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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: GENERAL RIAH PHIYEGA – CEO OF SAFE SOUTH AFRICA FOUNDATION

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 a familiar face; General Riah Phiyega who was the former National Commissioner of the South African Police Services and the first and only woman, thus far, to have held this position. Her career portfolio has encompassed multiple executive roles including work with ABSA Bank, Transnet; she served in the capacity as chairperson for several entities, namely the Presidential State Owned Enterprise Review Committee, The Road Traffic Management Corporation, as well as the National Welfare National Forum and she is actively involved in women's empowerment. She's a member of the International Women's Forum of South Africa and currently serves as CEO of Safe South Africa Foundation. Welcome to the show!
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Good morning my dear sister Dr. Amaleya and thank you so much for hosting me and greetings to all the listeners.
DR. MALKA	It's so good to see you and I think it's been five years since you were last on the programme.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Time flies isn't it?
DR. MALKA	Absolutely!
GENERAL PHIYEGA	You know when I replayed the podcast of the interview that we had and I looked at the picture and I was still looking young and a little bit slimmer; now I see, you know, a little bit more tyres around my waist and I'm clamouring for that beautiful figure that I had then, but it was a beautiful show and congratulations on keeping the fires burning and getting women talking.
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much! Having worked in the police and security sector you've witnessed first-hand the pervasiveness of crime in South Africa and the factors that contribute to criminality; you now serve as CEO of the Safer South Africa Foundation which was founded in 2012, so eight years young, whose mission is to build safe, confident and empowered communities through a community based approach with a really strong emphasis on youth. Firstly, can you tell us more about the foundation itself?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Okay. Thank you for the opportunity to explain the foundation, as you have put it, it started at the 2011 Congress of POPCRU (The Police Prisons and Civil Rights Union), they took a resolution to establish a foundation and it was informed by the fact that as a union they are serving their members in the police service, their members in the traffic departments, their members in the prisons, but the civil rights part of it is about communities and then you get a vehicle that will bring that to life. Civil rights; communities being involved around via sector; the area that they were involved and they needed to...the resolution was aimed at mobilising communities....
DR. MALKA	...and if we consider their sector, they are entrenched in communities across the country.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Completely, and basically the primary tenet is that "safety begins in the community", not just in the area where the police are and everything and if

	<p>you...if I can quickly say, if you take the continuum of crime and its management and you start saying there is a proactive side and a reactive side; most of the work that is being done by the police, the NPA, the courts, the prisons and everybody, it is when somebody has crossed the rubicon. Somebody has committed a crime and that person is now going to be processed by the police, by the NPA, by the courts, by the prisons and then there will be rehabilitation, so the big question is do we have to wait until these young people cross the rubicon? There is room for a proactive intervention which talks to prevention, which talks to communities coming on board and playing a role and the philosophy is also around the fact that these children are not born criminals. At some point certain things happen in their life that introduces them to the criminal violence, bully-type environment, which means somebody else intervened; recruited them and that is negative intervention and our argument is shouldn't we be competing at that level, as a society, coming in with positive injection and what is that positive injection? It is the work that we are doing as Safer South Africa Foundation because we go out there and we say to children crime does not pay and after all as a child you are a citizen and you also have a role to play, so get to understand this space of crime.</p>
DR. MALKA	And you're the next generation.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Precisely and investing in them is investing in the future. So by bringing them into the programme that we are running, the community and justice programme that we give to schools, we bring the very security cluster people; the police, the traffic, the NPA officials, the magistrates, the prisons authorities, Human Rights Commission, the banks have joined in....
DR. MALKA	...that sounds like it's the entire criminal justice stakeholder value chain.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Absolutely, we create a platform and they come and the children have an opportunity to now interact with the police, through that session they are able to know that oh, it's not just about them arresting people; I can work with them, I can assist them. When the traffic officers come they realise that it's not just about giving tickets, it's about road safety, it's about by-law enforcement and I can work with them and I can be an ambassador of the space in which they are playing. The NPA people would come and say in this value chain don't just see as the...this is what we are doing, help us preserve the crime scene; become the witness, inform us, because you are a responsible citizen too, you can help us to fight crime and then they have an opportunity of meeting the magistrate to understand how a court functions. We even, on a completely different day, take them to court to spend a day in court, to experience how a court functions and the courts are very kind in most instances, they bring juvenile cases there, then they are able to see that that's not the space I want to be in. I have choices and I can make better choices with my life.
