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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: SIMPHIWE DANA – SOUTH AFRICAN AFROSOUL MUSICIAN

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	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	Joining us today is Simphiwe Dana. Simphiwe Dana is one of South Africa's most soulful singers renowned around the world and adored for her impressive vocal prowess. She is an artist who employs a true cultural and African identity in her art form. Her albums have earned numerous awards both in South Africa and Internationally.
DR. MALKA	Welcome to the show.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Thank you so much for having me, thank you.
DR.MALKA	It's great to have you here and I think to start off with if you could please share with us some of the memories from when you were growing up, what influenced you in all those years and what's left its mark on you the most to make you the person you are today?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well I grew up in the village I mean I'm an African village child. My earliest memories would be running wild really, we would do our chores then we had the whole day to ourselves and the whole of nature was basically our back yard and there was a lot of forest and then we also had a river so we would go hunting for birds in the forest and then we would go play in the river and then when we got tired of playing in the river then we would.....there actually was quite a lot we that we could use to play, we used to make rope out of grass and then would play skip and we used to find cardboards and then we would sail down...where I come from is quite hilly, lots of hills so we would sail down the hills and so that for me was my childhood. I grew up in nature and from a very early age I imagine I got to respect my environment and to understand my role within my environment and also how to survive from my childhood.
DR. MALKA	Well it sounded like such a free, open spirited way to have grown up and almost, I'd almost put it as a luxury when you think of how confined our young children are today with the way they grow up.
SIMPHIWE DANA	It's very funny because I got to understand much later that I grew up quite poor, I never felt like I was poor.
DR.MALKA	But rich in environment.
SIMPHIWE DANA	There was so much to do I mean we didn't necessarily need money that much because we planted our own you know, food and when we came to clothes everyone around me also wore torn tattered old faded clothes, you know, two sizes too small and most people didn't have shoes, it wasn't a big deal to us you know, I only got to understand that actually I grew up quite poor when I moved from the village to a town.
DR.MALKA	And what factors would you say influenced you whilst you were growing up in terms of shaping your development did you always know that you wanted to go into music?

SIMPHIWE DANA	Well you know in Africa every chore, every moment has a soundtrack, I don't know maybe singing makes work light, I don't know but almost everything went with a song, you know, growing up whether it was the women cooking up a storm because there's going to be some ceremony of some sorts or whether it was my grandmother when she was sweeping up the yard, whether it was a drunk man stumbling home, you know, there was music, there was always music all around me even in church, even in school.
DR. MALKA	So almost the rhythm of life.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes it was you know, there was a soundtrack to every moment growing up so that's my earliest introduction into music and I believe that that also is the one that has shaped my musicality or my, shaped me as an artist than whatever else I learned after because that I absorbed naturally you know and it was basically like breathing and then I got to also learn how to sing even better in church. I was.... I used to love church a lot and then I was also in the school choir that also helped shape a professional understanding of how to sing.
DR.MALKA	And all those influences have culminated in you winning and being nominated for several awards at the list that I currently have with me is six South African music awards, songs...
SIMPHIWE DANA	Seven....
DR.MALKA	Seven now, two Metro FM awards for Best Female Artist and Best Contemporary Jazz, one AVO Session Award in Europe alongside with Elton John who I believe received the Lifetime Achievement AVO Session Award, Metropolitan Eastern Cape Awards and Culture Award and a PAN South African Language Award....
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes.
DR. MALKAand I think these are just few of the celebratory factors that mark elements in your career, can you share with us some of the landmarks in your career?
SIMPHIWE DANA	I'm celebrating ten years in the industry this year and....
DR. MALKA	Well that's an achievement in itself.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes it is you know and I'll tell you why because you know there is such a fast food culture that comes to music, or as they call it.entertainment, I don't even like the word because not all music is for entertainment you know, not all art IS pop so to be around for this long for me is quite an achievement I mean there are so many artists that I started off with who are no longer....
DR. MALKA	Simphiwe what would you attribute to your longevity in the business?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well my music is not trendy, it is not fashionable...
DR. MALKA	So it's timeless....
SIMPHIWE DANAso it does not go out of season because you know it does not follow, I don't follow trends I believe that that is the secret to my staying power and also my music is quite honest. I, so many people you know, what I write about it resonates with them and I think that's the other part it's the honesty and the refusal to be trendy.
DR. MALKA	And in terms of the style, could you share with us some of the style in your music?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well my music has been called many, many things, as you mentioned I have a few jazz awards but I believe that if I were to try and box my sound 'cause I mean I have you know my influences vary, they're far and wide

