

PROGRAM DATE: 2016-10-27

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: CASTER SEMENYA – OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST

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 on the line today is South African Middle Distance Running Champion, the 2016 Olympic Gold Medallist 800 metre champion and multi-gold medallist Caster Semenya. She participated in the 2008 World Junior Championships and won the Gold in the 800 metres at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games; she also won Gold in the women's 800 metres at the 2009 World Championships; Silver in the women's 800 metres at the IAAF World Championships in 2011; she qualified to represent South Africa in the 2012 London Olympic Games and went on to win a silver medal in the women's 800 metres. At the Rio 2016 Rio Olympic Games she won a gold medal in the women's 800 metres. Welcome to the show.
DR. MALKA	Competing at the forefront of international competition has given you unparalleled insight into what it takes to get to the top and more importantly how to stay there, as I mentioned in our brief introduction, tapping into some of your achievements, do you think that some of the same principles relate and apply to life in general?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think obviously as a sportswoman life is all about running for me but when it began it was more of football because I wanted to be a soccer star but obviously you know some of people we believe more in choosing you know individual you know sporting codes because there's no one to be blamed if you lose so ja, it obviously helps also with the status, obviously the personality, the morale and also how you know you treat people, so the respect and everything so it helped me to become a better person.
DR. MALKA	And one thing that you've just mentioned there you were looking at first of all your ideal dream was going into the soccer space which is most definitely a team orientated sport and then you elected to go into running as an individual and when we hear about successful people there's a tendency to think that those achievements happened overnight but really we're witnessing the end result of years of hard work and disciplined dedication, now although you mentioned that running is an individual sport behind the scenes there's usually an incredible support structure backing the individual, can you tell us a bit about your support systems?
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes, so I think it's all about it starts with the family I must say because without the strong support from the family you know you cannot really achieve anything so you know we start whereby you know I grew up at home we were six so we were six kids and I'm the fourth born so we all did sport but unfortunately it was only me who can you know do better ja but my siblings are always there for me, they train me a lot, they want me to be better all the time and if you check also in school we have a good support system where I have a coach, I have training partners and I also have like a good management team and I obviously need a gym, I have a good scientist to look after me, ja and I we have just got married recently so you know my partner she has been there for me, without her support I don't think I could have been here so.....my fellow South Africans you know

	they have supported me through thick and thin and I really appreciate their support and I'll always make them proud you know, may God bless them andmy fellow Africans you know they are there all the time and the entire world you know they are there you know to support so obviously with that support you know the success speaks for itself.
DR. MALKA	It sounds like there is a whole mini-ecosystem surrounding you so from your fellow compatriots, the peers through to your family through to your partner through to the coaching side that it's not just about the physical but it's also about the mental support too.
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes, I think as an individual it comes whereby you have to understand yourself better, you have to know what you want you have to knowso I think it's something of how I grew up you know my parents have played an important role in my life for letting me do what I think is best for me and not judging you know what I do but letting me do what makes me happy. Obviously it helps me mentally where I don't really depend more on what my parents will say but on the support that they have for me so I think ja, I think that's what makes me this extraordinary person I am today because of how my parents raised me so they raised me like a soldier you know, they just told me you know in life you know you can't always make people happy but you can make yourself happy so ja.
DR. MALKA	Well they sounded like great people from a discipline point of view and to help you maintain your focus. Caster one of the questions that I consider from a sporting point of view, often when we look at female sports and men's sports, women's sports in general always receives less coverage, men's sport has achieved iconic status so whether that is in soccer being televised across nearly every country that exists, what do you think needs to be done to help elevate the profile of women's sports?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think we as women we need to come together, we need to form a union you know if you check in the men's support system you know everything is all about men you know, if you check at the offices you know all business men they come together and they support each other so why in women's support we still lack that. I think if we as women, if we can you know go forward and support each other then we come together you know we brainstorm you know to take a step forward for sport, I think that will help us a lot because if all women come together then we contribute whatever we contribute if we do have and then we put it together then we focus more on women's sport too then obviously we will be taken seriously then we will be more competitive, you understand, so it will be a balanced equation so that's how I see life you know, if you support...if we support each other I don't think we can fail but if we carry on like this then you know we want people to feel sorry for us, sympathy, you know we don't do anything about it we can never be heard.
DR. MALKA	So you're almost looking at trying to drive the change internally from the organisation and from women's...women competitors within the sports sector. What do you think about being able to increase media coverage, so to have more televised or radio broadcasts and then through sponsorships with some of our for example leading brands or automotive vehicles?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think also we still lack that in that because we don't really have more of sports managers especially women so it's only a few who can manage and obviously it's all about creativity and also you know the future you know plans and all those goals. You have to understand you know if you can check the definition of sponsorships, they want something in return, they want exposure, obviously most of us we still struggle you know a bit here and there more of international competitions and stuff like that, like I said,