DR. MALKA	So I would imagine apart from seeing let's say the view of the proactive and the reactive perspectives, that they're also having an opportunity of potentially seeing careers in this space.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Completely. It's also another output that we get there because suddenly they realise that in the police by the way, oh it's not just cops that are in there, there are lawyers, there are doctors, there are nurses, there are psychologists, there are teachers, so it's a.....forensic sciences, so they are able to see that oh there's so much there I can do. There are accountants in the intelligence environment and all those things, so it's a whole career expose and it's got massive longitudinal benefits because we are investing, as you were saying earlier on, in the future.

DR. MALKA	Well this programme is certainly going to have demand listening to everything that you're saying, from seeing the successes and being able to keep making those interventions so the kids choose the right path.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Very important, we want to participate in fighting for safety in our communities.
DR. MALKA	But the Safe South Africa Foundation and the work that you're doing through the foundation seem to have a tremendously positive impact in the long-term view of the country. One of the things though that I feel it's important to raise and particularly given your experience and the work that you're doing, is we had a conversation last week with the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure and the topic of the safety of women kept coming up, whether it was in the workplace, whether it was in the home environment, whether it was public transport; the safety of women was and is a real concern and I reflect on some of the sexual crime statistics that have been committed against women. In the last ten years, looking at figures from the South African Police Service, there have been 584,000 sexual offences; at the end of last year we had a number of different protests raising awareness of gender-based violence, femicide and rape and whilst these campaigns are really important from an awareness point of view, they've got to lead to some kind of action because the reality is that we all know about this, but how are we going to stop it.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Look, I think first and foremost, let's commend the women who are rising to raise awareness to say hear our voice, we are not safe, hear our voice there is too much...we are enduring too much violence, this gender-based violence is a pandemic. So, that we must celebrate, that at least women are standing up and it looks like there is some bit of listening that is emerging. If I look at the response by the President and asking the departments to set aside resources to have programmes to participate and assist in these gender-based violence issues, but is it sufficient; I agree with you, that on its own can't be sufficient. We need to start seeing very serious practical programmes emerging, I mean, whether it is increasing the Thuthuzela centres, whether it is ensuring that there is much bolder responses from the social development department and social workers in rural areas and in areas where this is happening; it is a very serious problem.
DR. MALKA	We spoke a lot about communities in the first sector of the show, what do you think about the role of communities? If we're seeing this as interventions in criminal elements as a proactive point of view; do you think that that's in part a solution to almost re-programme and rewire people's thinking?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Very, very important, I was going to come to that to say again, I take all those issues that we are talking about as being largely reactive.
DR. MALKA	Yes.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	When you start talking community, we are starting to say how do we start structuring very solid programmes that brings us into prevention? One of the things, for instance, in Safer South Africa that we are now working on, we are talking with a few civil society organisations to say we need to add to our programme a gender-based violence module from a prevention point of view and I agree with you, we need a rewiring, we need a reconditioning. Who are these abusers? Are they not coming from homes that are led by us as women, as mothers? Is it an indictment on us to say what is it that we are teaching our children and I'm now being just women specific; I'm not going, you know, men should also be on board...yes...
DR. MALKA	...yes, but this is what crosses my mind constantly, that we have got so many single parent families and the single parent is the woman.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	And the husband I have that abuses me was nurtured and brought up from a family. Are we failing our children as families and I think also in the prevention arena I'm saying first; let's talk the family. Let's move and start

	saying if this is such a serious problem and we talk about life skills in our schools; why is it not sitting as a subject that teaches our children to say there is a peaceful way of coexistence, a way of engaging each other, because we're sitting here also with, you know, what shall I say, some underlying frustration on transformation processes that we are going through. I mean, whether you take it from Beijing 25 years ago where the women are saying our voices can no longer be kept...we also demand space in doing what we are doing, I mean, you were just saying when you were introducing me here that the first woman; why should it be the first woman, you know, when we are in a majority in this country? Why isn't it just natural that when we are looking for a president for this country women can equally participate. When we start talking about a woman president it becomes a brouhaha as if it's something that requires, you know, a permit from God for a woman to do this, so those are the things that we need to change.
