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GUEST NAME: PROFESSOR ARIANE JANSE VAN RENSBURG – DIRECTOR OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME – SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE PLANNING - FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT – UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Joining us today in our Johannesburg studio is Professor Ariane Janse van Rensburg who is the Director of the Architecture Programme at the School of Architecture and Planning in the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment at the University of The Witwatersrand. Architecture is part of everyone's lives, from the places we call home to the spaces we work in, to the landmarks that intersect our journeys. Prof Janse van Rensburg first of all, welcome to the show!
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Thank you very much.
DR. MALKA	And second of all, can you please tell us more about the School of Architecture and Planning as well as the responsibilities that are attached to your role as Director for the Architecture Programme?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Thank you very much. So the WITS School of Architecture is actually one of the oldest in the country but it's only been since 1994 that we've actually been open to all students and I think one of my biggest responsibilities there as Director is, first of all we're trying to prepare students to be able to go out and be architects who can change the world and that means that it's not just about training them to be able to design good buildings, it's about training them to think creatively about the problems that face us in the world which is changing all the time and how to find good solutions to those, but it's also about giving everybody access because the profession has had a very Northern Hemisphere bias for a long time and the problems that we have to solve are not solved by really iconic, glitzy, high-tech buildings; there are many more important things which stare us in the face every day and if we are designing for diverse people and communities and cultures and priorities and if we have no "Planet B" the way in which architecture should be approaching building and problem solving is becoming very different from what it was to generations ago.
DR. MALKA	I imagine there's considered blend in terms of culture, society, materials and environment is being taken into consideration?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes, because one's always designing for people and you're designing in a context, so the biggest overshadowing change in the whole profession now is sustainability. Buildings are extremely capital intensive investments, not just in terms of money but in terms of energy that went into producing the materials and the energy that the building is going to take for the rest of its life and whether it can be re-used eventually when functions change. So that is an enormous responsibility which is only really now starting to become the prime concern for many people but we are designing for people and building....the difference between architecture and just shelter is that

	<p>architecture is trying to give expression and meaning to people's lives and you need to understand the people that you're designing for; you need to understand the society in which you are working in order to design for people.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>I was intrigued by your statement "there is no Planet B" which is completely true in absolutely every respect, but can you expand a bit in the context of architecture?</p>
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	<p>Well we are...so I think the bigger perspective is there's rapid urbanisation throughout the world, people are moving to cities to look for jobs. Some time ago at a conference somebody was saying that in order to accommodate this kind of urbanisation the world needs to be producing one new city that can house a million people every day. So our problems are really not at the scale of an individual building, they are at the scale of how can we make people...give people comfortable and sustainable shelter at the rate that the demand is increasing and that means many ways of doing things were just too labour intensive, too time intensive, too energy intensive, we have limited resources and we need to be looking at new solutions, not how do you build with bricks and concrete and glass, yes, of course we need to know that, but what alternatives are there, what materials are there that embody less energy, what is immediately available because transport of materials is a huge issue. So there're many things that, so we're saying how can you design buildings that use the minimum of energy, how can you design buildings which do not use up resources and how can you design buildings which are not doing harm in the process of building them.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And stepping back for a moment with your academic architect hat on, your approach to teaching has really taken transformation in South Africa seriously with implementation of a decolonised curriculum where part of the intention is for students to become aware and question their own lived experience as well as taking cognizance of the realities of others and then what I really liked was establishing their own learning philosophies; please tell us more about this initiative and its success factors.</p>
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	<p>Well, it's been very exciting being involved in this. So for a while I was trying to work on how to level the playing field to make...to prepare students who are coming into the course for success, but the biggest challenge is we are designing for the future, we are designing for people and anyone of us comes from a particular background, I can't teach you how other people's lives work so we have to design a curriculum in which people are teaching each other, in which pure learning is happening and it's about collaborative learning, collaborative work amongst students, collaborative work amongst staff and it was something which I could see the need for that but it was...you can only do it as a collaborative and I was very fortunate that I was part of a team of young, dynamic and diverse colleagues and we've been combining our experience and trying to work out a new curriculum. My colleague, Sitchabe Malpe, Dr. Malpe has been doing his PhD on indigenous knowledge systems and the forms of learning which have traditionally worked are things like embodied learning and collaborative learning and we find that they just...those are theories which one can put into practice. So we set up groups of students as they come in, in...and they have to solve new problems through exploring things together, so I think students come in and they think but I came to study architecture, I'm not sure that this is architecture, but this is the absolute stuff that you need to become an architect, is for groups of people to understand each other, to understand what they have in common, what they can agree on,</p>

	what they think is important for the future and then use that as a basis for a design project.