	but if I were to box it I would say my sound is Afrosoul.
DR. MALKA	I think that's a wonderful expression.
SIMPHIWE DANA	I think so too.
DR. MALKA	Rich, lyrical..... and currently your newest album is Firebrand, can you tell us a little bit more about the album, how it came about?
SIMPHIWE DANA	If you notice, okay I have four albums first right and if you noticed the first three there is a theme that you can see you know, it's within the same theme, each album is a continuation of and with Firebrand I, it's a different take on my musicality, well not completely because it's still me whose writing the songs but the music is lighter, I guess after turning 30 I started to become lighter as a person myself you know, I don't take myself as seriously as I used to, I don't know maybe it's old age who knows but I don't take myself as seriously as I used to and I feel like I'm growing younger as I grow older mentally, I don't know how to explain it but I mean I know that many, many artists they are very, very young at heart, I just didn't expect to be one of them but ja so that is very reflected in this new album Firebrand I mean I still talk about heavy issues you know, social commentary and all of that but I also speak a lot of love in this album and also what I also did differently is that I broke my own rule of singing mainly in my African language, Xhosa, and I wanted this album to be more embracing and the message to be heard by many more people and so quite a big amount of the album is in English.
DR. MALKA	Well that will obviously open up more of a market and do you think that that will also give you more opportunity for attracting listeners abroad in other areas?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well yes but even though I was singing in Xhosa I was getting that but I just feel like the content, you know, of the music, the message in the music was not being, it was getting lost you know because not everyone speaks isi Xhosa and if I'm trying to you know then spread my message then I had to you know just compromise a little on my rules.
DR. MALKA	Well I think that gives a greater opportunity for people who are not isi Xhosa speaking to understand the content....
SIMPHIWE DANA	Totally.
DR. MALKA	...and whilst you're talking from a content point of view, music has always been a huge inspiration to people and occasionally it's been exploited to influence from a political point of view and social agenda's around the world, now you yourself are renowned for your social commentary particularly the plight of the poor and the dispossessed, how do you see the role of musicians in that regard?
SIMPHIWE DANA	We as people in the public eye you know, we are blessed because people listen to us and we also get the spaces to speak that you know most people do not get to have and as someone who comes from a very poor and dispossessed background I have chosen to use my voice you know to bring about a better day for this beautiful continent of ours in however small contribution I can you know, avail or put in, so I'm not saying that every artist should do this you know, we all have different roles to play but I personally I have chosen to use my voice for change. I would like that when I leave this planet or this life I would like to leave the world a much better place than how I found it so then I use my voice for activism, I'm a social activist, I'm particularly interested in education, I'm particularly interested in the psychology of oppression and how we should be dealing with it because freedom is not just material only, you know, getting back

	<p>your land is very much a part of freedom but if you're not free mentally you won't even know what to do with that land so like you know like as Steve Biko said we have to infuse back life and dignity into the hearts of the black person because we have been so dehumanised, so identity is very important it's a very important part of my activism, how do we infuse back what we have lost, that's one and then when it comes to education as someone who suffered Bantu Education and for the listeners Bantu Education was a very poor form of education that was meant to make the black child shearers of wood, we would learn things like it's what you called home something, so how to bake.....</p>
DR. MALKA	It wasn't even second class citizenship....
SIMPHIWE DANA	<p>....you know and gardening, you know, so basically that was meant so that we would never enter the mainstream market we would only ever be servants you know on our own land, so we in South Africa for instance we spend so much money on education, I think the biggest budget in this country goes to education, the damage is huge, you know there's a lot that needs to be fixed and I as an activist who managed to succeed despite like the odds that were stacked up against me, I realise the importance of education and quality education and to be honest with you, you can have quality education even under a tree as long as you've got great teachers who know what they're doing. I, despite the fact of Bantu Education I had good teachers who were passionate about what they were doing and I turned out okay regardless.....</p>
DR. MALKA	I think you turned out more than okay....
SIMPHIWE DANA	<p>.....of how the odds..... so basically part of my activism is to go on a fact finding mission to try and understand the core issues that plague our education system because being taught of mud schools, there's always been mud schools, why does it seem like now things are breaking down, so I do that, I travel, I go to the schools I talk to the kids, I talk to the teachers the principals, the leaders in the community the parents to try and understand and what I have found is that there has been a disempowerment that has happened post '94 as in people no longer feel like they should be in control over what happens in their societies in their communities. They wait with hands held out for government to come and drop something on their hands and definitely.....</p>
DR. MALKA	So would you say a lack of responsibility towards one's self and in terms of taking advantage of what is available and making your path and utilising the tools that are available to you?
SIMPHIWE DANA	<p>Yes but that....our government, our ruling party made a mistake in 1994 by saying we're going to come and fix everything, just relax, sit back relax, we're going to come we're gonna give you free electricity, free everything, mahala....right, that was....they had good intentions but that was.....you do not create a welfare nation, that's the worst thing that you can do for your people that's not empowering them, that's disempowering them, so that is what has happened in the communities even when I hear of schools being vandalised it's because people don't feel like they have ownership of those spaces so we have to, I guess that's the part when we speak of identity you know, self-esteem, self love and all of these things, I guess that's the role black consciousness perhaps was supposed to play and therefore we have to try and conscientise you know our people when it comes to their, so basically re-empower them, infuse back that identity and dignity and humanity because we are psychological beings right and people don't seem to understand you know the impact of something like what happened on this continent is on the psyche of those people that it happened to, so yes</p>