DR. MALKA	And the problem I have on that, with the brouhaha of a woman president, is that it's not just men, it's women.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	That's the point and that's why you are saying the rewiring, where I think something else at the formative stages is not happening and we, you know, when I grew up looking at those women in the rural areas and where I come from, I come from the Sepedi, I used to hear those women greeting each other and it is a greeting that is between a woman and a woman; no man can greet me like that and they would say "Bashumi"...bashumi means those who work hard and they would respond and at that time they are busy tilling the field, they are carrying water from the river, they are carrying wood and we would hear them saying "bashumi", greeting each other and the one will respond and say "Kibona" which means "indeed, we are the hard working women". So that affirmation is there. We recognise that we are very important and we do things and I remember another concept, you know, when I was growing up, there was something called Letsema; I see the politicians are picking it up, that's calledlet's work together, come and work with me to till my field, to de-weed it, tomorrow we move to...it's almost like a stokvel of helping each other. So, you could see that these are organised people around their own survival and recognising the importance in affirming each other. So the issue we are raising to say it's not only men, but it's also women, so I think we need to just rewire ourselves and start saying what are we missing around us affirming ourselves and celebrating us and know that we can. Know that we can.
DR. MALKA	And when I reflect back to our previous conversation, I remember that your household was very feminine, it was all girls....
GENERAL PHIYEGA	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...and listening to you and in that conversation and as you, you know, you've developed your career, I imagine that the ethos there was very much about being capable, being independent and I also vividly remember you saying this and I hope that I quote it right, was that you'd said that invariably in leadership roles or work roles women are compared to men, but we can never be a second...rather you said you can never be a second-rate man...
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Absolutely.
DR. MALKA	I'm going to be a first-rate woman.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Yes, do it the woman way. You know, I will tell you, when I got to the police service, the attitude I picked up was that okay, now that you are here to lead us, we will give you permission to lead us, but our way. It's silent, it's not overt....
DR. MALKA	And that's the challenge that women are always....

GENERAL PHIYEGA	...and you can feel it....
DR. MALKA	confronted with culture, with patriarchy, with religion; all of these other dynamics on top of the job that they are hired to do.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Precisely and then what must come out of you as a woman leader is to say no, I hear you, but I'm here and I'm not going to be a deputy you. I am going to be me and I can only be my best person if I unleash the best qualities that I have; there is nothing wrong in compassion, it will still get the results that somebody else who bosses and bullies people there, it will even get better results because people would fill an open platform to express themselves and to be able to, you know, afford to be weak and be supported and be strengthened. So this toxic masculinity is nothing we must pick lessons for, we must be our best selves and I would say that's number one, number two; because of all these structural inhibitions you find in the spaces we find ourselves as women, whether in the boards within the workplace or wherever, you cannot do without a good measure of stubbornness with on steroids, because you need to be stubbornly you. A good measure of stubborn resolve as a leader, as a woman.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to General Riah Phiyega who is the CEO of Safe South Africa Foundation. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomaniTalk.
DR. MALKA	We've spoken about stubborn resolve, but how else do you think we can strengthen women's leadership capabilities?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Let me add something else. The one thing that is going to take you further is ethical leadership and your integrity measures because once you have that, you know, it's the strongest currency, the strongest currency you can ever have as a person. They will try you this way and that way, but that currency you will remain standing because of all these currents where you are being tested as a woman. Let me come to that question that you've asked me; I think that Letsema that I told you about, working together, networking, supporting each other, handholding, making sure that we create a pipeline of similar leaders. When I live where I live I must be looking at five, ten, six women to say we are ready; I've shared with them my experiences, they are stronger and they are able to tackle the challenges that are there and I think most of these women organisations we must not shy away from our feminist womanly self and we must teach each other, hold each other and not shut up; the voices must be out and higher and where we have failed, where we have had traps, where we have...let's open up and share to say these are the lessons I have learned when I was there, it was difficult and these were the difficulties, this is what I tried to do to achieve and the journey, I mean, to achieve, again, we achieved because we learned from others. Those stories...we must talk and share and we must have role models and we are able to say if she did it, because that for me is pathfinding and we are saying...and for me pathfinding says I may have gone to the police and had my own challenges, but what I know is that you are a little girl who saw me, who knew about me, knows that it is possible to be that. The young little girl who saw Phumzile Mlambo being a deputy president knows that uhuh, it is possible, there is a pathfinder, we've seen somebody do it, so we must do that, celebrate and make sure that when they look at it, it is not something that doesn't imbue confidence in them; it's something that says go for it.
