

**PROGRAM DATE: 2019-08-01**

**PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY**

**GUEST NAME: PROFESSOR LINDA RONNIE – DEAN – FACULTY OF COMMERCE – UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

<b>SPEAKER</b>	<b>TRANSCRIPTION</b>
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 Cape Town is Professor Linda Ronnie who is the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Cape Town. Welcome to the show!
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Thank so much you for inviting me.</b>
DR. MALKA	Prof Ronnie to start with, as Dean of the Faculty of Commerce at UCT, can you tell us more about some of the departments that are housed within the faculty?
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Okay, we have five departments within commerce and these are the School of Management Studies, the School of Economics, the College of Accounting, the Department of Finance and Tax and the Department of Information Systems.</b>
DR. MALKA	And what are your milestones that you want to accomplish during your tenure?
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Well, I think there are two key things for me, the first is really around curriculum reform, so we need to be sure that as a university on the continent we are dealing with continentally appropriate information and getting our graduates to be out there and be real productive members of society. So that would be my first intent really and then the second is of course around becoming more demographically representative. Unfortunately I think in South Africa we are focused almost completely on the racial demography and not really thought about gender and its importance and so that's really my focus I think.</b>
DR. MALKA	Curriculum reform; it seems to be a hot topic on the table for literally all of our universities in South Africa, that's going to be a massive assignment to accomplish.
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Oh absolutely, I think you know, at the end of my five year term, I have been lucky to have made a little dent in it because I think it's an ongoing conversation that we need to have. For me I think the first step is really around relevance; so are we teaching things that are relevant to our soon-to-be graduates. If we're producing graduates for the world of work we need to have young people out there who are really on top of their game and so we have to be on the top of our game. So that, I mean, has been a natural part of academia for as long as I can remember, which is, you know returning to your syllabus and throwing out the things that are a little dated and including stuff that is a little more relevant. So that process is already in place, it is just being a little more tuned to what might be relevant both for South Africa, the continent and then also be mindful that our graduates may leave the continent for other shores and they need to be able to make a contribution in those environments as well.</b>
DR. MALKA	Ja, so global citizens. Given the economic nature of the departments and schools under your watch, you have to produce graduates who are able to contribute to our economy; how are you managing to integrate the worlds of academia with industry?

PROF RONNIE	I think we're quite fortunate here really, you know, commerce has essentially two major degrees and we also have incredible links with industry because I want to say that they underwrite what we do but in the sense that they do, so for example SAICA who is the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants are quite involved with the kind of accountants or the accountancy professional that they'd like to see produced and so our curriculum is in line with what they're wanting and the same applies to our actuarial bodies out there and then just on a more sort of granular level, we obviously have people coming in from industry to guest-lecture in our classes and I think that's amazing because you're getting students who are kind of not quite decided about their career paths, I always say I think their parents are a lot more decided than they are, but they are sort of struggling to know where they fit in and then people come in from industry to talk about all the possibilities that may be there for them.
DR. MALKA	I think that's a strong element of collaboration and that integration between the two so that people get a view of what to expect and what those opportunities are. One thing which is standing out for me more and more is the strong representation of female leadership at the university of Cape Town; your VC, Prof Mamokgethi Phakeng, the three deputy VC's, Prof Loretta Feris, Prof Sue Harrison, Prof Lis Lange and then the deans who are leading faculties like yourself, Professor Alison Lewis and Professor Carolyn Williamson. So in your opinion, what I wanted to ask is what has the University done right to improve the representation of women in leadership?
PROF RONNIE	<b>Well I think, you know, the university set out to find the most confident people to fulfil these roles and they just happen to be women.</b>
DR. MALKA	How do you think this can be replicated into other areas because to be frank female leadership, besides our public sectors, is actually quite poor?
PROF RONNIE	<b>No, no, I'd agree there completely. I think it starts with the notion that...and the belief that there are competent women out there and it's kind of deciding how to nurture them along the road so that when leadership positions arise, they can fulfil those. So it doesn't start at the top in a sense, it starts by having particular policies and practices that encourage women and so the whole notion of kind of having women in these leadership positions who act as role models is absolutely fantastic for the university.</b>
DR. MALKA	And I look at this as well as, you know, you spoke about the role modelling effect, on how it nurtures and provides opportunities for younger women as the students to understand and realise that you've got this fantastic cohort of female leadership at the top, that being a leader is possible, you can be the head of an institution or you can be a head of an organisation.
PROF RONNIE	<b>Ja, I think that's particularly important, you know, it's not something you read about, it's something you're actually seeing, you're seeing people act in...well what I...we both consider to be traditional male roles and be absolutely confident about themselves in those roles and I think that sets a wonderful example for young women. I mean I think that applies down the chain as well, so commerce is certainly an example of this but I would imagine it's pretty true across the university that we've got...well we at commerce we have...we've got twice as many men as women in the senior professorial band and I think that's something that needs to change because then students are able to see it in the classroom as well.</b>
DR. MALKA	Plus that also provides your pipeline for development.
PROF RONNIE	<b>Absolutely.</b>

