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GUEST NAME: LANA MARKS – AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO SOUTH AFRICA

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 on the telephone line is Ambassador Marks who is the Ambassador of the United States of America to South Africa. She recently took up this position in October 2019. Welcome to the show Ambassador!
AMBASSADOR MARKS	Thank you so much it's an honour and a pleasure to be with you today.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador Marks you have almost done a three sixty degree turn, you were born in East London, South Africa, and now you're representing the United States of America as Ambassador to South Africa; please can you share with us some of the landmarks in your journey thus far?
AMBASSADOR MARKS	It was extraordinary being born in East London, South Africa, my father had escaped from Lithuania, from the anti-Semitism in Lithuania and fortunately with blonde hair and blue eyes, had the opportunity as a young boy, to settle in South Africa. He did engineering, was a developer and settled in East London with my mom and I had a wonderful childhood and my mom always pushed me in the most loving way to attain any achievement that I was capable of, whether it was academics at school and I remember in junior school she had me doing a tremendous amount of homework every day, surging ahead, skipping two grades in junior school, whether it's pushing me tremendously at tennis so that ultimately I would earn two medals for the United States in tennis at the Maccabiah games in Israel or if it was in my business career, my mom and dad would push me in that, my dad would take me on buildings, he was building, my mom explained to me all the business principles and I think I had quite an exceptional childhood in the sense of a loving family and then pushing me to the max to achieve what I could. When I was fortunate to meet my husband and leave South Africa in May of 1976, at a pivotal time in South Africa, very fortunate to leave at that time to have this opportunity with my extraordinary husband and then go briefly to Bermuda and then my husband was offered a professorship in Miami, I then was able at that time to start a business from scratch, from my kitchen table and develop it into forty-three department stores and then a global brand. In the interim I was fortunate, besides my mom having been such a role model and a mentor and an encouraging person to me, in Bermuda I met and became friends with another extraordinary woman, Dame Lois Browne-Evans, she was the first black woman admitted to the bar and women in Bermuda as a lawyer and she was also the ultra-liberal leader of the opposition party and I feel absolutely blessed to call myself her friend at that time, one of the most extraordinary women and we had many lengthy conversations and she was also pivotal in my life at that time. During the time that I was developing my business I was also very, very fortunate to travel to a hundred and ten countries, just in the last fifteen years, interface with heads of state, leaders, extraordinary people all over the world, business leaders, royalty, all over

	<p>the world and then also after that I became very close friends with another extremely extraordinary woman, Princess Diana, and in the year and a half that we were very close friends prior to her passing away, we shared many, many very lengthy conversations and this was another pivotal time in my life to have shared such an extraordinary friendship with such an extraordinary woman. During this time of developing my business I was so grateful that President Trump could in fact see the business acumen in me, the meticulous attention to detail, the hands-on diligence that I have always...that is part of my DNA, which combined with my intimate knowledge of South Africa, he asked if I would become the US Ambassador to South Africa. In the short time that I have been here I want to mention four other women as well; I also feel blessed to have spent time with Tshepo Motsepe, the wife of President Ramaphosa, she also...we spent some time together and she is one of the most extraordinary women that I have ever met and she has had a profound effect on me in the short time that I have been in South Africa and then also another woman Precious Motsepe, who has just become the Chancellor Cape Town University, another absolutely extraordinary woman in South Africa who I feel very fortunate to call a friend and also we've had many conversations and another very extraordinary woman in my life. Two other women I would like to also list that have had profound influences and that is Melania Trump and Ivanka Trump, I feel very blessed to know them over some period of time, both of them being incredibly strong women and smart and encompass everything as role models for women globally. So, you know, I fast forwarded, very quickly, in my life just some of the highlights.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>That is a wonderful encapsulation in a very short space of time, giving us a quick run-through, it almost reminds me of a conversation that we had with the former president of Mauritius where she said she is kind of now living her fourth life, because you've had the success within the athletic space with tennis, you have had your industrious career, which I certainly want to touch on more when we focus on the entrepreneurial and business side of things and now moving into the diplomatic space and absolutely agree in terms of the four ladies that you mentioned, both First Lady Motsepe and also Precious Motsepe, her sister-in-law are both doctors and have really achieved in the higher space. If we could look for a moment at the role that you are working on now as the United States of America's Ambassador to South Africa, what would you consider are some of your greatest challenges?</p>
<p>AMBASSADOR MARKS</p>	<p>There are not enough hours in a day is my greatest challenge at the moment. I see so much opportunity in this great land, together with the magnificent United States that quite frankly with all my engagements with many of the ministers and director generals in the different departments in South Africa, I see this as a pivotal time in our excellent bilateral relationship and with President Ramaphosa at the helm, it is a different time for South Africa, a positive time between our two countries in so many aspects, even though we've always had an excellent bilateral relationship, it's stayed pretty much the same, we have had six hundred companies here, we've had many, many programmes, but I see this as a very pivotal time and have had excellent meetings with many of the ministers, discussing many opportunities between our two great democratic nations and really not enough hours in the day, 24/7, 365 working days, week-ends, to achieve all of these tremendous opportunities between our countries as quickly as possible with enormous diligence and being very hands-on. So, time restraints is the factor.</p>