	education, dispossessed people and also feminism.
DR. MALKA	We're glad to hear on all of those factors given the nature and the genre of this particular show.
SIMPHIWE DANA	I don't want to mention it last, I guess maybe because I'm a woman and I'm so used to taking care of everyone else before I take care of myself.
DR. MALKA	Well we'll definitely get more into that discussion a little bit later into the show.
DR. MALKA	We'll take a short break.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	You're listening to 'Womanity – Women in Africa' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9625 KHz, on the 31 meter band also available on DSTV channel 902. Today we're talking to award winning South African singer and entertainer, Simphiwe Dana. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In our previous insert Simphiwe shared some of her rural upbringing and the rhythm of life which was associated with almost every activity that was undertaken within the household whether they were for chores or for pleasure and talked us through some of her influences within her music and touched on her social activism work. Now going into the next segment of the show I'd like to stay with the theme of your social activism, I understand that you're a convenor of the African Union's Re-Imagined Creative Hub which considers how arts, culture and heritage contribute to the AU's Agenda 2063 in terms of their role in shaping and reimagining the narrative of Africa that the world will see by 2063 and I know that you've touched briefly in terms of the identity and within the African continent and also changing and taking ownership and more responsibility through education. Can you tell us a little bit more about the project, the countries that are involved, the duration of the campaign?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Africa Re-Imagined Creative Hub came about, I was a guest in Addis Ababa of a separate programme and then I thought, it was my first time in Ethiopia, if you wanna meet people from all over the world on this continent go to Ethiopia you'll meet them all the diplomats, they're in and out of Ethiopia, so I was there for a different programme and then I requested to meet with the chairperson of the AU, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and she granted me my request and when I met with her I had just read her vision for 2063 and she had written it in such a beautiful form or format where she made it, she wrote it in a way that it was a letter to Nkrumah who is the founding father of the African Union where she was basically reporting back to him what has happened in the 100 years since the AU was formed, it was called the OAU then and she has this vision of you know an integrated Africa, a unified Africa, we even actually treat Africa as one country, there's a confederation you know of Africa, you know she puts it in such a beautiful way and you know the people of the continent are benefitting from the riches that this continent has. She speaks of the blue economy, she speaks of how women are empowered and I was like wow, this can be so beautiful but as we all know African unity has been plagued by a lot of issues you know, the progress has been quite, quite slow.
DR. MALKA	It has been slow and in fact she was one of our guests a couple of months ago just after the recent AU Summit where I loved the theme of it "Year of Women Empowerment and Development" towards Africa's Agenda 2063.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes, so I said to her I honestly believe that the reason why things have been so slow, development has been so slow, the unity has been slow on the continent is because we do not put the artists at the centre of African development. We do not utilise the voice of the artist because we obviously