DR. MALKA	I mentioned earlier about the public sector having a much better picture in terms of female representation, but in corporate South Africa the numbers are really quite poor; we've got surveys from a number of different institutions, whether it's Grant Thornton, McKinsey or Business Women's Association of South Africa. On the Business Women's Association of South Africa, their 2017 study showed that women only account for 29.5% of executive managers and only 4.7% of CEO's in JSE listed companies, now bearing in mind this is 2017 so we've now had Maria Ramos exit ABSA so that picture is probably even poorer.
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Yes, yes, I'd imagine so. I think what organisations are doing, they're putting in the appropriate policies and so on but there's a little more to be done than just that and you alluded to it earlier, which is that you must nurture women within the organisation at all levels in order to create that pipeline.</b>
DR. MALKA	You've authored and co-authored several papers on women in business and leadership and I'm going to mention a couple of them. "More Women in Business is Good for The Bottom Line"; "South African Women Leaders Enablers for Success" and another one is "Exploring the Labyrinth – Challenges Faced by South African Women in Senior Leadership Roles." Please can you tell us about some of your learnings and findings?
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Okay so there's...there're two really nice concepts that I think you'd like. The one is the "Think Manager – Think Male Paradigm" which is just kind of the whole notion that the kind of qualities you want from a manager are to be found in men, so that's kind of the one aspect which is clearly I think pretty prevalent across organisations. And then there's another notion which is the notion of the "Sticky Floor" which explains that organisational practices keep women in follower roles due to our communal traits, you know, so even before women contemplate leadership roles they're already told in a number of subtle and perhaps not so subtle way that their role is really to be of support and to nurture others from the bottom up, so to say, rather than the other way around.</b>
DR. MALKA	I haven't heard the "Sticky Floor" expression before, but...
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>..I know; it's absolutely fascinating.</b>
DR. MALKA	And in your opinion, you know, given...it's all very well going and doing the studies, looking at the findings, but what can we do to fix the situation so that we can improve the outlook for women to rise to the top and not be held down by that "Sticky Floor"?
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Ja I think you see besides organisations kind of having this compliance mindset, which is really we have these policies and we need to get X amount of people into this role is to say what are the kind of barriers that women are facing and one of the most incredible ways of finding out what those are is simply asking the women in your organisation. So what are the barriers you are facing, what kind of skills do women need and then working on something which I think is more of a long-term or rather not an overnight solution which is really kind of to try and dismantle those unconscious biases that we all have. So on the one hand they need to obviously monitor progress in terms of targets and so on, and the other really is that women are becoming quite discerning now, so before we go off to organisations we want to have a look at what is their reputation for supporting and embracing women, you know, all the way to the top and I think there are many organisations who are losing out because their reputation in the market is really poor in that regard, so they might attract but they don't retain outstanding women, so that's pretty key. The other really is to</b>

