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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: NONI “SHE BEE STINGING” TENGE – FIVE TIME WORLD CHAMPTION BOXER

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 from Port Elizabeth for our focus on Women In Sport is five time world Champion Boxer Noni “She Bee Stinging” Tenge. Welcome to the show!
NONI TENGE	I’m so happy be here, I can’t wait to speak to the audience, more especially the listeners of such a radio station, I’m so happy to be here, thank you very much.
DR. MALKA	We’re glad that you can join us and I know that you’ve taken time out of your training schedule to accommodate us so we really appreciate it.
NONI TENGE	Of course I was training anyway an hour back then I need to have another two hours of training but at least I have to fit in, I need to speak to you because at the same time it’s very important for me to speak to the public so they will understand where I’m coming from, who I am exactly.
DR. MALKA	To start with, your amateur career spanned from 2002 to 2007; you’ve had twenty four fights, no losses. In your professional career I believe, up ‘til now, out of twenty two fights you’ve had twenty wins, one loss and one draw and as I said in the intro, you’re five-time World Champion Boxer; these are incredible statistics so congratulations!
NONI TENGE	Wow, thank you very much, it’s amazing, it’s hard work huh. It’s not easy but when I started boxing it was fun because I was young. I was the type of child who likes to get active because I grew up in a family of sports but not thinking that I will be a world champion today. I was in netball, I was doing all...because you know when you are a kid, you do everything, you don’t know which one is yours but I decided to take boxing after some time because I was in netball, I was also in athletics while I was in primary school but I also liked the netball too much because it was a ladies sport but I noticed at some stage no man, the women’s sport is like we need to focus on the team but some of us don’t like to...some of the ladies doesn’t like to train, they don’t want to commit themselves, some of them they are very lazy, so as you grow up you understand what kind of people you are dealing with.
DR. MALKA	What prompted you to change paths? To go from netball and really make boxing the fundamental part of your life?
NONI TENGE	As I tell you I’m a social worker by nature, I like people very, very much huh and my parents were telling me that Noni you need to the career to become a social worker so I noticed that while I was in netball if we are going for training, it takes two to three people to go for training but when it comes to the tournament by itself on Saturday and Sunday, all of the girls want to play but you’ll notice that they want to play but they were not there for training so that our coach then have to face the problem that guys, you have to understand, if you begin train for three days a week then you expect yourself in the tournament, there’s no way that...because you’ll make others suffer because you need to commit yourself, especially when

	you are going to the top eight/top six and the provincial tournaments. So it was so hectic for me because I know that most of the guys when I'm training with them, they don't want to commit themselves so that's when I decided to choose an individual sport.
DR. MALKA	When people look at you today, they see the Noni Tenge living her dreams, but it wasn't easy so can you share with us a few of the challenges and landmarks in your journey to hold five championship belts?
NONI TENGE	Being a world champion in Africa I was seeing that....it's not like I was demanding the attention, I'm seeking for an attention, I'm there, I'm lifting women in sport. I'm doing it on behalf of women, against women abuse, I'm doing it for against child abuse because as women we need to stand up and fight for ourselves, so whatever I am doing in the ring, I'm doing it on behalf of women of Africa, not only of South Africa, not only of Eastern Cape, I'm only doing on behalf of women of Africa because we need to stand up, we need to unite, we need to fight for one another. So it was so difficult for me to choose boxing because it's a male sport and being a male dominated sport I have to train with the guys, whatever the guys do I have to do. Even if sometimes you know when it comes to women we've got our own times of natural causes then you have to go to your coach and try to explain because he doesn't even know what you are talking about because he's a man. Then I told them, guys, please man, my coach, my trainer, my manager, on the last week of the month you'll need to take it easily for me. On the first week of the other month you'll need to take it easy for me and remember those guys doesn't know anything, they don't know anything about the natural cause and cycles and everything, then you need to explain to them so coming from theit was easy because guys and at that time women were not allowed to box so I was fighting with the boys because I was very young, then I was beating all of them up, then when our former president Thabo Mbeki gave us a chance, I was the first lady out of five, we were five by the time we started boxing and then nobody recognised us, nobody knew us but I can tell you now we've got about 200/250 girls in Africa as a whole, up to 500 in the continent who are in professional boxing now.
