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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: BUHLEBENDALOMDA – VOCALIST AND MEMBER OF SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC GROUP ‘THE SOIL’

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 in studio today is Buhlebendalo Mda who is a vocalist and member of award winning South African a capella music group ‘The Soil’. Welcome to the show!
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<b>What a beautiful intro thank you; hi. Thank you, thank you for having me.</b>
DR. MALKA	It’s a great pleasure and today we’re interested in hearing more about your background, how everything started and towards the future; what we can expect from you and ‘The Soil’.
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<b>Yes. Wow, I feel so old when I have to talk about my background and everything. I grew up in Soweto. I grew up in three different places in South Africa being Port Elizabeth, where my mother was born and Soweto, like four other parts of Soweto, you know, so I’m proud to say that I’m a Sowetan girl, you know. I grew up in a not so big family, you know, and my parents got married a year before I was born so I know their secrets; I know everything about them and I grew up as a very flexible child and low-key, attention seeking child you know I always wanted to be seen. I was loud and I was just out there, you know, and that’s how I met the guys in high school because I was maybe something you could call as a popular girl in high school and that’s how I met up with the brothers Ntsika and Lumphindo during a <b>Sci-Fi</b>, you know, we were just having fun and just jamming as young kids; teenagers in high school and just sharing the love of arts really, not just music but the love art in general because we also had poets in our circles and we had people who were playing instruments, although it was not like live, real instruments because hey, growing up in Soweto we didn’t have the privilege of learning any instruments which leads to what we call now <b>Kasi Soul</b> that we’re doing right now.</b>
DR. MALKA	So would you say from this, and I think it’s extraordinary, I love a capella in terms of what people can do and as we chatted briefly offline, I call it a human orchestra....
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<b>...yes, yes.....</b>
DR. MALKA	...of finding your sound; being able to make the music out of your voices if you don’t have access to piano, if you don’t have access to guitar, you’re there creating your own sounds and all of this formed in high school, you guys coming together as young people and was there any formal training or did you just pick it up and adopt your sound?
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<b>Well I think as a black child you’re born gifted and if you’re not born gifted it’s going to be instilled with you by force. I mean things like going to church, being forced to go to church and being forced to take some sort of role in the Sunday School Organisation, you know, and being part of youth organisations in the neighbourhood</b>

	<p>just to keep you off the streets, you know, you...and all those organisations and all those spaces that we found ourselves in, there was music involved and growing up black is like a musical really, like everything is surrounded by music from when you wake up in the morning and to the kitchen parties that our parents used to have with their friends, to the uncles gathering during the week-ends and drinking beer and just sharing the gift of music, to playing in the streets using the gift of music, you know, and going back to bed and being celebrated by music, you know, we are just surrounded by music so it was by default for us to be blessed with this kind of music and the only thing we knew was a capella. So...and to us really it didn't mean a thing, it just meant that we're just singing, that's the only form of music we knew back then and that's the only form of music that was available to us, so, there was no formal training, I think the training went as we grew into the music industry and we are still being schooled even now, you know, as we grow into the industry.</p>
DR. MALKA	So now you're in and the way you describe it growing up, it's almost like the rhythm of life was...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...providing the music and the soundtrack to what you were doing and your journey
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	...yeah...
DR. MALKA	...and you've spoken about the genre of a capella that you do as being Kasi Soul;....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...would you say that you are in part responsible for creating Kasi Soul as a sound?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<p>Firstly Kasi means hood, means neighbourhood, it means the ghetto, you know and the reason why we tagged our a capella as Kasi is because it tells stories of the hood and relatable stories to an ordinary person you would find commuting by train, you know, and taking a taxi or even walking to school or walking to work, you know, so I believe...I believe...I can proudly say that we own that tag of Kasi Soul and I'm so pleased and I'm so proud that we created a platform for other Kasis, you know, so which is not just the only Kasi you could find, there's Kasis across South Africa, there's Kasis across Africa and the world. So each and every Kasi child has an inheritance of some sort to say, there's a genre out there that represents me, that is for me and that is by me, so to me it just gives me so much pride to have started something like that and not even being aware of the legacy we are creating.</p>
DR. MALKA	Because it's described by you know...people have said melodic medication....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...township jazz...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...hip-hop, afro-soul, afro-pop....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<p>...yeah, I mean like I said, our music is relatable and there's a particular song that is called 'Sunday' you know, it's a typical pure love story, very innocent love story. Girl meets boy, the girl is visiting the grandmother for holidays and unfortunately she has to go back home and this girl saw this boy and they (inverted commas) "fell in love" because really, I don't think they know what love is;</p>

