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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA

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 studio today Ambassador Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya who is currently South Africa's Ambassador to Egypt. Ambassador Mayende-Sibiya has been involved activities for Gender Equality and the Emancipation of Women in South Africa. Between 2009-2010 she served as South Africa's first Minister of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. In 2006 she was elected as co-convenor of the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa and a member of the South African Communist Party Central Committee. Additionally she served as a member of the Central Executive Committee of COSATU from 1998-2009 when she was a Deputy President and later President of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union and was also selected the first woman president of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador, you have several "first" under your belt.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Thank you.
DR. MALKA	Welcome to our show.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Thank you very much for inviting me.
DR. MALKA	You have an impeccable political career, serving your country both in and out of government. Can you share with us; has it been your strong sense of duty or your passion for making a difference that has kept you for so many years in the political arena?
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Firstly let me thank you for this opportunity to be part of your organization here and to share whatever perspective I have on many of the experiences that I have had in life. I have been very fortunate and humbled by the fact that I had been exposed to leadership positions at a very early age in life. During my school years for instance, when Soweto was burning we were in the Eastern Cape at our high school Mfundisweni High School a rural school where we also had our issues and we had our own struggle with authorities then. It was from that time that one developed leadership qualities and was exposed to the many activities that were taking place during that time. And of course my upbringing by politically active parents at the time inculcated in me that sense of responsibility and participation – you can't just watch things happening and not make a contribution to make a difference. So that was the early years. Later on I was then trained as a professional nurse, but in addition to that my involvement in politics through the African National Congress, the organization that I come from and the organization that developed me over many years as a political

	<p>activist. Because you don't just become president, you start somewhere and you rise through the ranks of leadership. So I will be forever indebted to the members of NEHAWU who had the confidence in me to lead them as the first woman president. So that was a privilege that I did not take for granted. It was challenging because trade unions by their nature, are male dominated and at the time when I became a member in 1988, NEHAWU was mainly a blue collar workers union. So I was one of those people who mobilised nurses to join and be part of trade unions.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And at that time nurses were predominantly a female profession.</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Nurses were predominantly a female profession.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Tell us how you navigated some of those elements of gender issues bringing women in from a nursing point of view within the trade union environment</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>It was challenging because there was initially resistance because nurses are predominantly women and of course there is a professional element and others saw the union as theirs. Even at that time women leadership was not an easy thing to do because we had to navigate through attitudes, life time attitudes. You had to deal with the opposition. People did not see women as capable of providing leadership and playing a meaningful role in society.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>It was a very different era for women.</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>It was yes and that time also it was the era of apartheid, ja so there were many, many challenges. But I am so happy now that women are increasingly playing their role in the terrain, even though I wish when I left NEHAWU another woman could have taken over from me, but I still believe that NEHAWU would still do that and find a woman amongst its ranks who can fill that responsibility of being a woman president.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And Ambassador, staying on the note of NEHAWU you were the first female president as a co-convenor of the Progressive Women's Movement in South Africa in 2006, you were also Chief Professional Nurse, you were the first Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities so as a woman, your involvement in activities for gender equality and emancipation of women have been paramount in almost everything you do. Adding to that you are a mother of three daughters and you are a grandmother and it seems though that some of your strength comes from your compassion. What is your point of view on that?</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Yes thank you as I have indicated earlier on, I think my upbringing played a part because I want to say that it's not only myself but it's other people who have developed me to what I am today as people saw something in me I didn't even know I had to place me in positions of leadership and of influence in our society. So obviously I had to care, to learn to care for others to learn to have compassion, you know and that's when also training as a nurse makes you have you compassion on suffering people and makes you want to make them feel better and makes you want to make a difference in their lives for the better. So that is how then I navigated through the challenges of all the positions. When a woman takes a position, any leadership position she brings with her female components of being a woman, you know the traits into previous-</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>The nurturing-</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Yes the nurturing, the loving and you know the caring, uniting people around a common program.</p>