DR. MALKA	It's almost as though architecture is a tool but it's all of this understanding that has to take place before you can develop the tool.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes and you need...you need that understanding in order to be an architect but you also need that understanding in order to design for people. So I believe that learning has to happen on diff...the final sort of technical learning in your field is only the cherry on top, learning has to happen at a social level and at a level of problem solving and understanding the context in which you're working and you can use that in many other fields afterwards, not just as an architect.
DR. MALKA	I was going to say, this approach to learning arguably should go across all disciplines.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Well I think what's very exciting and interesting is that in fora on decolonisation and fora on how should learning be changing at universities, more and more other faculties are looking to what we're doing and saying but this is relevant and exciting.
DR. MALKA	You qualified as an architect; you went into practice, establishing your own practice before working in academia; what inspired you to study architecture?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Well I suppose the simple answer is my father was an engineer with a very practical approach to things and my mother was an artist and I ended up with interests and experience in both of those things, but I think what actually made things gel is I had the opportunity to go to London when I was in matric; I went as part of a Science Olympia Team, but for the first time I saw buildings..I saw a city which had developed over time with layers and layers of history and meaning and interesting buildings that I hadn't seen back home and I suddenly realised but this is fascinating, it's not just the kind of the art side of things and the technical side of getting things there, but it's about people and meaning and history and all the things that make me excited.
DR. MALKA	And as you went into practice, what were your design preferences for buildings; residential, commercial...?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	I think my sort of background was I was brought up to believe that people are more important than things and I think I really enjoying design...I enjoy designing for people. I enjoy understanding what people need and want and what their aspirations are and why they want a certain kind of building and then usually if you can piece the whole context together you can produce something which is more than they thought that they wanted and that to me is very exciting. So I enjoy designing buildings for the people who are actually going to use them and I've been involved in educational buildings and community buildings, religious buildings, individual houses are always interesting although they're very time consuming because it's somebody's whole lifetime aspiration which needs to go into one small building and budget. So yes, I'm not...I'm not a commercial architect, I've done that kind of work, but there it's about whether you can get a better investment for your client than if he were to invest his money in the bank, so that's to me not the most exciting challenge.
DR. MALKA	And what would you say out of all of the pieces that you've worked on stands out the most for you?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	I think the house that we built for ourselves because we did it on a farm, we had a very low budget, we were looking at rural Wattle and Daub technology for building parts of the house and I was basically the person on site learning how to bend conduits and things like that, I learned a

	tremendous amount from it, but I think to me it's a building which could put...it could integrate the meaning of various communities in that area of the Highveld and the actual inspiration for the project came from my husband, we often work as a team which is very great, but I think it was a very satisfying project, yes.
DR. MALKA	And it seems to have been solutioning; utilising materials from the area, you don't have transport to take into account, you are reflecting the society of the environment.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	The culture of the whole area, yes, yes, so and it was...they always say architect's houses are never finished but it was a kind of project that one could add to over time and yes, so for me that...I think it's this integration of meaning and context and technology and practicality and a personal expression is really what makes architecture exciting for me.
DR. MALKA	But the process of becoming an architect is very long; it's almost the equivalent of becoming a doctor.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes it is, because it's a very complex field. So you are working with social factors, urban factors, technological factors; structurally buildings do have to stand and you are working with teams of people, you are not building the building yourself, you have to produce really good communication so that the team of other people can produce that building. So all these factors combined means that you need to...it's quite a rare integration of interests and skills and there's a lot of ground that needs to be covered and then you need to have some practical experience. Theory is all very well but you only start realising why you learnt theory when you start trying to apply it.