DR. MALKA	That was something which really, really surprised me when I was doing research for this show, that equality is completely part of our programmes DNA; before today I was unaware of the challenges that women boxers face and continue to experience. As you've indicated that former president Thabo Mbeki was instrumental in being able to allow women to box, because.....
NONI TENGE	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...if I'm correct, prior to 2001 it was illegal for women to box?
NONI TENGE	Yes, yes you are correct, very, very correct.
DR. MALKA	So you were an activist, you were part of this group that was responsible for changing the boxing act to allow women.
NONI TENGE	Yes, yes.
DR. MALKA	Can you tell us...
NONI TENGE	...and it was not easy....
DR. MALKA	...no, can you tell us a little bit about the process, this period, what you did and how you brought that change?
NONI TENGE	We were only the top five in South Africa and one of the ladies was coming from Western Province, her name wasand the second two they were coming from Gauteng and two were coming from Eastern Cape, so...but we wanted to box but we were not allowed to fight. Then we had a chance to go to the parliament in Cape Town and then we tried to speak to the managers around the province and then we tried to tell them that like

	<p>can you give us a chance to fight because we understand that it's a male dominated sport but I wish if you can see us, you can see what we have. Then we had a meeting as a region in the province by itself, so we speak to the governments in the parliament, in the big offices, then they decided to take us to parliament, then they tried to approach the former president Thabo Mbeki. Then we had a secondthat on the same date, I think it was on 21st August 2001, if I'm correct, then we went to Cape Town, all of us coming from different provinces, then he wanted to see what we are capable of then he asked us guys, are you sure that you can box and we said yes president, we can box. We need to stand up for women of Africa, we need to fight violence, we need to fight women abuse, we need to fight those guys who are killing children and raping children and women. So they said can you show me what you are capable of and then we decided to speak all of us okay we're going to show the president, so we did an exhibition, it's like we did not fight as such, but you show we know the technique, we know the tactics of boxing, we know everything, the only thing we need is if you give us a chance to fight then you will see what we are capable of. Of course he signed the contract that guys, I approved your contract, I approved your request; you can go and box. I'm not going to stand in front of women who want to fight for themselves and I do respect the way you think guys. Then he gave us applause and all the people, the members of the parliament, they were so excited, they said we can't wait to see you fighting in the ring and for the past fifteen years we were not allowed to box in the ring and I was in boxing already. So that was...we were so happy, so happy by the time we had a first tournament in 2001 on Women's Day, it was 9th August, I think the former the minister of sport,in 2001.....he couldn't believe the way we were doing it, it's like he said when he had the speeches there, he said yes women can box, I think Noni, he specified my name, that Noni can beat some of the other guys. So I felt like that was very, very, very nice, it was so...I appreciated it a lot because after that I never quit.</p>
DR. MALKA	That's such a wonderful achievement, not just from a personal point of view, but in terms of what you've done to pioneer the paths for the future of other female boxers, not just in South Africa but across the continent.
NONI TENGE	Ja, sissy I don't want to lie, it was hard hey.
DR. MALKA	So having made this achievement, having asserted yourself, that this was the career path that you were able to fight, that it was legal, that it was a vocation that women could pursue, you then went on to achieve your titles; where are you now, today, if we look at that being the past, what are we looking at for your future?