DR. MALKA	And you have also mentioned which I think is interesting is often people think that people get to a position and they just arrived, no. They have had to go through and undertake this journey of events and that each element that they achieve, contributes to the overall picture.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Indeed, indeed. If I can make an example I proposed to NEHAWU to take women on a program that will empower them, that would develop their skills in their terrain that they are operating in – in the public sector and the public services. So after much debate, very difficult debate because at times I had to stand alone to fight this because the men didn't see the value why pick up women. Even though not all of those 315 women achieved, you know because some passed away, some due to family situations could not finish, but at least about 298 (if I'm not mistaken) made it through. So I am extremely proud of all of them and I'm thankful to the leadership and membership of NEHAWU for having had the foresight you understand, to make such a progressive decision to empower women in the tenders. So for me it is one of the things that I'm really happy about.
DR. MALKA	Well personally I think that must have been a very rewarding experience, but also to see that multiplier effect of what those women have achieved, through been given that opportunity of empowerment and then the ripple effect therein.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Indeed and it is said if you empower a woman, you empower a nation-it is true. The birth of the Progressive Women's Movement, for me was an important milestone in the history of our country and I'm also privileged to have been a founder co-convenor of that movement which sought to unite women of South Africa along common issues and common goals that affect that women aspire to. So in that sense I think that was a very progressive development in the history of our country and is something that we need to do to build the Progressive Women's Movement so that it continues to be the voice for all the women of South Africa, across the spectrum of our nation irrespective of race, creed or belief, or whatever but that women of South Africa are united under one banner – even irrespective of political affiliations. I found that whatever our differences may be as women in South Africa and across the world, there are many issues that unite us that we need to rally around so that together we can be a powerful force for change and progress in our world.
DR. MALKA	And Ambassador in terms of the Progressive Women's Movement as it stands now, where do you think- what do you think we need to do in terms of moving forward to continue with the momentum or what needs to be done next?
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Well I think we need to mobilise women, we need to hear the voice of women speaking together on the issues that affect them and on the issues that affect their families, the whole country and you know if you look at the example of 1956 – the 1956 march that was an important milestone in our history. Because women were there in the background supporting their husbands in the political terrain, some of them were activists in their own right but then they decided that enough was enough with the pass laws and let the women stand together – that was a shining inspiring example that we aspired to follow as this current generation of women. When the Progressive Women's Movement was launched in 2006, there was a symbolic march that led to the union building where a memorandum was handed over to then President Thabo Mbeki to say as women of South Africa, we are united and we are marching forward, we are taking the baton from our forbearers who showed us the way so in the current challenges that are afflicting our society, women have an important role to play and they have an important voice, you know. I think that things will

	<p>change if we stand together and speak as one in addressing issues of poverty, you know, issues of economic development, issues of safety and security for women you know and children. All of those things, are things that we can do together as women, it does not matter you know who is where and who is what, but we just need to stand together and address. Of course not in isolation, but within the organizations that are existing also and also we need to stand together with men who think like us and change the attitudes and the mind-sets that are not promoting progress as we see it as women. So I believe the Progressive Women’s Movement has an important role to play of course together with other organizations like the ANC Women’s League and other women’s organizations – there are also many NGO’s out there who are doing a great deal of work on this front they are also part of the equation for all of us to stand together and make a change in the world that we live in.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Ambassador thank you for elaborating on all of those points. Today we are talking to Ambassador Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, South Africa’s ambassador to Egypt.</p>
<p>AD BREAK</p>	
DR. MALKA	<p>You’re listening to Womanity – Women in Unity 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 are talking to Ambassador Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya South Africa’s ambassador to Egypt. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter @womanitytalk. Moving ahead now in terms of your current position you are currently South Africa’s ambassador to Egypt, you have developed and cultivated relationships with various foreign heads of states, ministries of commerce, economy as well as international business leaders. And in effect I would say you almost see yourself as a bridge builder, structuring those strategic partnerships amongst international trade organizations, helping businesses to enter international markets in Egypt and South Africa – can you share with us some of the work that you do as an ambassador in Africa?</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Let me start by saying it is a privilege and an honour to serve South Africa as ambassador to Egypt. I really was humbled when I was appointed by the President to go and represent our country. Firstly like any other ambassador sent to represent their country, my work entails mainly to forge relations across first and foremost with Egypt as the host country and to promote relations of course with other international organizations and other embassies you know, other countries that are based in Egypt. South Africa has forged many relations across the world, with many countries and also that is part of the work that we do to engage each other as African ambassadors, but also as ambassadors who come from the SADC region. We also have a role to ensure that we promote the interests of South Africa in the equation and also make sure that we strengthen the bilateral relations between South Africa and Egypt. So it is being an ambassador is an important position in the sense that it keeps relations alive and also deals with other issues that may arise between our two countries. I believe also that the AU Summit that was recently held also reiterated the importance of implementing the action plan on boosting inter-African trade and also even in terms of Agenda 2063 that the African Union has adopted, talks to challenges of making strides in terms of economic development.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And this year’s theme was also under the empowerment of women for 2015 strong element that came through with this summit.</p>

MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Of course plenty strong. Indeed, indeed and the theme of the summit – I was so pleased and happy – the theme was about women, this year is all about women and this is the time when we must take the opportunity and show that women occupy this space you know. In 2010 the AU adopted a ten year focus program.
DR. MALKA	And that was for the agenda for the Decade.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Yes the Decade for Women. So this is the Decade for Women, still and we need to ensure that women seize the opportunities that are there and make a difference wherever they are.
DR. MALKA	I found it a very enlightening experience and you have those discussions with various gender ministers to understand what was happening in their different countries. And really, gender equality has undoubtedly become a global focus. From a South African point of view we had the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality bill which is currently under review. But one of its principal aims is about promoting and achieving equality for women across all sectors, whether it is in the political space, whether it is in the private sector – so that we have equal representation, we have equal opportunity and equal pay for the same job – I think that is one of the biggest concerns. What are your perspectives on gender equality and do you think that 50/50 representation can be achieved?
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	I believe that it can be and it will be achieved. Even though the predictions are saying we are not going to get gender equality until about 2093 if I'm not mistaken. But we must defy that prediction.
DR. MALKA	So we need to have the legislation.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	We need to have political will; we need to have determination and commitment to ensure that women make such a difference. In our country, the ruling party the African National Congress has adopted the 50/50 gender policy. The challenge is then and I think also the ministry for women is also looking into how best to implement that so that across sectors in government and also in the civil society organizations, in the whole of our society how then do we ensure that this is translated into meaningful experience in our country because it is an important issue in terms of how to implement the gender equality policy from the perspective from the ruling party, which must then translate into meaningful programs in terms of government and that will also have positive spin-offs on the rest of society.
DR. MALKA	And women mustn't become complacent that's the other issue that once a level has been achieved, that they continue to move ahead rather than sitting back and going okay.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	You see if you look at the figures I can't believe that even though currently 28% of senior positions in South African are occupied by women, only 2.4% of CEO's in the JSE listed companies are women.
DR. MALKA	It's shocking and we have such disparity.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	And fewer than 9% of those listed companies have 20% or more females as directors. So that gives you a picture that a lot needs to be done.
DR. MALKA	And I think the private sector needs to take learnings from government, from a political point of view where we have that representation.
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	Yes, when I was minister that is the most frustrating part you know, because you find that the CEOs are men, the chairpersons are men. You see very few women, but there are women who are coming up serving as chairpersons of boards etc. but CEOs you still – and yet there are many

	<p>capable women out there who can play a meaningful role in this regard. So I believe that we are doing well as a country and we are ranked 17 out of 136 countries in terms of gender equality. We are on track but we can still even do better. My personal dream is to see more young women, you know coming to the fore because even our generation of women, one day we will have to hand over to somebody and we want active, young women who are passionate about their country and who understand you know the importance of ensuring you know that the voice of women continues in board rooms of companies, in offices in governments, in the offices of NGO's in the civil societies, in the factories where workers are; you know that there is an important voice that needs to grow so that we can make a meaningful contribution for the betterment of society in our country and the world.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Ambassador, your passion for women's development is evident through everything that you have said today and in fact you are a role model for many young women, and older women. One of the questions that I ask all of my guests on this program who have made significant achievements in their respective fields is about some of the factors that contribute to their success. I know that earlier you mentioned elements of the enabling environment that you were in through your organization, being in a political conscious family. But could you please elaborate on some of the key drivers that have contributed to your success?</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>I did mention that the support of family is key; you know because as a woman you need that space and the support, you must not be concerned by the fact that you are bringing up children or you have your family or husband waiting for you at home. So that kind of support is very key. I used to go to meetings as a young mother with my baby, with the baby on my back you know. To meetings because I believed in the cause of the struggle against apartheid at that time. So they too relate stories to "oh mummy you dragged us to your meetings and we were bored with all-"but you know they now also my daughters appreciate that it was necessary that I play that role.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>But I think and for the listeners out there to understand the contribution and the impact it had on your daughters – three daughters- one is a medical doctor, one is an accountant and one is an attorney.</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Yes</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>I think that is a fantastic achievement of a mother, empowering her children.</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>In fact I consider it as one of the most important achievements, if not the most achievement of my life you know, because they are well rounded, independent young women you know, who can think, who can analyse who can make their own decisions, who can make a difference where they are, you know. For instance my eldest daughter that is Sihle the doctor, she is in the private sector medical but she is passionate about the public service you know and she continues to do some work in the public service so I'm proud of that because she is responding to the needs of our people on the ground and she sees herself as one of the foot soldiers that must make a change in that regard. So these are the things that make me happy as a mother, you know and I hope that the little legacy I will leave with them as a mother, they will carry forth and see themselves as people who can make a difference towards positive change for society and not just live for themselves you know and their families but also live selfless lives thinking</p>