	will fast track progress once we can unify as a continent and when I say once we can unify, you have to trust someone to do business with them, you have to trust them to deliver, you have to feel like you know and you understand them to even be able to start a multi-million dollar project with them, you have to have some sort of, not necessarily kinship but something close, you have to feel like you can depend on them they can pull it off and therefore we on the continent we are strangers to each other even though we are so similar to each other but we do not know each other well and music is the quickest cultural conduit that we have.
DR. MALKA	And it offers so much diversity and it's ever present, everyone is always, there's a continuous listenership with music...
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes.....
DR. MALKAand we get it from all parts of the world this mass.....
SIMPHIWE DANAand music is its own language right, and therefore I did convince her and she was convinced so she....and then I asked her to task me with writing the arts and culture chapter of the AU's Agenda 2063 for which I would have to gather artists from all the 50 AU countries. The idea was to have at least 3 artists from different art disciplines from each country and I only had a month and a half, she gave me a month and a half....
DR. MALKA	That's a quick turn-around.
SIMPHIWE DANA	It's very quick, I don't even know how we did it, she gave me a team of people and she gave me a month and a half, if not a month and so my goal was to have 150 artists but we managed 120 and we wrote that chapter, we have and we even did a song together, we have a documentary coming out very soon you know it's just that the wheels of the AU move very slowly so everything is coming together and we have basically given the AU a plan how to quickly or fast track development on the African continent. We had pages and pages of ideas that we then concretised into you know maybe like a one page list of the things that you know can help to unify this continent.
DR.MALKA	How does that make you feel to be part of our continent's legacy?
SIMPHIWE DANA	You know I'm a Pan Africanist right but prior to going to Ethiopia I was not as well travelled on the continent as I would have liked to and what that did for me that it opened me up to so many other artists on the continent, like now I have my own network of artists and it also just opened me up to all of these different cultures and that has enriched me as an artist you know, I want to be a better composer that is for sure but also, there are such opportunities to do collaborations with all of these different artists and now we are like a family, we know each other and we check up on each other you know so we've created this African union of artists.
DR.MALKA	That sounds absolutely incredible and I'm sure that by tapping into that market it'll allow for greater fusion for all of these artists into
SIMPHIWE DANA	Definitely. This continent is rich even artists as artists, we can make all of our money here we don't have to go to the US, we don't have to go to Europe you know for money, we go there for new markets we shouldn't have to be going there to make money, this continent is rich it's just that we are not working together in a way that enriches us, it's people.
DR. MALKA	Do you think we need to be more appreciative of ourselves, of our own values, of what we can do?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well in South Africa for instance, it's a huge problem, like this whole identity crises that we have it really impoverishes artists. We cannot have a country so invested in promoting the culture of another country that makes no sense, it is completely nonsensical. How do you have you know, state media promoting another culture over our own that doesn't make sense

	and also financially also it makes no sense economically, all of this money leaving this country every year, millions if not billions leaving this country and going mainly to America that makes no sense, something has got to give we cannot continue like this.
DR. MALKA	So there needs to be a far more greater ownership in terms of people's collective responsibility, culture....countries to appreciate.....
SIMPHIWE DANA	People have been given a chance to actually you know want to be a part of South Africa and they have not jumped on it so now for me it's a matter of policy, we need to change policy and put out quota systems that benefit this country, South Africa, and this continent, anything less than that does not make sense.
DR. MALKA	I think that's an interesting perspective on pushing through and almost has a business aspect to it as well to make it an economically viable and vibrant industry.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes, yes I mean all of this money could be staying right here and you know if your artists are more empowered they empower others you create even a bigger industry, the money circulates here.
DR. MALKA	And one of the questions that I ask all my guests from an empowerment point of view and a creativity aspect is that you have made significant achievements in your career and where you have got to to date, what would you say have been some of the factors that have contributed to your success?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well I've had a lot of help along the way, what I call my guardian angels. I've also taken a lot of chances you know, my motto is luck will find you on the way to your success....right...
DR. MALKAluck will find you on your way to success....
SIMPHIWE DANAon the way to your success, yes that's my motto so I've taken lots of leaps of faith because I believe that what you are most passionate about it can't be wrong, this is what you are here to do and the universe will conspire with you in your favour if you follow your passions, so this is how I've lived my life, I've been chasing my passions I mean even when I chose to do IT after I finished high school, I chose it knowing it knowing that the end game is music but I have to pay my way for now.
DR. MALKA	A bridge
SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes I have to pay my way for now, I have to be able to pay my way I have to be able to pay rent to help my mom support my sisters, I'm the first born at home you know and then when I'm comfortable financially then I'll be able to think clearly about music which is what I did, right, but I've made sure throughout my life that I follow my passions and I believe that our passions are our gifts from God and when we follow those passions that's our gift back to God.
DR.MALKA	I think that's a fantastic attitude to have and especially your beautiful expression of "luck will find you on your way to success".
DR.MALKA	We'll be right back after this.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to award winning South African singer and entertainer Simphiwe Dana. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In our previous segment Simphiwe shared some of her social activism work particularly as being a convener of the African Union's Re-Imagined Creative Hub which saw her amassing 120 other artists in terms of writing the chapter within the Charter for the AU on how it reconsiders the role of arts, culture and heritage to fast track change within the continent and drive unity. Now Simphiwe we're going into the last segment of the show and 'Womanity – Women in Unity' is all about gender equality, you mentioned earlier on in our