NONI TENGE	For my future it's if I can....I believe that I can train some of the youngsters of South Africa because the youngsters of South Africa some of them they don't even know what sport is, they don't know because I think it comes from their background because the only thing that they do now is to smoking, heavy drugs, killing people. I would like to recruit more youngsters in sport and I'm already...I'm already happy for those who are already in sport and I'm not talking about boxing here, I'm talking about any other sport coach, any other sport, whether it's cricket or rugby or whether it's tennis or running as long as the youngsters of South Africa is in sports, that means it decreases the number of people who are getting raped, the number of the violence in South Africa, the people who are dying every day because those people, the elder people are being killed by the youngsters. If I can tell you about my place, I'm living in a suburb area, an 86 year old he was killed by a 16 year old boy because he was

	<p>demanding a grant money from the grandma. Then the grandma told him that I cannot give it to you, I need to buy some food, I need to rent, I need to do enough stuff of the house. He went to the.....in the kitchen, he grabbed a knife and then he killed his grandma. It's not about eating the whole day, watching TV, I understand technology is very good but a child needs to go out and play with the other kids because that's where he realises that okay, he can be involved in sports, he knows, he will understand himself that he is becoming much stronger but you need as a parent, you need as a parent to take your child in sports, as long as your child participates in sport at school.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And talking about sports and having them as part of school activities, one of the things that I've been thinking about is - and I wanted to find your thoughts – about introducing boxing into school curriculums, especially for girls, so not only from a point of view of empowering them with physical skills so that they can combat gender violence, but also in terms of building discipline and confidence to become better people.</p>
NONI TENGE	<p>It's very important. I think our former minister of sport has tried to do that but he needs someone who can mentor that because I can't put the blame to anyone. Any child, I understand boxing by itself they think that boxing is dangerous but if you grew up in this sport it is not dangerous. At the same time it disciplines yourself because I know what to eat during the day, I know what not to eat during the day, at the same time it keeps discipline...it keeps discipline to me at the same time I've got a lot of respect towards people because I know I can fight. I know I can fight with people physically but I don't need to fight with people physically because I've got a lot of discipline for them, I do respect them and they also respect me back so for me to take boxing in school that will be my dream because children need to understand this sport, they don't understandin sport, they think that it's so brutal, killing people, you will have the brain damage at the end of the day but to me we need to take it out to the youngsters. To join the sport, more especially for the ladies. The youngsters they need.....you know the youngsters they can't even defend for themselves, they are getting raped; they don't even know what is the first defence for them is to scream louder because they are scared of screaming. But you know what we were taught in boxing, by the time we joined boxing while I was young, my coach tells me Noni if someone tries to attack you, before you fight you scream as loud as you can then you will knock the person just in front of you then the person will be so nervous, so we need to take it from schools so that they will understand what is boxing, how is about boxing, more especially for the girls because we can't run away that our world is so cruel.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You seem to have a passion for development and one of the things that I recognised from reading and learning about you is that in between working your day job, building a professional boxing career, you also earned a diploma in sports management from Walter Sisulu University....</p>
NONI TENGE	<p>...ja.....</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...and by doing so you've joined the line of athletes around the world who strongly believe that education is a key element for progress and self-development, no matter how many belts or medals you win. Can you share with us your views on education, particularly in the hands of women as tools to achieve equality?</p>
NONI TENGE	<p>If I can tell you since I was the eldest in my class, I was the eldest in my class but I know...I know by heart there's no role model without education. You can't be a role model to the young if you are not educated. You need</p>

	<p>go to school; you must lead by an example. I always tell the elders, if you lead to the youngsters you must lead by an example. You will need school. I understand it's not easy for us to speak any language, English and Afrikaans properly but we need to learn, that's how you learn, but if you are not going to school, how are you going to learn, there's no way that you can learn and I know that being a role model to the youngsters, I need to get an education. So I started....my former minister asked me Noni what do you want to do anyway after your career? I said Minister I don't want to do it after my career, if you've got some time can you take me to school because I never had a chance to finish my school and I was fortunate because at least...at least I passed my matric. I passed my matric in 2001. I started sports management in 2013, so I decided to go to school because my parents never had money to take me to school to further my studies, now I had a chance I said I will grab it by both hands. Of course I achieved a diploma, sports management diploma in 2016 and now I am proud of myself, I can stand in the front of children because I like to be truthful to myself before I can be truthful to the youngsters because I will preach what I am not living but I need to preach what I am living. It's very important to go to school, more especially their education is free, the only things they need...they are eating free at school, the only thing they need is to put their mind on it, just to pass a matric because in these days you are not going anywhere if you don't have a matric, even if you've got more than a matric, even if you can further your studies, you need to put your mind on it. Education is very important because it can take you anywhere.</p>
DR. MALKA	So true, it can take you anywhere and...