	that thing I think we need to establish something from down from the rural's everywhere so we can teach you know young ladies how to manage their times and everything, so how manage athletes, I think if we can have that we can have a very, very strong sports you know sports you know especially women's side you know so it's not like we can't do anything it's just we don't have the right people to manage and the.....
DR. MALKA	I think that's an important insight.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Caster Semenya, Olympic Gold and multi-gold medallist South African Middle Distance Running Champion.
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DR. MALKA	You are 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 802.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Caster Semenya, Olympic Gold and multi-gold medallist South African Middle Distance Running Champion. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment Caster shared some of her insights in terms of competing at the forefront of international competition and what it takes to get to the top and more importantly how to stay there. We also spoke about her endeavours primarily into soccer and then her foray into running focusing on from an individual perspective; we spoke about some of the importance of support systems in the role of grooming and sustaining an athlete both from a mental point of view as well as from a physical perspective and we tapped into some of the needs in terms of elevating women's sports by trying to drive it from within through the establishment of female unions.
DR. MALKA	Caster this programme is all about gender equality and increasingly it's become more of a global focus and as part of that building female leadership is really important for the future of women not only in South Africa but around the rest of the world. How do you see female leadership in South Africa whether that is in the sporting environment, the political world, business world, just your general perspective?
CASTER SEMENYA 11.07	I think we're doing well, we have a strong you know leadership especially more in women, I think we're doing well it's just a matter of time of being more competitive so we can you know take this thing forward so we can be taken seriously, like I said we still need you know to gather around you know, guide each other on how we can lead because if you check we only have you know a few you know leaders.....like Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Thuli Madonsela we need people like that you know strong people who can lead us into victory so ja I think for me we're doing well, we just need a little bit of time so we can get there.
DR. MALKA	And often I think when we've got role models like a Thuli Madonsela or an Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, they inject and they inspire our younger people to look up to people like themselves and understand what can be achieved.
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes I think they make us believe in ourselves because it's all about self-confidence and stuff like that you know, if you believe you know you can do it so they make me believe that I can do anything in this world so that's what we need to teach you know the young generation you know, they mustn't look down on themselves, they need to think big and aim big so
DR. MALKA	I like that thinking big and being able to help mentor our future women leaders. Now turning towards more of a personal side you attend the University of North West, you're a sports science student and by doing this you're joining the long line of athletes around the world who really believe that education is a key element for progress and self development, no matter how many gold medals

	you win.
CASTER SEMENYA	Of course, of course education is the key to success and to me as a sports person I really have to understand myself as a human you understand, and I have to understand my physique, my human movements and everything so that's what we do in classes so you understand you know sports in detail, not only because of running but we do study a lot of sports.....like golf, hockey, swimming, gymnastics you know it gives a lot of opportunities but you know sport is just a short career you know, if you're luckyabout twenty years to twenty five years, but if you're not lucky you can take injuries. It also helps to look after yourself health wise to alleviate injuries you know to eat healthy and stuff like that and also if you want to be a sports scientist you can still study so you can be better to help others to improve you know the imbalances; weaknesses you know in their bodies so also in sports performance you know so ja you know it's very important to study, not even only if you study sport science, you can still study accounting, you can study Bcom you can study law, you can study anything you know that's why they say without education you are nothing because you don't have that knowledge you know to portray yourself to people so you really have to learn all those kind of things also it helps more in you know mental state, you know behaviour wise, how to respect others and how to treat people so that's education, it's everything.
DR. MALKA	You're absolutely right I totally concur with the merits of education and helping to uplift both from a women's point of view as well as from a men's point of view on achieving equality and your success. And something that I wanted to tap into which you mentioned and I think is a very important point and a very mature point is recognising that as a runner, as a sprinter to stay at the top of your game competing in world sport you actually have a short life span from a career point of view and you have to look beyond that five year term in terms of what the rest of your future will hold.
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes I think it's all about just having the right people around you, you have to surround yourself with you know people who motivates you who push you hard, if you do wrong they tell you the truth so it's all about that, if you want to be the best you have to you know roll with the best because like for me moving to North West University it was more of a change you know I moved there when I was injured so I didn't see changes where I was then when II got proper infrastructure you know people who would look after for my needs you understand so I think you need such things.
DR. MALKA	True and I think it's also the partnership in terms of what works for you, you're giving back and you're also receiving the right balance.
CASTER SEMENYA	Ja, it's about the right balance, you're right there.
DR.MALKA	In 2010 I read an article from the business magazine The New Statesmen which included you in their list of 50 people that matter in 2010 which subsequently since then you've now added several more gold and silver medals to your collection, you were chosen to bear the South African flag during the opening ceremony at the 2012 Summer Games and as an international sportswoman you've reached the top of your game and as part of that when we spoke about the role modelling of some of our political and legal leaders, you have effectively become a role model to young women and demonstrating to many women and girls in South Africa and across the world that with hard work and personal sacrifice everything can be achieved. Can you please share with us where you draw your inspiration from?