	first segment that feminism was part of your interests, gender equality is increasingly becoming a global focus and as such we consider that building female leadership is critical to the future of women not only within countries but on a larger scale, how do you see female leadership whether it is in parliament, whether it is in the business space, the music environment or any other field for that matter?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well in South Africa we as a woman we actually should be quite thankful to Madiba because he fought for proper gender representation, okay or equal representation and he also thought that we would be given a hand up in the form of BEE which favours the black woman more than anyone else. Those two have helped so much that you have many women leaders in good positions in South Africa who are running corporations, which is really awesome, I believe also Rwanda.....
DR. MALKA	Rwanda leads the world in terms of female representation in parliament; they've got 64%....
SIMPHIWE DANA	Rwanda is stellar actually I would love to visit Rwanda very, very soon.
DR. MALKA	You must add that to your agenda.
SIMPHIWE DANA	Tell me about it, I want to go and see for myself 'cause it sounds like a miracle, so, we live also in a patriarchal society and patriarchy is heavily intertwined with culture, as a result when you stand up and say you're a feminist you are viewed as anti-African, which I find very, very interesting. We have to find ways to root out patriarchy from culture, you know because patriarchy is patriarchy and it has existed in some form or another in most parts of the world and we have woken up to the fact that it's oppression to women but in Africa we seem to believe different, you know, you'll have a conversation with a black man and you'll agree on racism, it's bad it's this and this and that but when you turn it and you use the same conversation points to deal with patriarchy they shut down completely, they don't want to hear it you know which is I guess their male privilege kicking in to.....
DR. MALKA	It's about socialisation and what they've believed in and what has been taught to them, ingrained in them as they've grown up and it's difficult to divorce yourself
SIMPHIWE DANA	But the thing is that no one told them that it's wrong.....
DR. MALKA	You're exactly right....
SIMPHIWE DANAthat is what makes it so difficult to actually turn things around, it's been seen as right and as culture as our way for the longest time that when you stand up and say no hang on, that's oppression, you're oppressing a woman they're like what are you talking about this is how we've been doing things for hundreds of years and so that is the challenge with African feminism.
DR. MALKA	But do you think we'll come to a point where we'll be able to overcome these issues for the sake of women's development?
SIMPHIWE DANA	Well the good thing in South Africa and Rwanda is that the women are empowered despite cultural sensibilities, right, and those women once they become empowered they empower others right, and I believe personally I could be wrong, I've not done the research, but the reason why there's so much more violence against women and it's so vile and ...is because of the frustration of seeing like these women not being able to, not staying under your thumb, not jumping, not being controlled by you as the man.
DR. MALKA	Last year there was an article by our current Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, and in there she was talking about that very fact that it's almost because of our empowerment that men are feeling threatened.

SIMPHIWE DANA	Yes, you know they call it emasculation which is complete rubbish, I'm sorry... so that is that retaliation but at the same time it's not stopping the empowerment of women, more and more women are being empowered and the patriarchal voice is being stifled more and more every day, you know by the women I mean you also find women who are very patriarchal and you also find men who are patriarchal you know, it's a, it's quite tough you know because you'll have even women not seeing that they're oppressed and you know attacking you for talking about feminism you're saying it's un-African you know, don't touch our ways, if you want to be a white person go and be a white person somewhere else, it's quite tough but every day more and more people are buying into feminism and more and more women are being empowered and sooner than later patriarchy is going to be gone, it might take a hundred years, it might take two hundred years but one day it will be a thing of the past.
DR.MALKA	And it comes to us fighting and making sure that's the way. Now, Simphiwe we're coming to the end of our show, in closing the discussion can you please share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to impart to women on the continent listening?
SIMPHIWE DANA	You know they say that if you empower a woman you empower a nation and that has been true for as long I have been able to comprehend what's happening around me so I want to challenge the women to, to really focus and not be waylaid in empowering their girl kids, this is very, very important. We need to empower our girl children because they are the ones most likely to empower the next generation, I'm not saying that men don't but I don't know maybe having a child grow in your tummy does something to you that connects you much more than it does with a man, if you want to transform our societies let's focus on empowering the women and it's going to be good for all of us, both men and women.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much for that important note. It's been a pleasure having you on our show and we...
SIMPHIWE DANA	Thank you so much doctor.
DR. MALKAlook forward to hearing more about your developments on a personal level and also the work that you're doing on the continent.
SIMPHIWE DANA	I will be back.
DR. MALKA	We welcome it.
	PROGRAMME END