DR. MALKA	What's that statement? "Theory doesn't work in practice"....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	It does but there's a lot more than just the theory that's needed.
DR. MALKA	And I was surprised to learn that although there seems to be an equal proportion of men and women graduating with an architectural qualification, that globally, around the world, women only account for approximately 20% of practicing architects.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes, that is a big subject for debate. In South Africa the proportion is a little better than say in America, we have a higher proportion of women, but we find that the highest proportion of women in the architectural profession is in the technologists layers of the profession and for a smaller percentage actually become professional architects. I think it's a complex thing, there are...I think because it's a long training, life also has to happen in parallel and I think by the time we have about a 50% graduation at undergraduate level but we'll find that a low percentage of women come back for their post graduate training, I think many of them by that time have families and there's an expectation that they are the people who need to look after the kids and the other thing is that it costs a lot of money to study, so if you have to pay back study loans you end up working as a technologist and maybe you work as a technologist for ten years before you say okay now I really want to come back and complete my studies, which quite a few women students do. But I think family, family expectations, the fact that you need to repay your...that your family put you through varsity for the first degree and now you need to give something back and I think when it...even when people finally graduate, we have about a 45% of the final master's class graduating are women, but we still have only about 25% registering in the profession. So I think many people then say okay I want to have a family, I need to be a bit more flexible, I'm not going to be a high profile architect, I'll work for other people, I'll do jobs without

	<p>registering, I'll keep my life a little more flexible, so I think that's one of the factors and that this gets exploited and then the other thing is I think we are just still inclined to not take up our voice and we are inclined to say okay I can do the work, I'll do it quietly in the back corner, I don't mind whether anybody really realises that this is what I'm doing or that I've achieved this, that or the other and so we are backward in coming forward and fighting for our place and so often I think a lot more of the work is being done by women architects, but they're not necessarily taking the credit for it.</p>
DR. MALKA	So there's an under-value; under-appreciation....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...there's undervalue...yes....
DR. MALKA	...for the work that they've done because....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...under self-appreciation, under self-valuation.
DR. MALKA	It's so unfortunate because there's a massive investment that goes into becoming qualified and if you're right there at that cusp, to not go forward and to become registered in a profession that you've invested so much time, effort and money into; it almost becomes waste.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes it is a waste and I think it lowers the voice but what I was very....I've just come from the Australian Institute of Architects Conference in Melbourne and what was very interesting to me is that about half the conference attendees were over forty and of those I would say 90% were male, which is the kind of profile that we tend to have here too, and the other half were probably under thirty and generally female. So I think worldwide there's a big emphasis now on balancing out disparities and certainly the conference programme, 90% of the presenters and keynote speakers and chairs of sessions and everything else were female. So I think the profession is making a big effort to equalise the balance again.
DR. MALKA	But these types of transformation shifts, it almost seems to be generational, like you've indicated you know people being over forty and predominantly men. The one's that are thirty you're seeing more of a dominant female profile.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes, definitely it is generational. Look, when I went to study architecture one of the South African university's said that they only took in eight female students because we were just going to go off and have families, which I did have and...
DR. MALKA	...so women were quota's...
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURGas well as a career...I didn't go to that university but...so yes, I think there has...worldwide it has been a male dominated profession. I mean there was a big fuss...so Robert Venturi got the Pulitzer prize for Architecture for a book which he had co-produced with his wife, who is actually...started her career at studying architecture at WITS and she has only now won the fight to also be co-awarded the Pulitzer prize....
DR. MALKA	This is Denise.....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...this is Denise Scott Brown, yes, so yes that is....that has been the kind of bias in the profession and I think I was brought up in a home where it...there was no difference made between opportunities for boys or girls and I received all the encouragement so I never went into the profession expecting hurdles and I think in that way then there weren't so many hurdles but if you come in very aware of the fact that things might be stacked against you, it...and hesitant for that reason, you actually have to take it on very head-on.

DR. MALKA	But there are issues of disparity and one of the things that I find across, you know, I think there was a study done by the Institute of Race Relations, which identified that on average women earn 23% less than their male counterparts.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes, that unfortunately remains so and the whole secrecy around who earns which salaries and the fact that these things are not discussed and disclosed, I mean for any job that's advertised there's never a disclosure of what the salary is going to be, that get's negotiated on an individual basis to see okay let's see what this person's...how low can the price be for this person is the general kind of attitude.