NONI TENGE	...ja....
DR. MALKA	...you're living proof of it taking you anywhere.
NONI TENGE	Yes.
DR. MALKA	One point that I want to mention, in our previous conversation we had a fellow colleague of yours, Bukiwe Nonina and she mentioned that you are her role model; how does that make you feel?
NONI TENGE	I was so, surprised it's like I've been hearing that yeah Noni you can be a role model but a person comes to you Noni I want to tell you that you are my role model, aahhh that's a big achievement for me. It's a big achievement I promise you, it's a blessing for me. To know that someone is looking up to me, it's a blessing for me and I don't want to lie, even if those youngsters I don't know, maybe they know me, some of them they know me, I can't say I'm not a role model to those they know me, I know them they love me because I'm very disciplined, I'm very focused, I'm very committed and I would like to lead by an example to the youngsters because I'm old....the world champion I'm getting old but I'm still holding the title because I'm very disciplined, I respect those who are around me. Discipline can take you everywhere.
DR. MALKA	So it's a big responsibility to uphold.
NONI TENGE	It's a big responsibility to be on top. It's a very, very big responsibility; you've got a lot of pressure. People loves you, when you go in there and fight they expect you to win. They don't know what you are dealing with, they don't know where are you coming from, they don't know what did you eat or not, they don't even think that you might go in that ring and you might be able not to come out. The only thing that they see, they see the person, the loving person, they see the person who can make the person who is committed, the person who's focused, they don't know what's behind to that person. Where he or she's coming from, where he can go because to stay on top it's not the easiest thing; that is the hardest thing I

	ever experienced.
DR. MALKA	And how do you stay on top? What have you learnt from your own endurance of being at the top of the game?
NONI TENGE	I don't have Sundays. We've got a different way of preaching our God, we've got a different way of going to church. My church is my training on Sundays. If I'm coming to the gym I need to pray because I know that I'm supposed to be in church but I can't go to church, then they will say to me Noni you need to go to church because your family grew up in church, I said I've got a fight then I need to prepare for the fight. Noni no, you can't miss the church, I said no I will go to the church but as time has being go on they did understand.....that is the way I'm preaching in my own way because I believe that I'm recruiting the youngsters because we were only five, as I told you, we were only five but now we are more than five hundred, the young ones fifteen or sixteen some of them they want to train with me, ten years and nine years and then I just told them guys, please boys and girls you can't train with me, you are still young and we have to run to the gym. Wait until you get into fifteen years of age then you can go with me because I can't run with them a long distance because they need to grow up, they need still to grow up because to run with them at ten and fifteen then I have to check, I have to look after them in the road while I am running, whereas I am preparing for the fight. So I've got that pressure in my neighbourhoodbut the young ones want to go with me, even the ones that I'm living with in the village, they have been asking me Sis Noni, Sis Noni, we want to train with you, when are we going to train with you? Then I have to explain that every day, I'm going to train you two guys only when you are twelve years old, I can't take you because you are still young, you are seven, you are eight, then I have to run about seven to fifteen kilometres with them which is I cannot do that because there's a lot of cars in the
DR. MALKA	Oh Noni I'm seeing pictures of Rocky coming into my head where he was almost like the Pied Piper running and all the children were coming...