	they fell in love in a very childlike way and now this boy just is telling this story to the friends or whoever is listening that oh my gosh, I met this beautiful girl but she had to leave because now she can't stay, you know. So that's what happens in our everyday lives so it somehow soothes the soul and just gives people that faith to say oh my gosh I feel like they're talking to me; I feel like they're talking about me, so yeah.
DR. MALKA	So your...would you say your messages or lyrics are really about what happens in everyday life stories....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yeah...</b>
DR. MALKA	...so we've got love stories...any other type of themes that you would say are dominant?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>There's a song I'm very proud that we've produced, it's called 'Uhuru'. I remember it was inspired by the Fees Must Fall Movement. We talk about social issues as well, we don't just talk about light and fluffy stuff you know but at the end of the day we do need some light and fluffy stuff but we also need to raise our voice about issues that are affecting our country and are affecting the youth and are affecting women in general, you know, so this song talks about our dissatisfactions with our government and the system in general and it's not just our system in South Africa but the system in general, especially when it comes to black lives, you know, the black lives that are not (in inverted commas) "important" to the system, so we kinda send that message that we are dissatisfied as young South Africans.</b>
DR. MALKA	Social issues are incredibly important and if I look at the world over music has been such a key influence, so sometimes it's about inspiring people, sometimes it's about lifting up the mood, sometimes it's a powerful message, but ultimately it does provide a platform for artists to influence the public, either picking up sentiment, like you said social issues of Fees Must Fall or other elements. Sometimes it takes on a commercial tone, but ultimately when people stand up for a belief, say it's human rights or be it equality; how do you see that role for musicians?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>They're always very important but it also boils down to what an artist believes as an individual, you know, and I believe sometimes artists are alert to promoting brands just to...just to enhance their...what can I say.....?</b>
DR. MALKA	...pocket....?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...pockets...for lack of a better word pockets or accounts or just to create hype around a certain brand that needs upliftment and then they use a face that is known but at the end of the day - I'm not judging any artists - but at the end of the day it boils down to what a particular artist believes in....</b>
DR. MALKA	...your integrity....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yeah, for instance as 'The Soil' we don't endorse alcohol brands, you know, it's...not really endorse but we try and walk away from brands that are alcoholic because we understand the effects of alcohol abuse in community and in the society so...and most of the time our target market is the youth and our target market most of the time is young kids that look up to us and I don't think that would be an important enough brand to be associated with, do you get what I'm saying?</b>

DR. MALKA	So you're very conscious about the values as individuals within the group, as well as what the group stands for and also in terms of how you appeal to your target audience because you're very aware that they're looking up to you as influences and what you're putting out there, they're going to be receiving and applying.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	I recall reading an article about you in 2017; it was just after August in Women's Month...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yes...</b>
DR. MALKA	...where you urged women to stand up for themselves and to not accept mistreatment in their relationships....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>..yes...</b>
DR. MALKA	...do you see yourself as a gender activist?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Of course yes, I mean...I mean I think every woman should be a gender activist you know and I personally feel that it should start right at the beginning, you know, and by treating our kids the same, you know, and I think in order for the world to be what we want it to be, to be what it was supposed to be, because clearly there's....equality is not a thing in....let me just talk about Africa in general, equality is not a thing and I feel like it...in order for all these things to change or the narrative to change, it should start with the generation that is mothers now. Like our generation of mothers, our generation of women, we must be able to speak equality to our children. If you have a girl child and a boy child they must know that they are equal, it must start from the grassroots up, you know, and I feel like this...especially this country is so far gone to a point where we can't now cut the ends of the tree in order for the tree to look...I feel like we must just take up roots, the whole tree and start afresh and start by creating a world that is equal, starting with our children. If a girl child can wash dishes, a boy child can also wash dishes. If a boy child can play soccer, a girl child can also play soccer, you know, so that our children grow up with that mentality that there is no difference between a male and a female. So I'm all for...I'm all for equality for women, I'm just like there, yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	And the big point that's coming out for me in this conversation is about...is the role of mothers, on being there to stipulate the equality factor and to equalise and to socialise kids in the right way because let's face it, the way that you nurture a child....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yes...</b>
DR. MALKA	...maybe indoctrination is a little bit of a harsh word, but they grow up believing in those values and that's what they take with them as they...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...as adults...</b>
DR. MALKA	...lead on into adult life and those are the practices, the customs that they apply in their relationships.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Yeah and it's not just the mothers responsibility to do that, I think that's also another problem in society. We feel like it's a woman's responsibility to teach our children the response...fathers need to be there as well, fathers need to be available, father's need not to pay maintenance to be fathers or take a child to McDonald's or take a child to the school trip or whatever, but....</b>
DR. MALKA	...it's superficial....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...exactly, a father must be available, a father must play a role, a father must be a mirror so that a boy child and a girl child can take</b>