DR. MALKA	What do you think women can do, in your opinion, to let's say better the odds of equal pay?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	I think you have to find out what the ballpark figures are, you have to find out what you are worth and you have to...don't walk in and assume that this is the salary; you have to go and negotiate for it.
DR. MALKA	And I suppose it also goes back to your point from a almost like athinking on a cultural level and patriarchy on self-value.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	It is on self-value and you have to...you have to take the whole spectrum of things into consideration, it's not just your professional experience. It's the fact that you are a very good multi-tasker, that you are a good organiser, that you've learned all sorts of other skills in other contexts as well increases your value, don't underestimate that.
DR. MALKA	The peripheral tools and skills that you've...
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...accumulated over time.....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...that you've accumulated over time.
DR. MALKA	And from a point of view of (a) getting women more into the workforce, realising better pay, there's also aspects of leadership which I think is another important component where if you've got women in leadership they are more likely to be encouraging of incorporating other women, bringing them up through the ranks.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes definitely and I think certainly in the architectural profession and in academia that is happening at the moment, there's a strong emphasis on yes making things a bit more equitable and then certainly people are encouraging...and I think the thing of role models is very important and it's also that you have leaders who understand what the factors are and what the odds are and can help other women to negotiate what is...not necess...it's not a level territory and every situation has its own challenges. I'm not saying that there are not challenges for men as well, but it helps to have women who know what the challenges are for women, I mean we have women students who are coming back with small babies and things like that and the fact that I can say to somebody you know if you need to bring your baby in today and if you want to feed her, there's my office, you know there's things like that which do make life simpler.
DR. MALKA	Accommodation and support tools.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Professor Ariane Janse van Rensburg who is the Director of the Architecture Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
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.

DR. MALKA	Prof Janse van Rensburg, a question I'd like to ask you now goes on more of a personal reflection to your personal journey. Some of our guests who've all reached tremendous achievements in their respective fields have spoken about what have been some of the key drivers to their success. Some people speak about fear as being a motivator, others speak about hard work and perseverance; in your opinion what would you say have been your key drivers?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Well I grew up in a family who really encouraged us to be very curious about the world in general and to find things out and to find out how things work and to find out more. So I've always had a great curiosity about things which drives one to find out things and learn things and to look at learning as something which gives one a lot of pleasure. I think I'm a very...I have a strong will so that means I can be extremely stubborn but that can be very useful when you do need to get a lot of things done. So yes, I think I've been brought up to work hard and to explore the world and to try to understand the world, which was a good starting point. I also think I really enjoy what I do. I enjoy architecture, I enjoy finding solutions, I enjoy improving things, so I think a very strong driver is the fact that I'm passionate about what I do and then I have always had wonderful support systems. I have a great family support system, my husband has the person who's really challenged me and encouraged me to do things, so yes, I think all those have been big plus points.
DR. MALKA	And casting your mind back, can you share some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Well a very early moment was I went to a school where they were starting to explore project schools and they chose some of the students in the class who were causing trouble because they were bored and gave them extra projects to do and so I had this project to do about...I had to collect leaves from trees and sort of write about trees and so on and I came home and I thought oh this is great I'll collect a couple leaves quickly, put them in a bowl, carry on playing and my mother said "no, if something's worth doing, it's worth doing properly" and she took me on walks in nature reserves to collect leaves, to go to the botanical institutes to identify them to find all about things and find out what glue can you stick them onto the paper with that works properly and so I think I was really encouraged to find out what's interesting and rewarding about doing things properly, to not take short cuts, so that was one thing. I remember my cousin telling me that she believed in the 80/20 principle, that 80% of the work produces...or 20% of the work produces 80% of the results and then to get it perfect it takes another 80% of the work and you have to find the right kind of balance point. So I think my own family tended towards 100% and to find out that in order to be efficient and get a lot of things done you need to find the right balance and then I think the big thing that...my husband has a very wide perspective on things; you need to understand the big picture and you have to get the detail right and I think what he taught me is that the synergy of things...if you can be involved in different things that are all leading in the same direction and you can start to have an influence and start to do some cross-pollination, you can get far more done, you can actually make things change and move in directions. You can be working terribly hard in one little field but if you're not starting to harness that energy you're not going to get a great deal done.