NONI TENGEwatching them....
DR. MALKA	...Eye of The Tiger. So after...you've mentioned that in three years time, that's sort of your end point on a professional career...
NONI TENGE	...ja....
DR. MALKAare you looking at starting Noni's gym after that?
NONI TENGE	I will be very happy if I can do that because my problem here is parents....some of the parents are trying but you will never say you would like your child to be a killer, not a single parent, not even one parent would like he or her child to be killers, a real killer Any, any parent raised your president, any parents raised a lawyer, any parent...any parent raised an advocate. Not a single parent wishes their child to go and kill people and rob people and smoke ganja and smoke drugs. Not a single parent wishes that, any parent wishes to have a better child so if he or she party away, a person knows my child that she's...I know my child has got a good...he or she's got a good place, he's doing a good thing for other people, she's helping people. I would like to help people. I would like to help people because some of the parents tried but you know at the end of the day a child has to choose the destiny by himself or herself. So you can't choose for your child but a good foundation will always have a good result; that's my motto. If she raised your child with a good foundation and know your child now he is doing wrong things then you must discipline the child and you must tell your child, you must warn your child. A good foundation will always, always have a good result but I promise you we can make a change

	if we can fight this together. If we can stand together as I said, in two to three years time I will be opening my gym. I will recruit more children, I will recruit more ladies because the young ladies are falling pregnant at an early age, those things they don't know, they need to be taught.
DR. MALKA	So your social working mind is coming through very, very strongly and looking down the line to that future where Noni's gym becomes a reality, you will be taking and making good foundations and turning them into good results.
NONI TENGE	I would like to an academic...academy, academy, not only for boxing. I would like to be involved to open the academy of sports.
DR. MALKA	So you're building rounded children that have got the mental....
NONI TENGE	...I would love to....
DR. MALKAskills and the physical ability...
NONI TENGE	...I would love to open an academy of sport when I'm finishing my sport career. Not only boxing; running, athlete, singing, art. Every child of South Africa must be involved so that they will understand because we've got different talents, we've got different interests; we are different by nature, so I need to accommodate others. Even if I can be a motivational speaker I believe out of ten, five children are listening. I promise you, out of ten, if I'm passing my message, I'm telling them where I'm coming from, whatwhat was so wrong in my career, what was so wrong, what did I face in this sport, it was not easy; out of ten I believe five will be listening. That's my mental thinking.
DR. MALKA	And changing one life at a time.
DR. MALKA	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. Today we are talking to five-time World Champion Boxer Noni "She Bee Stinging" Tenge. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Noni, one of the questions that I ask all my guests on this programme who've made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people speak about the challenges that they faced as being part of their motivators and drivers, others talk about particular people or role models in their lives; can you tell us what have been some of the key factors in your path to success?
NONI TENGE	The challenging factors of boxing, it's a male dominated sport. Some of the men were not happy about us, I don't know why, I wish I can ask them why because this is not their sport but they think that boxing is for them. Boxing is like any other sport. If anyone wants to join boxing why do you have to get jealousy of that, I've been asking myself why do you have to get jealous because you are decreasing the number of the people who will stay in the tavern the whole day, you are decreasing the number who stands on the road and looking for someone to buy my private parts, my body, and you are decreasing...and the sport is decreasing the number of a child...of a child on the road who is begging for help and you are decreasing the number of a child who can't even think for himself or herself because you are making this mental child of a child....you are making this child to think stronger, to think in a positive way. So to change your ability, your mentality, why you can't approach more people in sport because the sport is not yours. So my first challenge was the men are not happy...some of the men were not happy because I was doing it like them anyway and I was so focused and we were all so focused by the time we started this and then there was this thing there's no women who can box. The only thing that they are here, they want to take these guys out of the gym because the only thing thatthey want to date these boys, not anything women can

	box. That was their ability of thinking, they were thinking like we are there in the gym because we're there for the boys. We want to take the boys out of gym, so they noticed after that three to six months time at the ... no man, those ladies are very interested; they are very committed.