CASTER SEMENYA	For me I don't know.....you know I take it as it comes somy role models inspire me like Maria Mutola she was one of my inspirations and she is still my inspiration and I shaped on how she led her entire life during her career so I looked up to her ja, so she inspired me so much I wanted to become you know, not just to be like her but just to be the best that I can be so that's what I can give to the young generation, they need to be the best that they can be, they don't need to be like us but they can do better than us, you know you have to focus more on your strength and weaknesses so that's why I think I managed to be where I am today not just because I think I am better than anyone or I look down on myself but that I believe I can achieve you know what I work for so it's all about also long term goals so you look you know in ten years at where you want to be and obviously in that ten years I will be shaping up my career each and every three months I had to improve in my training I also have to graduate and stuff like that. I think ja these are the things that you have to look up to, you don't have to imitate what I do, you don't really know what's behind the scenes, how I live the life but you only look at you know the achievements that we have, so ja we just have to be the best that we can be.
DR. MALKA	And sometimes I like to see it when we've had the greats that have gone before us like the Maria Mutolas, it's almost as though we are utilising them and you're standing on the shoulders of the giants that have gone before you so it's leveraging off of their knowledge so that you are improving your game and in turn years to come we're going to have other people standing on our shoulders doing the same thing.
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes, yes that that's the plan because we need to educate you know the young ones on how they can achieve you know their goals, how they can better their running styles and all these things, they may not do it the way we do, they can do it better so we just have to be there for them just support them and make them believe that they can do it because to be honest what we do is hard work, you sacrifice your time with your families you know you wake up early in the mornings like at five o'clock then you study your classes around seven, you knock off like around four then we go straight to training so you really have to be dedicated you know, you have to dedicate yourself, you have to be ready for everything you know, it's hard work it's a lot of hard work.
DR. MALKA	And whilst we're talking about the inspirational angle do you have a saying or a motto that you live your life by?
CASTER SEMENYA	For me it's just you just dream it and do it so nothing can stop you. If you look forward you know you can get that thing you want you know, you look at the futureyou just have to dream it and do it.
DR. MALKA	"Dream it and do it"....
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes...
DR. MALKA	I Think that's a fantastic motto.
CASTER SEMENYA	Thank you.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Caster Semenya, Olympic Gold and Multi-gold Medallist South African Middle Distance Running Champion.
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DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Caster Semenya, Olympic Gold and Multi-gold Medallist South African Middle Distance Running Champion. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomaniyTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment of the show we spoke about Caster's views in terms of gender equality on how we could start building greater capability and seeing more of our female leadership both within the South African context and around the world; we also spoke about the importance of education as an enabler for people's future.
DR. MALKA	Turning towards I suppose more recent times you've just returned from the 2016 Rio Olympic Games where you won the gold medal in the women's 800 metres, which is extremely impressive in any form or standard and I have to say I probably saw the clip at least five times, but that leads me to the next question, what's next?
CASTER SEMENYA	For me like I said I still have like ten years of career now, I'm looking forward to.....12 championships which includes about five World Champs, about two Olympics and two Common Wealth games and two African Gamesand about four African Championships so ja those are my plans for now.
DR. MALKA	And in that space, are you still looking at the 800 metres or are you looking at another event, track distances?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think I still have you know about six years of running 800 metres you know it depends on the speed that I will be you know still having so speed will control me, if I can still be able to run under 1,57 you know in 800 metres that means I will still stick on it but I will be playing around more on 400 metres and 1500 because I'm more of a sprint middle distance runner so ja, so my plans rely more on speed.
DR. MALKA	Well we hope that you continue to improve on those times so that you can continue your journey in the track irrespective of the distance that you choose to run. Now you in this conversation that we've had you're definitely somebody who has a longer term focus so if you've got or developed those plans for the future beyond your running career, what are some of your thoughts?
CASTER SEMENYA	For me I believe in development so I wanna go back to my province where I was born in Limpopo province where I want to start my own development you know foundation something like that where I can, I want to develop more of middle and long distance runners, maybe something like a sports..... institute, maybe it might grow bigger, maybe it can be like an Olympic training centre so it's one of those things you know that you want to do when you are a sports person you know, I have a passion for sports so ja, that's the plan.
DR. MALKA	And I think it's so important to give back and that's exactly what you're going to be doing.
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes it's something that I'm going to do.
DR. MALKA	Now throughout the different radio programmes that we've had in this show one of the questions that I ask all my guests who have made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people talk about their parents, others talk about hard work what would you say have been the key drivers for your success?
CASTER SEMENYA	For me like I've said and I mentioned earlier in this interview, it's the people who are around me you know my family, my supporters you know , my spouse, my training partners, my coach, my management team it's all about team what I can say, Team Cobra
DR. MALKA	Team Cobra?....