	<p>understand what is real empowerment for women, what does that mean, you know, and then try and kind of address some of those issues as well but I'd really be kind of remiss if I didn't also say that women shouldn't be waiting on organisations to help them out, there are things women themselves can do because if...you know to get back to the notion of the "Sticky Floor"; if you are buying into the "Sticky Floor" and you say well you see, they don't really have any opportunities here for me and so on and you don't do anything about it, then you are as...well, let's say you are...you are also...ja you are equally responsible for the position you find yourself in.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>So we've got the dynamics of what happens in the organisation, with policy, of trying to put that into effect, but then we also as women need to become more assertive as individuals and go for it.</p>
PROF RONNIE	<p>That's right, I think it's our role to play in ensuring our own emancipation, you know, and then the other most fantastic thing we can do is there are other women, so I mean, you know, find support and networks across other organisations, in one's social circle and so on and finally I think something which has really been marvellous, the new generation of employees, I mean we're finding more and more young men want a balanced life and they're likely to be quite supportive of initiatives that benefit both groups in the workplace, so one can consider them allies and advocates of women's empowerment as well.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>I think that's a great perspective, it's actually one that I haven't heard, on looking at the younger generation coming through and the balance equation.</p>
PROF RONNIE	<p>Absolutely.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Financial independence obviously contributes to women's empowerment; our unemployment statistics are depressing to say the least, they...depending on which way the figures are cut, they seem to be hovering around the 27% mark but the corporate space is not the only means for gainful employment, entrepreneurship is obviously another route to independence, so what types of programmes has the Faculty of Commerce initiated to promote female entrepreneurship?</p>
PROF RONNIE	<p>Well I have to say we haven't particularly focused on women entrepreneurs, there're more sort of general things like we have our post graduate diploma in entrepreneurship, which is amazingly popular and I suppose we focus on women in the sense that when there are opportunities for them...for students to go off and attend workshops and conferences we are able to sponsor a small group of women, for example, last year it went off to a symposium in Durban to represent us there, which was ja, I think that was fabulous, but I have to say that we didn't set out to do that, so we wouldn't claim it as a victory there at all. Other sections of the university I would say are at the Creative School of Business where they have the solutions space, which really kind of helps young entrepreneurs across the board and the Raymond Ackerman Academy which is a wonderful six month programme for young people who're wanting to become entrepreneurs and that one's also pretty gender friendly in terms of its intake, ja.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Well I have to say, we had the privilege of interviewing Wendy Ackerman on our show a few years ago and one of the things that she spoke about when she went into the workplace she said you know we hear about "glass ceilings" but she said when I was there it was a "glass cube" in terms of the barriers that women confronted on literally almost every direction that you tried to move ahead into.</p>

<p><b>PROF RONNIE</b></p>	<p><b>Ja, I'd agree there. I think that a lot has changed but it really has changed so slowly because I think I saw a stat the other day that said that if we just attempted gender parity now, women would earn the same as men in about I think it was 102 years. [laughs]</b></p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Yes those, you know, those surveys are quite frightening that...and it really always concerns me that it's something....these changes are going to happen to another generation, they're not going to happen for our generation, which I think they should, but whatever we're doing is working towards the future. One of the points that I wanted to ask you and you alluded to it earlier in terms of our younger generation of men and women wanting more of a balance in life, is when it comes to unpaid labour, which is obviously an essential to sustaining households and economies from cooking, cleaning, looking after kids, attending to the elderly, etc., and I read a stat from UN Women where they estimate that women carry out two and a half times more unpaid housework and care work than men, which has a double impact because it means that then they've got less time to participate in paid labour or to be able to work longer hours and there needs to be a better dynamic of how to incorporate the paid as well as unpaid labour; how do you think we can promote more of an equitable distribution of unpaid work between men and women?</p>
<p><b>PROF RONNIE</b></p>	<p><b>I think there's several suggestions there, I mean, one, for me would always be it's important to raise your children correctly, so they need to see that in the home in the first place, you know, so who you choose as your partner is really quite important. So I can talk about my own I'd have to say that he's always been out there doing sort of more traditional things, he is the cook, he does all sorts of other related tasks around the home and so our children have never imagined that women do one thing and men do another. There're just tasks that occur and you know whoever's available then does it...</b></p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>...someone has to do them....</p>
<p><b>PROF RONNIE</b></p>	<p><b>...ja, no absolutely. So I think it's...there one must role-model oneself, the notion also of the kind of toys one buys for children, you know, it sort of sounds so simple but it really is part of the marketing sphere that entrenches particular roles because the...you know the little play-play stove is never bought for a young boy and you know all the associated things; the tea set, etc., etc., so those just reinforce particular roles; serving roles I'd have to say among young girls, so ja, one has to make one's change there I think. The other is around I mean just sort of organisational wise, is attending to parental leave. So this surge in kind of increasing paternity leave in organisations for example, here at UCT, I think that goes some way to realising that there are two parties in a child rearing capacity and both need to play their role, so I think that's another way that organisations can ensure more gender friendly policies, you know, that again is a...I think it's quite a mountain to climb in a very patriarchal society like ours. There's so many societal pressures on young women and I mean we're just talking about women so far, we're just talking about women as some kind of amorphous mass and we know that's not true, there are different cultural practices and the most confident and competent of women sometimes play the other role over the weekend or in their private lives; when they go on holiday they play more submissive roles to appease the broader family. So shifting those things is also going to take a little time I think.</b></p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>You're absolutely right on how some ladies manage those dynamics; we've had a number of successful medical doctors on this show who have...and lawyers who have spoken about exactly that; that during the week they're in their lab coats, they are at the top of their game and at weekends they have to become</p>

