders and I take pride in it, it's a legacy that I'm trying to build,
DR. MALKA	But with it comes a tremendous responsibility in terms of how you display, how you behave because you're influencing young people.
LIRA	Very much but that's also the purpose. I am influencing young people. I am influencing young Africa. I am creating an impression of how the world sees Africa. Yes, I am. That's my mission.
DR. MALKA	It's an admirable mission and one that you are certainly well on the way to succeeding in.
LIRA	I appreciate it.
DR. MALKA	Now, we're coming to the last components of the show and I'd like to ask you a question that I pose to all our guests. Every August we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa. I think we're the only country to do it in the world and in that period we talk about the years that women have struggled and we reflect on the progress that women have achieved. In your opinion, which areas do you think that we still need to build on the most to benefit women in the future?
LIRA	You know, I think this country has done well, in terms of creating empowerment platforms for women but we need support. It's one thing placing us in a space but sometimes women get set up for failure. Women need to be enabled to fill certain positions and to take on certain spaces of power or leadership. We do need support. I see it in my own space, I'm enabled. I've got a wonderful husband. I've got a wonderful team. I can't possibly do it on my own but I've got enablers, you know, around me so I think that's a very key thing. Ja, for me that's the main one and then I'll just digress a bit and say, the thing that's been a theme for me this year

	and being a woman and I feel I've covered it almost in every talk that I've given this year. It's just a reminder at the back of my head to say, you know, as women, you know, we're always fighting to be heard, to be seen, to be given an opportunity that perhaps sometimes we, of course, fight amongst each other but ultimately it feels like, the thing to consider is to develop a sense of self-love and appreciation. If there is a better, greater sense of self there's no need to fight amongst each other or to fight so much. In all the things that we do, sort of to influence outer things, our careers that we need to also invest some energy inwards to feel, ja, a sense of self, you know, the spirit.
DR. MALKA	A sense of self-development.
LIRA	Very much, I even mean it on a spiritual level you know, we'll always show up for the career, we'll always show up for the children, we'll always show up for the husband, we'll always show up for the church activities, I mean those moments when nobody is watching and you are dealing with your own dark corners. I mean, that part. I would urge women to also consider that, you know, to just literally stop all the noise, stop all the roles that we need to play and just invest a little bit into yourself when nobody is watching. When nobody can look and go, ooh, you doing this well or you know so you can literally be by yourself and connect with yourself in that way.
DR. MALKA	I think that's a really interesting perspective.
LIRA	Excellent.
DR. MALKA	And I hope that some women can find the time to do that because I think quite often they so pushed extending themselves into multiple different roles.
LIRA	Exactly.
DR. MALKA	That they're ignored and neglect themselves.
LIRA	This is exactly my point.
DR. MALKA	And lastly, in closing, can you please share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to pass on to young girls and women in Africa who are listening to the show.
LIRA	First of all, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on the show and address all these wonderful women listening. My message is always the same, find out who you are, find out what you love, find out what excites you in life, dare to do it, build a vision, a very clear vision for yourself, determine what you can and need to do to see it come true, roll up your sleeves and do it until you get there, adjust your thinking, consider the end result, see yourself at the end and be your own heroine, if you will, in the process. I always find when you dare to do something that's truly, truly meaningful, all kinds of things will come at you almost challenging you. So it's really just life's way of getting you to be your own hero in that sense and good luck. God bless.
DR. MALKA	Thank you for those words of wisdom.
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