DR. MALKA	Those are wise words. Who would you say are some of the strong women in your life?
PROF JANSE VAN	I think I grew up in a family where women had had the chance to go and study. My grandmother went and studied in the 1920's and got her BA

RENSBURG	degree, so that was an unusual thing for the time....
DR. MALKA	...very rare for the period....
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	...yes, so I think I grew up in family where women were recognised as equals and had the opportunities to do things and were doing things. My mother gave us a great deal of support but I think oddly it was not necessarily strong women who encouraged me, it was the fact that I grew up in an environment where there were men who recognised women's potential and didn't think that they should be doing anything differently and that was the most encouraging thing. I mean when I was small, my dad...I was his assistant in the garage, he'd say pass me the hammer and that kind of thing, so yes I grew up with the kind of technical understanding which was extremely useful in architecture.
DR. MALKA	But almost.....more important as you said is being in this egalitarian society, that was what you knew.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	That is what I knew and that is what I expected and when it wasn't like that I tried to right it because I assumed that that is how it should be.
DR. MALKA	It reminds me of a conversation I had a good few years ago with, she was the then Dean of Education at University of Pretoria, Irma Eloff and she said "I never knew that single women could be anything else other than strong" because her mom was a single mother and that was just how women worked.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes and women can be incredibly strong, yes.
DR. MALKA	And what would you say has been the best lesson that you've learned throughout your career?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	When I failed a subject and I found that the earth did not stop turning, nothing terrible happened, I learned from my experience, I learned what the limitations were and these expectations that we have of ourselves that we should never fail are totally unrealistic and in fact you learn far more from failing than succeeding.
DR.MALKA	How do you incorporate that into your teachings?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	I think it's one of the key things where we try to teach students to experiment and schools teach you that there's a right answer and a wrong answer. There isn't. There are better answers and worse answers but if you keep on exploring you're going to find something that's even better. So if you're scared of exploring you're not going to get anywhere, you need to learn, so we do a lot of tutorials projects where are people experimenting with rough stuff, it doesn't matter how it comes out, just try. Find out what works, find out what doesn't work and it takes that edge of things.
DR. MALKA	Yeah and you look at the progress in Silicon Valley, one of the mantra's is "fail but fail fast."
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Yes and learn from it; what did you learn from the failure.
DR. MALKA	Yes you have to have that learning otherwise it makes the failure a waste and not an experience to move up from. And finally, as we close off the conversation today, could you share a few words of wisdom or inspiration that you'd like to pass on to young ladies that are listening to us on the continent?
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Okay, it's difficult to summarise that but I think the most important thing is evaluate yourself realistically; you probably have far more skills and talents that you realise. There are many things that you are learning every day which are not a specific degree or qualification, when you start to put all that together it's a sizeable thing that you can offer and if you have a

	dream about something, keep on finding opportunities to get closer to that, there's no paved highway to anything, but if you keep...don't let go of it because there isn't a paved highway. You're going to find the bits and pieces, you'll piece them together, you'll arrive at that thing and believe in yourself, you are unique, you have to be unique, don't ever try to be anybody else or like anybody else. You...there's a puzzle piece that's only your shape and size that's needed to complete the picture and if you can do that well; then people will recognise you and you will be happy.
DR. MALKA	Thank you for that insight, I think that my take-out on that is that learning about the different skills that you accumulate over time to fill in that big picture and that the journey to your destination is not necessarily a straight line; it is a zigzag.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	And you have a long lifetime, you need to do everything all at once, you can do one thing and then the other thing and then the other thing and eventually you'll get them all integrated.
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing your time with us.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Thank you very much, it's been...and I think this is a wonderful programme, thank you very much for allowing me onto it.
DR. MALKA	Absolute pleasure and may you go on to continue producing architects who can change the world.
PROF JANSE VAN RENSBURG	Thank you.