DR. MALKA	So was...
NONI TENGE	...professional
DR. MALKA	...perseverance the big factor that got all of you ladies through?
NONI TENGE	Perseverance was the big factor because it was not easy. Men were thinking that it's their own, own sport, even if the former president gave us a chance to fight. Even some of the promoters even now in professional events they don't host women in tournaments because there was a law in Boxing South Africa that each and every, every tournament, every tournament, every tournament in Africa you need to put two ladies.
DR. MALKA	Can you tell us about some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up; what made you become who you are today?
NONI TENGE	To become a.....champion, to stand up in front of the crowd in the stadium at twelve years old, that was very important, I know that there's something more in that, I need to put more effort. To become a world champion in 2009 I know that I've got this but I need to work harder. To won the second title in the world, I know that I've got this but I still need, I still need to pray to God and I still need to say thank you to God because other people tried but they never came on top. To become on top it's an important thing for me. Even if I can fall today, I don't have a problem to fall today, but I tried and I stood up for my people and I'm still on top of the world today. I'm not there because I wanted to be, I'm there because I asked it to be and people are giving me a lot of blessings, people are praying for me even for this coming fight and I know that I'm going to win it...
DR. MALKA	Noni please tell us....
NONI TENGE	...and I...
DR. MALKA	...about the upcoming fight.
NONI TENGE	I've got one more fight at the end of February because 2nd March it's an eight round fight. I always keep myself neutral. I always work hard, when it comes to the tournament, when it comes to the day of the tournament, nobody knows what I'm going to do, I cut people off until God shows people what I'm capable of. If I go in the ring I might not come out.
DR. MALKA	And this is about defending your title?
NONI TENGE	This is about defending my title. One more fight it's only to defend my title.is to take theoff because I was not at peace for the past year so I need to warm up, I need to open my chest, I need to do it before the big event so to defend my title for the third time, that would be the greatest thing ever in my career because then I've got four on my hand then I still need to defend the sixth one successfully.
DR. MALKA	We wish you every, every success there to take on your focus and lead as you have been doing in your career.
NONI TENGE	Thank you very much hey.
DR. MALKA	We are unfortunately coming to the end of our time on the show today, so can I ask you as we close the conversation, to share a few words of wisdom or inspiration with young ladies that are listening to us?
NONI TENGE	Wow, that's so nice, that's.....I appreciate that a lot, I would love that because I know that when I'm speaking to you now one of the young lady outside is crying, be always being abused by her boyfriend and she doesn't want to tell anybody about it. No, that's bad. There is not a single person who has got a right to hit you, you need to stand up for yourself, nobody owns your body. You are here for a reason, you've got a purpose to do on

	<p>this earth. Don't smoke drugs, the drugs are killing your inner soul and remember this body is the temple of yours so respect this temple. This soul is here for a purpose; respect that. There is someone who is looking up to you, don't forget that. Your kids are looking up to you, even if you don't have kids, the neighbours, the youngsters around your community are looking up to you. Someone is loving you the way you are so if you drink you are killing that person. If you are smoking drugs in front of the kids you rather stop now because you are a killing your child, role model of your child, you are a role model to your child. Please stand up for yourself, go to the gym, I promise you it will work out. You own your body, you are a boss of your body so you must be proud of yourself. Even if someone has a bad thing to say about you, just focus on you, don't look back. Thank you very much.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you so much, we appreciate you taking your time out to join us today to share your experiences, your wisdoms, not only in the boxing arena but also in life itself.</p>
NONI TENGE	<p>Thank you very much and I also would like to say to the listeners of Africa I am so happy, I'm so happy to share my moment with you guys, thank you very much.</p>
	<p>PROGRAMME END</p>