	subservient, they have to follow protocol with culture, so they're leading these double or triple lives and navigating that journey.
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Yes and we wonder why women are tired, because they are juggling all these different personae....[laughs]</b>
DR. MALKA	Yes I'm sure we've got a bit of a ...what do we call it, almost a...a bit of schizophrenia and multiple personality disorders....
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Yes, yes, along with....interestingly...along with a lot of guilt, you know and I'm thinking about my own studies now and in my PhD I was looking at gender as one variable in my study and I asked women so how do you feel about, you know, doing your studies on top of all your other roles and they were quick with an answer about how they were kind of being challenged at all times because they felt they were letting down their children, they were letting down their husbands and the men in the sample, really, they expressed no such feelings. I mean I asked several times, I kind of said; well for example, don't you feel that you, you know, you haven't....no, no, no, no, my wife's quite supportive; all is well at home. So quite interesting that dynamic as well.</b>
DR. MALKA	Yes, perspectives.
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're talking to Professor Linda Ronnie who is the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Cape Town. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: <a href="https://twitter.com/WomanityTalk">@WomanityTalk</a> .
DR. MALKA	Prof Ronnie, education is a vital tool to empower individuals and societies and your passion for education is evident throughout your career, both as an educator as well as a learner. You hold a Master's in Education, Training and Development, MSC in Applied Psychology and a PhD which examines the experiences of mature students in higher learning education institutions. Firstly can you tell me what role did education play in your life and career development?
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Yes I think I was someone who came late to the party, right, so that's probably the best way to put it okay. We had...we grew up in a very particular time where the career choices presented to us were one's of nurses, teachers, etc., so all in these kind of service roles really and that was due to not only a gender perspective but obviously a racial perspective during the apartheid years. So I didn't really have any idea of being anyone, I think that's probably the best way to put it. My dad was a high school teacher and so education was a primary kind of focus in our lives and my mom was in social work so we got that kind of impetus as well because she was seeing things in her work and said, you know, or they both believed very firmly that education was the route away from our scenario. So my...I'd have to say to you that my...all my qualifications have been as a result of part time studies, ja, I just...I look at our young people here in commerce and I think they don't quite appreciate the real joy of being a fulltime student, but ja, that wasn't something that was in my life at that point and so I can truly say that learning and being, I suppose, good at a variety of my courses really assisted me in becoming a lot more confident, but also through seeing the different opportunities that would be available to me. Ja.</b>
DR. MALKA	Staying on the topic of education; can you tell us about your views of education as a tool in the hands of women to change their lives as well as their children's, for the better.
<b>PROF RONNIE</b>	<b>Yes I mean it's absolutely crucial because it's getting, okay it's building confidence on one hand and then you become I think aware that your brain</b>