DR. MALKA	But they identify with....
GENERAL PHIYEGA	...walk the journey....

DR. MALKA	Letsema, I think is a wonderful expression and if I look towards government for the moment; we want parity in terms of the percentage of...we're 50/50 in cabinet, so government seems to have got it right, but, when I look towards the private sector it's a completely different scenario, it's chalk and cheese. How do we improve that picture?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Shew! Look, I think there's a lot of work that we have to do and it is time now that we who are suffering, the women, you know Martin Luther King said "you cannot expect your oppressor to deliver freedom to you" so we as women, because these are statistics that affect us; we must stand up and make our voices heard and make noise and reclaim this space. The legislation is there, the policies are there, why the regression? So, we must come up and say what has happened and if quotas must be, let's go quotas and the women...the Ministry of Women must have a woman development index, release a report each year on this index...consolidate them, whether it's the EE Report, whether it is the JSE report, so that the nation should know....
DR. MALKA	...and the numbers are all there....
GENERAL PHIYEGA	...the numbers are there, and we make noise about it; they have the platform, they are in the presidency, they must stand up and start saying it's not happening for women. So, I think we must start being very serious and monitoring, tracking, evaluation and start looking at consequences to say if you are not doing it, what are the consequences. So, all of them, whether it's school principals, whether it's management of hospitals, whether it's universities, whether it's the police services, whether it is the JSE; we must actively and consciously manage and track women inclusion.
DR. MALKA	It seems to be a constant battle and if you don't have the representation, you don't have the role-modelling, you don't have the pathfinders for the path followers to come in behind them; but it's something that requires constant, constant attention.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to General Riah Phiyega who is the CEO of Safe South Africa Foundation. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	I know that one of the other areas that you are part of is the...well you're a member of the South African Chapter on the International Women's Forum, which aims to advance women's leadership across their careers, cultures and continents. There was recently a session with the President; can you share any of the highlights from that conversation?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	I think as the IWF will say that meeting was important to us, just to be allowed to sit around the table with the President and some of his very important ministers; the Minister of Women and Disabilities was there, the Minister of Social Development was there and that for us was very important because we are offering to the president that you don't have to, with your cabinet, to run this journey alone, we are offering ourselves as women, to bring to the table intellectual inputs, to bring to the table our hands, our feet and our ideas to help all other role players that are sitting around the table of making a difference to the issues of women. So, we were offering ourselves to say as a voice of women in this country, we want to join other voices and we are volunteering, we are declaring that we are there. We want to be with you as you embark upon the process of developing women leadership in this country, we want to be there when strategic and concerning issues are being handled; gender-based violence, this whole issue of misrepresentation...underrepresentation of women in various sectors.
DR. MALKA	But this forum is a group of South Africa's top women, it's not your average, ordinary level benchmark, these are the women who are sitting at the top of their game in their respective fields.

GENERAL PHIYEGA	Precisely, and this is why we were saying, I mean, we had people like Maria Ramos there, talking about the economy. We had people like Dr. Judy Dlamini talking about gender-based violence and to tell some of the type of initiatives; we had people like Ramano from...who was the CFO at PPC, we were saying to the president can we talk about this job creation and all that. It's not a male conversation, it is equally our conversation, we have inputs to make and we are willing to be there, to be counted, so we are an organised and structured formation and there are other organised and structured organisations of women we want to be around the table; not as second hand reference but as first-hand reference engagements, we have contributions to make.
DR. MALKA	And outside of this initiative I know that the IWFSA also has a vision of being able to groom the next generation of female leaders....
GENERAL PHIYEGA	...precisely....