CASTER SEMENYA	Yes....
DR. MALKA	Not Team Caster?
CASTER SEMENYA	No, no, Team Cobra, Team Cobra you know, it's everybody included, it includes everybody you know who are supporting me, even the haters you know we put them in there so ja, everybody.
DR. MALKA	So your drivers are, you're very people centric so your drivers are orientated around the individuals and the people that have helped propel you into success?
CASTER SEMENYA	Yes.
DR. MALKA	Can you please share with us some of the important or pivotal moments in your life growing up and what influenced you in those years?
CASTER SEMENYA	If I look into my childhood you know I grew up more around boys and the bush you know, we have lived a rough life you know in the bush you know whatever happens in the bush then you are in the bush so I think my cousin you know I grew up with a family so my cousin is a...I think they are the ones that are driving me to be a very, very tough person you know I grew up with boys where we you know look after sheep, cattle and stuff like that, I never wanted to do any lady's stuff so, ja I think my childhood I can, as long as I remember I've done a lot of crazy stuff.....I've tried rugby, I've tried kickboxing you know, I've tried cricket and stuff like that in the bush soyou know if I go back.....I wish I can still do those things.
DR. MALKA	And what would you say has had the biggest impact on you to make you the person you are today?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think it's more of wanting to do better ... if you look at how we grew up you know we grew up in the rural's where we lacked water, we lacked you know electricity, the roads are dusty, they're off....I think it was all about you know just changing you know my village to be better and I wanted to be a great leader because I was like I wanted to bebut I just said to myself when I grow up if I can be a leader I'm just going to make changes in this world, I can make the world better so ja those are one of the things that have pushed me.....where I wanted to be a better person and just to change other people's lives.
DR. MALKA	Well I think you're living proof of that in terms of the inspiration to feed back into others to aspire to, not necessarily do exactly what you've done, but understand the challenges and how you've overcome to be the person you are today. Now what would you say has been the best lesson that you've learned throughout your career to date?
CASTER SEMENYA	I think my lessons it would be more of taking off.....of not studying I think I've learned a lot out of that because I realise the more, I felt I was morestuck especially after having an injury after Olympics 2012 so you were like okay what if I can't work anymore, what am I going to do, I hadn't completed my education so that means I won't have a decent job so obviously my wife just pushed me so hard to go back to school so I really you know appreciate her support and the love she has given to me so those are the lessons that I've learned after so far about life. I just know life it's you know it's all about challenges, I like challenges so I really love challenges but the lessons are more on the dropping out of school than focusing on my career then when I was injured and I was just stuck in my room, couldn't do nothing so now I had to go back to school.
DR. MALKA	Well we're very glad that you have and it's going to pave the way for the rest of your future.

CASTER SEMENYA	Yesa few years away from graduation so if I work hard
DR. MALKA	And when are you due to graduate?
CASTER SEMENYA	You know to be honest if I finish my masters next of next year then I'll graduate in 2018, maybe I'll do my degree again, so ja,it's just all aboutin life so I can be a great leader too because like I said with education you can be the best.
DR. MALKA	Absolutely agree with you.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Caster Semenya, Olympic Gold and Multi-gold Medallist, South African Middle Distance Running Champion.
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DR. MALKA	Now lastly, in closing our conversation today can I ask you to please share a few words of inspiration which you would like to pass on to the women in Africa who are listening to this show?
CASTER SEMENYA	For me what I can say to our fellow South African women especially African women I can say that they must just believe in themselves, if they work hard they must know they are the bestbuild a lifetheir health for them to build their health you know to inspire others you know they have to give back to the community you have to teach others so they can be better, so if they believe in themselves I think this world will just be fantastic you know, so ja it's just all about hard work and dedication and also teaching the young ones you know to become great leaders so also unity, it's all about uniting you know , to encourage kids to do sport because sport unites people as Madiba said, so ja that's what I can say.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much I think that those are fantastic words of inspiration and it also subscribes to the whole philosophy of our show, women in unity, to drive the success of women and equality ahead so thank you so much for joining us.
CASTER SEMENYA	Thanks a lot Ma'am I really appreciate it and the best of luck for you
DR. MALKA	And we wish you every success in the next leg of your career on conquering further championships, Olympics and common wealth games in the near future.
CASTER SEMENYA	Thanks a lot I really appreciate it.
	PROGRAMME END