	<p>about other people you know and contributing to betterment of society. So for me it is one of the greatest – that support and of course the belief by the different organizations that I have served in me, also is important and I really appreciate the opportunities that have been given to me over the past to make a humble contribution that I contributed in a small way to ensure that our country is a better place to be even though, whatever I do in the future, you know it will still include women you know, whatever it is that I will do in the future whether I am still working, whether I am old or you know retired, there will always be an aspect of women in that regard. So I am grateful to NEHAWU, to the African National Congress, to COSATU and the SACP. I am really – and the membership because they gave me those opportunities. At times when I was elected as president of NEHAWU, I was not sure what I was going to – but because of the support they gave me you know, I was able to discharge my responsibilities and ensure that the union grew and improved – we improved its financial standing, you know and improved systems within the union itself and that’s why NEHAWU now has about 277000 members – I am proud of that achievement, there is still more to be done. There are many challenges out there in the public service, but you know I can see progress. When I was Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities there was a lot of robust debate because the Ministry was new and nobody knew what it was going to do. So many people were asking questions and of course criticizing you know, positively you know others of course in whatever way but I do appreciate you know that space because it was a period of growth for me you know. It was the first time that I was given such a responsibility as a minister you know and I was given the privilege of establishing something new from scratch you know. That confidence that was given to me by the President and the ANC will always be appreciated in that regard. So all I am saying is you know you can be a leader but it’s only – credit must be given to the people who are supporting you who have been instrumental in the position that you are holding. So I believe that you have given me a platform to say thank you to everybody.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your thoughts there and the pioneering elements that you have achieved throughout your career. And now ambassador in closing our discussion today, could you please share a few words of wisdom and inspiration that you would impart to our young girls that are listening to us today?</p>
<p>MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA</p>	<p>I wish to say to all women out there especially young women that we are now in 21 years of democracy. South Africa has achieved a lot in this period, even though there are still many challenges that remain. Let’s stand together, let’s rally together and stand up as women and to address all the issue that are affecting our society. There are many opportunities that are there, grab them you know. Even if you don’t believe in yourself, you know, others will make you; will build you up to be the best that you can be in whatever field you are. So go, the sky is the limit for young people. The terrain in South Africa is open you know and young people young women, must see themselves as future presidents of this country, one day; future ministers who knows you understand and future CEO’s we want to see them you know in my old age, I wish to see more women you know coming up and occupying you know. When I grow older I hope to see this more and more in our society. So the sky is the limit, participate also in organizations that you believe in you know, whether it is NGO’s whether it is political organizations and so on. That is where you learn to grow and you learn about discipline. That is where you learn about empowering yourself and others and also caring for others – a selfless giving to others and the nation</p>

	<p>is important. So it's not just about us, you know I want to see myself there - see others also bring others up instead of bringing them down. So that's the message that I would like to – you know that's unity that speaking with one voice, that you know fly, fly and the wings you will have the wings to do the many things that you want to do. So I believe that it is possible for everybody.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you very much ambassador. Thank you for joining us.</p>
MS NOLUTHANDO MAYENDE-SIBIYA	<p>Thank you very much for the invitation. Thank you.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You have been listening to Womanity-Women in Unity, on Channel Africa the voice of the African Renaissance and we have been talking to Ambassador Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, South Africa's ambassador to Egypt.</p>
<p>END OF PROGRAM</p>	