	<p>some...some...some mirror effects from the fathers side so that they can be the adult that a father would be proud of at the end of the day. So fathers need to be present as well and work hand-in-hand with mothers so that a child can have both perspectives of life from their first reference of God; which is their parents, yeah.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Very powerful point. Staying on the topic of gender equality, there's a quote from Nelson Mandela which always resonates very strongly with me where he said "<i>freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us take this on board, that the objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme will not have been realised unless we see in visible, practical terms that the conditions of women in our country have radically changed for the better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life, as equals, with any other member of society.</i>" And all of what you've just said now completely supports this notion. As we develop as a country, how do you think South Africa will look in 20 to 30 years time concerning women's rights and gender equality?</p>
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<p><b>It goes back to my last point, you know. When I look at my country in 20 and 30 years from now, women are leading. I think...I'm so proud of the generation I'm finding myself in; the generation of women that are relentless and unapologetically united beyond colour, beyond race, beyond age. For the past 2 or 3 years I've seen such a huge transformation when it comes to women uniting in one and uniting in one voice for the realisation of women power, you know, and women existence because for so many years women have been trapped and not been seen as people who can take charge and take lead of even the household; not even going outside of the household, just by the household. I'm so proud to be part of a generation that is tired of being the neck, you know, I see...I see my country having a female president for the next 30 years if we continue holding hands and fighting in breaking the shackles of patriarchy, you know, and I believe if women like uMam Ruth first did it with Mama Sisulu back then, I feel like we also can do that and I feel like we are on the right path and on the right track in taking our power back in relentlessly and fearlessly taking a stand and saying we are no longer the necks though. We've never been the necks, we were just told that we are necks and our parents and our grandmothers believed that they are necks, but now we are actually realising that nah, not really, we've been leading. So many leaders were leaders because of their women; look at the documentary that was released.....Winnie Mandela, you know, may her soul rest in peace, it...that's just painted a whole new picture of Madiba for us to say wow, it is true when they say behind every successful man there's a powerful woman behind them. But now we don't want to be behind of any man, anymore; we want to take the stand and we want to lead. So I'm seeing progress for my country, it just needs that togetherness and that resilience that we can actually conquer as women.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You speak with a lot of passion, with a lot of inspiration and energy behind your words on how you are actively changing your generation...</p>
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<p><b>...yeah, yeah....</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...and sphere around you.</p>

DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Buhlebendalo Mda who is vocalist and member of award winning South African a capella Group 'The Soil'. You are listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the African Perspective, on frequency 9625 KHz, on the 31 meter band, also available on DSTV, Channel 802. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Now turning to 'The Soil' for a moment; the group won a SAMA for best R&B Soul Reggae Album; you've performed locally, regionally and internationally; is there anything or any place that's really stood out for you?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Wow! There's so many of them, oh my gosh. I remember this one year, I think it was around 2013/2014 where we were invited to the Westminster to sing for the Queen and her family. I think that's what stood out the most because we were representing South Africa because it had – I can't remember what the event was about but it had different countries there and we were one of a few African countries that were there to represent and we just sang one song and it was just like...it felt like...that room is so...the energy in the room was so thick, you know, you could tell that you are in the midst of royalty, you know, and we always strive to put the South African flag high and we did just that and....</b>
DR. MALKA	...also the way the venue's designed....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yes...</b>
DR. MALKA	...acoustically...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...ja it's....</b>
DR. MALKA	...the music just....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yes....</b>
DR. MALKA	...it's the right environment...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...the architecture, everything, it was just...it was so beautiful. I think if I was a child I would think I was in heaven or something because it was just shiny and just beautiful and just glittery and clean and just quiet, you know, it was just beautiful and I think we've got <i>Native Rhythms</i> to thank for all the world stages we've performed in and I love home really, you know. I love performing for our people, you know, the other performance that stood out for me was when we went to Morogoro in Tanzania; that's where we learnt so much about the history of our country and we sang for...I like singing...I like singing for ordinary people, I like...they have this genuine thing in their eyes that...and this yearning for something new and this appreciation that you can feel in their energy, so I think for me personally, those were the two performances that actually stood out for me out of a lot, yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	And looking towards the future; what are the touring plans for this year or events that are coming up shortly?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>We...you know we don't perform so much back at home you know that kinda worries me sometimes because they do say charity begins at home, you know. I'm so happy to know that this year we will be doing a lot of home tours, you know. We are currently embarking on our tour of the Korobelo tour; Korobelo is our new single. We will be starting at the Silver Star Casino on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February, so that should be exciting because we plan to go across the country to spread the word; we'll be performing with the beautiful and harmonious...I can't even describe their music, it's so beautiful and I feel like they are...they are the Mambazo in the</b>

	making; they are the Mambazo of our generation and I'm so happy that a capella is...has resurrected from wherever it sort of like died, you know, because the only people that we looked up to for a capella was the Ladysmith Black Mambazo, so I'm so proud to be one of the people that will be tagged as the a capella legends one day, hopefully, you know, so we will be singing with the a capella band which is called 'The Legacy'...
DR. MALKA	I feel as though you're almost teasing us; you've spoken about the song Sunday, you've spoken about Uhuru, you've spoken about performances at Westminster....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yeah...</b>
DR. MALKA	....doing performances in Tanzania, performances locally; can you share a little bit of Kasi Soul and perhaps a couple of lines from Korobelo.....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Wow, my...wow, okay....(Sings). Ntando is actually Korobelo in isiZulu, so Korobelo is love potion (for those who don't know), so just...just going back to my point, my first, first point to say it's relatable music. Korobelo is a known word in the location, you know, we know when someone has been fed the love potion, that person goes a bit cuckoo's and that person just shows this extreme love for this person and does crazy things in the streets you know, so we're just expressing the effects of having a love potion.</b>
DR. MALKA	And is that why the launch dates are round about Valentine's Day?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...around Valentine's Day, you get what I mean??</b>
DR. MALKA	Okay....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>..that's right, that's right; so it's all about love and we love love; we're suckers for love.</b>
DR.MALKA	Turning towards a personal perspective and I can see that home is very much a part of your fabric...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...yeah...</b>
DR. MALKA	...but particularly not just home South Africa, but home Soweto, and in your hectic schedule you've somehow still managed to find time to do charity work. I believe that you've got a project which is called 'Soil Sister'....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...'Soil Sister Projects' yes...</b>
	...which you work with social workers to educate high school kids on depression and other social problems that they're facing; please tell us more about the work.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>You know I'm a very passionate lover of the youth and I feel like in order for this country to be what we dream of it, we have to make sure that the children are okay, the children are good, you know, and I've realised so many...so many...I've heard of so many suicide stories in high schools and suicide stories with people from the ages of what...15 to at least 30, you know, and I realised that there is a gap between the student, the teacher and the parent because for instance a typical story, the teenager, let's say a 13 year old wakes up in the morning, the parents have already left for work. Wakes up, prepares lunch – if there is lunch – prepares lunch and walks all the way to school, because I used to walk as well to school, like 4 Ks or something. So this child walks, sometimes on an empty stomach, this child walks from home to school, gets to school and the teacher teaches the child and maybe one child becomes very rebellious and doesn't want to learn and bunks classes, but the teacher doesn't even want to know about that, the teacher just wants to teach, that's</b>