	can function, okay, so then you start thinking well, I can do this, so there's a self-esteem output as well as you learn, learn new things, see the world in a new way and start to challenge what's happening around you, I think that's absolutely crucial and I suppose parents always, always, always want their children's lives to be better than theirs....
DR. MALKA	...yes....
PROF RONNIE	...and very much so, I mean, all the research says that is even more critical with working class parents, so they see that education is the way out in a sense for their children and we see here some of the unintended consequences of that pressure. So if I can just talk about that for a little bit...
DR. MALKA	...please do....
PROF RONNIE	...so the students that are here at UCT that may be from a working class background, or, the first students within their family and extended family to come to university are under incredible pressure to not only do well, but to do well quickly and exit the system so they can go into the world of work and because we've only recently begun to understand what kind of pressures those kids are under, we are only now putting in place, I think, a proper supportive system because of the amount of mental and emotional anguish felt by these students. I really can't express deeply enough, just how disturbing it is for all of us to be here with people who really, they just want to make a difference in their families lives and imagine feeling that instead of feeling wow, I'm at university, I'm being left alone, I can do amazing things, independence at last. It really is a kind of a double-edged sword for them.
DR. MALKA	They've got an incredible weight to carry; incredible on being able to be the first, being able to exit the system, having the family support but also then the expectation of supporting the family post graduation.
PROF RONNIE	Ja, ja absolutely. I mean let me digress slightly and tell you that probably about a year ago or so I found some old letters my mother had kept in her belongings and they are written by a professor in the science faculty on a UCT letterhead to my grandfather who worked here just as an assistant in the lab, very many years ago, I mean they're beautiful and they're from the 1930's and I thought how far we have come because that's my granddad who worked just down the road here and here is his granddaughter sitting in the dean's office. I think that's amazing.
DR. MALKA	I think that's a beautiful story. Whilst we're on that point of self-reflection; can you tell us a bit more about your personal journey, on some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up that made you who you are today?
PROF RONNIE	Ja I think, I suppose don't they always revolve around people? So I'd have to say my high school principal, he's still alive, who said to me that he thought I was a very creative young lady in the broadest sense of the word. I was quite outspoken and did many things at school while trying to kind of learn I suppose, but possibly learn a different way. So I think he had an incredible impact on me, he was a fascinating man who I suppose in common with my dad had very high expectations and those high expectations aren't a bad thing, I think, they allow you to say well I must try harder and I must do something else to get there. So not sort of you know in achieving academically but in being all that you could be, so that for me was a key thing. In terms of other people in my life and particularly women, I'd have to say my aunt Jocelyn, she was the...I think she was the first woman of colour to get a BA degree; she then became a teacher and she was the principal of a primary school and she was incredible. Such exacting standards, truly, that she role modelled for her staff and at the

	<p>time I would say that her staff possibly consisted of three men and the rest were all women because they wanted to work with this outstanding person who was just...had such drive and mmm,..I think the other person must definitely be my sister; she's my younger sister and I only have one but she's the younger one and she's been so absolutely committed. She works in the public sector and is an economist and is someone who has the highest level of integrity and ethics and it's just wonderful to see how in fact one can hold one's own despite anything that happens around one and she's someone who makes me think there are so many really good public servants out there. We don't pay enough attention to them, mainly because well the media is occupied with stories of doom and gloom. So those have been like really fascinating people in my life and then just as an aside and I suppose quite humorously I often credit my husband as being the person who made me into a gentle feminist because he's someone who worked in the Trade Union Movement for over 25 years....</p>
DR. MALKA	...wow....
PROF RONNIE	<p>...and not only was he fighting for, you know, workers rights, he's very, very committed to women's rights and so from the beginning of our relationship and we've been together for a number of decades now, he was always gently chiding me and saying listen to what you're saying, you're actually entrenching your position there, you need to be a bit more, you know, forceful around that and it was interesting because it was discussion between the two of us rather than discussion between me and someone else. So I've been, ja, I think I've had so many gentle and perhaps not so gentle people around me who really showed me what is possible and I really can only hope that I do that for other women that I meet.</p>
DR. MALKA	And they all sound like they've got integrity, great values; they do things with a sense of good moral fibre in their execution.
PROF RONNIE	<p>Ja, I think that's spot on. You need to...you need to live up to the values that you espouse; I think that's absolutely crucial for me. Don't...or let me rephrase that...you need to align your behaviour with the things that you're saying because most of us are judged on what we do rather than what we say. So that's how one must really live one's life; you have a set of values that you need to live up to.</p>
DR. MALKA	And lastly, as we close the conversation today, could you please 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 RONNIE	<p>Yes, I'd have to say don't wait to be discovered, please take responsibility for your own career. No-one's coming to find you. You have to stand up, show all that you're capable of and grab your opportunities with both hands.</p>
DR. MALKA	Great words; love that "don't wait to be discovered." Fantastic, thank you so much for joining us, it's been an absolute pleasure having you on the show.
PROF RONNIE	<p>Thank you so much Doctor, it's been lovely talking to you and hopefully people who are listening to us have...some ideas have been sparked in their minds too.</p>
DR. MALKA	Indeed, I hope so.
<b>PROGRAMME END</b>	