DR. MALKA	...can you share with us a little bit of that?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	That's a big thing for us because leadership is, you know, is one of the strategic pillars that are sitting in the strategy of IWFSA to look at supporting the current leadership, enriching that, but at the same time a very important focus for us in the strategy is building a pipeline of future leadership because those women have collectively have massive experience in tilling this journey of women leadership. So, we're trying to leverage that experience and giving, you know, making sure that we can enrich the pipeline of young women who are now taking the baton from us.
DR. MALKA	So investing back into....
GENERAL PHIYEGA	...precisely....
DR. MALKA	...into the next generation of female leaders.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Yes, you know in Sepedi was an idiom to say (and I'll explain it) they say [language 0:32:13.7] remember in those olden days we had traditional healers and they used bones to diagnose what was wrong with you, so that idiom says that signs is not written so the best thing for you as a traditional healer, teach it to your children so that when you die, you don't leave with the wisdom. So that's precisely that pipeline to say we have been there as pathfinders, most of us in that group, so share the experiences and they can improve on them, they can learn from them and we can say to ourselves when we depart that the baton that we gave, we gave to strong hands and women who are strong footed, who are able to take the course forward.
DR. MALKA	Talking about sharing learnings, we're coming towards the end of the programme now, what would you say has been the best lesson or lessons that you've learned in your career?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Many lessons, but I think let me put it this way, first and foremost I just want to say I was lucky to be where I have been and it wasn't of me; it was because others came to the party and I want to say that my father was the first feminist I met, male feminist I met.
DR. MALKA	I don't think he had a choice.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Because we were all girls.
DR. MALKA	Exactly.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	The second male feminist that gave me support throughout my life, over...I've told you about my grandmother, I've told you about the women around that I met, but the husband I married; people keep asking me are you married and I said yes and they say how does this husband cope with you and I say he is my cheerleader, he is the second feminist I met, because I saw a man who was not frightened by a woman who is developing. He

	<p>carried on with his own development and cheered us and I see that in my daughters. So that for me, I will always cherish, to say I was lucky to have a father who said be the best that you can be and do not try and be me as your father. I was very lucky to have, you know, when we were growing up my grandmother became widowed at a very early age and I saw her stand up and take care of the family and all her children were graduates those years and I said to myself wow, this woman, and she knew what she was...she was a community leader, she was everything and she was a hard worker and then my mother, brave, bulls by the horn and I looked at...as I told you the last time I saw her at a time when it was not fashionable, she was already a principal of a high school and she would share that the male teachers are giving her serious trouble. I remember her coming home one day saying one of them said to her she's very ugly and I said it's not about your ugliness ma, are you comfortable with yourself? Don't even listen to him, just go and be the principal and tell him what to do and demand from him and that's the type of person she was and just that resilience, the strength, the focus, keep on walking attitude has carried me through many, many difficult circumstances. I disallow anybody to define me. I define myself. You can say what you say, I hear the noise and I say that's noise and I go in and I find me and I'm saying I'm on it and I am unapologetic. I am a woman, I am a feminist, I am a womanist and I can as much as he can.</p>
DR. MALKA	Being your true authentic self.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Absolutely.
DR. MALKA	And lastly, as we close out the conversation today, could you share a few words of wisdom or inspiration that you'd like to impart to ladies that are listening to us on the continent?
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Let me shift to the work that I am doing currently, as I empty my hands. We deserve a safe, a secure, a peaceful space in whatever country you are, but I also want to say it's not going to be delivered like manna from heaven. Me and you as a woman have a fundamental role to play; let's teach our children good values of love, caring, respect for each other, concern for each other and by so doing we will be imparting peace education to our children and we'll be contributing massively towards reducing all these things that are making us uncomfortable in life, in schools, where we live we meet crime, there is rape, there is abuse, there is everything. I do believe that we have some contribution to make, it's not us alone, but we have some significant contribution to make. Look at your child and ask yourself; do I like to be the child that I have, if not, go back to the drawing board and see if there is anything you can do to also partly contribute. We deserve to be safe and we can contribute to a better society.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much, it's been wonderful to see you again and to hear about the new developments that you're working on and still hear the passion that you have for empowering women.
GENERAL PHIYEGA	Thank you very much and I wish you well with all this. Let's build a safer world.
DR. MALKA	I couldn't think of more apt words to end today's show on.
	PROGRAMME END