	<p>why the teacher is there, you know, and then the teacher...and then the child leaves school, goes back home, walks back home. Gets home, cleans the house, prepares supper for the parents, sometimes sleep without even seeing the parents, maybe does the homework sometimes or sometimes doesn't, does homework, sleeps. Wakes up in the morning, same thing. Then this is the gap; no one cares to know what the child is feeling....</p>
DR. MALKA	...so the emotional vacuum....
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<p>...how the child is feeling, no-one cares to ask the child how are you. So I'm trying...the reason why I did this project, I'm trying to create that gap to say how are you doing? Like for real, on the real, how are you? What do you think about when you're by yourself? What are the things that piss you off? What are the things that you're passionate about? Because between the parent and the teacher they don't do that, the teacher teaches the curriculum, the parent hustles for the child to go to school, there's never a space in the day to sit down with your child and ask them how are you, how was your day? So I'm planning to work with people from the government somewhere to try and assist me to making this a dream come true for me and hope for the youth of every location or every ghetto in South Africa and Africa.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>It's a very important social gap that you're filling there. One of the questions that I ask all my guests on this show who've made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of work is about some of the factors that have contributed to their success; so what would you say have been some of those elements?</p>
BUHLEBENDALOMDA	<p>Wow...contributing factors to my success. I don't think I've succeeded enough. I think the only success I've accomplished is fulfilling my dream for now, but I feel like the reason why I am here is because of my mom's prayers and my mom's teachings and my mom's voice that keeps ringing in my head every time I think of doing something wrong and something out of my family values, you know, and I think for the past 8 years it has also been my child. It's a...it's a beautiful feeling to watch yourself evolve from being a child to being a parent, so...and going through the happenings of life and making do and trying to make ends meet. You know I used to watch my mom actually making ends meet and I used to commend her and sometimes feel sorry for her to say wow, you're doing a great job and we see you and we appreciate you and thank you and now I'm that person who's like wow, who's trying to make these ends meet and I can see from my child's eyes because her emotional intelligence is just crazy. She actually...our conversations are so deep, she actually said to me the other day, I don't think I want to be a parent and I asked why baby and she said it's hard labour, I mean I have to take my child to school, I have to go to work, I have to do this and this and this and that and I don't think I'll be able to cope, but you're coping mommy, you know, and that for me just gave me so much courage and so much strength to keep on being the mom that my mom was to me, you know, so I think those are the driving factors, you know. I always want to do more, I always want to achieve more, I always want to reach that status of success which I think I haven't reached as yet but success for me comes in stages you know and you can't restrict success, you can't say okay hashtag mamma I made it, you can't really say that because in...life is a</p>

	<b>process, life is a learning process so I think success comes in stages, just like school, just like life, yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	But that's a really good thing because it means that you're always chasing tomorrow.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Yeah, yeah, all the time.</b>
DR.MALKA	And finally as we close....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...oh my gosh..</b>
DR. MALKA	...the conversation....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...are we closing?...</b>
DR. MALKA	...we are closing...
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...I feel like I talk too much...</b>
DR. MALKA	...please can you share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that you'd like to pass on to our young ladies....
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>...oh yes....</b>
DR. MALKA	....listening to us on the continent?
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	Oh yes. These are the words I live by; my mom always says never, ever forget where you come from you know and she always says <b>impumelelo isandaweni</b> , which means success is at the top of the mountain, you know, so it's a climb...it's the climb that matters you know and you are climbing to reach that certain peak where you will be able to say yes, I made it. So to all the women and all the young women I say to them live and don't apologise for wanting to be the best version of you. The best version of you is known by you. You can't be restricted or boxed because of society, you can't be....you can't be tamed, you can't be chained. You are great and you are a king you know, and I feel like if we learn to...to make sure we polish our crowns as women, we sit down, we have sessions of polishing each other's crowns. I have a picture of it, of queens just sitting in a row and just polishing our crowns and showing each other you've missed that spot, you know, or let me get that spot for you and your crown can be your craft, your crown can be your education, your crown can be your home, your crown can be your body, your crown be anything that values yourself, so make sure that crown doesn't rust on you. Make sure you don't sleep on your crown, don't let your crown rust so that your crown...and your crown must be that first thing that people recognise when you enter into a room so that they don't see anything else but see your greatness; see your potential. You don't have to prove yourself to anyone, we were born great, so it is important to stay shining, not for anyone but for ourselves.
DR. MALKA	Beautiful message; believing in yourself and letting yourself shine through.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much for joining us.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Thank you, this was so great, thank you so much for having me.</b>
DR. MALKA	We wish you all the very best of luck for the future and hope to have you back on the show soon.
<b>BUHLEBENDALOMDA</b>	<b>Thank you so much. God bless.</b>
	<b>PROGRAMME END</b>