DR. MALKA	If only there was a way that we could multiply or clone ourselves to be more effective.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Ambassador Marks who is the Ambassador of the United States of America to South Africa. In the previous section of the show Ambassador Marks shared a few of the landmarks in her career, traversing from South Africa through to American, touching from her athletic developments as well as her entrepreneurial developments in the evolution of her global brand and moving more towards her present career in the diplomatic space. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKS	Ambassador Marks, increasingly we function in a globally connected society with America connected, South Africa connected and we've got all of these different projects; could you share with us a few of the details on some of the more significant projects that you are working on, I know for instance there's the Dreams project, there's the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs and Technology?
AMBASSADOR MARKS	Those are two very important projects for us, through our public affairs we have many, many programmes for women and some of this culminates in our American corners which we have established throughout the country and I strongly urge young women to visit these American corners because the opportunities are exponential in every aspect, entrepreneurial, educational and they are in touch with all the programmes that we offer in twenty-eight of our departments within our mission. I would strongly urge that there is no cost, there is no fee, it's just a matter of visiting and interfacing with the folks there.
DR. MALKA	Super, and one of the things that I was really interested in learning more about and you briefly touched on it in the introduction when you said that you started your own brand, that you were eventually placed in forty-three different department stores, evolving into a global brand and the brand being Lana Marks, a fashion brand, starting in 1987. Financial freedom has always been a core part, I believe, of women's empowerment; can you share some of your business philosophies for women, for success?
AMBASSADOR MARKS	Yes indeed. First of all, as a young woman you will know what you excel at and believe in yourself, trust what your intuition tells you, what your skill set is and move in that direction, don't let anybody else tell you differently. Figure out what niche you are going to enter whether it's a small entrepreneurial, independent, individual business or whether you are going to join a large corporation and work your way up the corporate ladder. Diligence and trust in yourself is imperative and also it's difficult because you have to delicately navigate your way through many, many minefields along the way and you have to go through good times, you have to go through very bad times and if you encounter obstacles, don't have that as a final roadblock and think it is all over, figure out the way to get round that roadblock, there are solutions and there are always roadblocks in the road ahead in one attaining success. So, there is always roadblocks, there's always obstacles to overcome and just figure out the way to overcome them, go in a different direction. I have had tremendous, tremendous obstacles and tremendous roadblocks in every aspect of my career whether it is in the sporting arena, whether it was in the business arena and now in the diplomatic arena and just be absolutely persistent and diligent and another thing would be to always show by example; don't talk the talk, walk the walk. So, always show by example; if you want to succeed and you want to accelerate your career just do what you have to do, don't talk about it, do it and whether it's working long hours to achieve goals for a project you are working on, whether you want to develop some aspect of

	<p>entrepreneurial skill, whether it's in marketing, operations, supply chain, the international arena, negotiation, being detail oriented; always think of the bottom line, always envisage the finishing line and in any of these arena's, even if you have to establish experience and you start off without experience, establish that experience, listen, learn and head towards the finishing line always.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>I think that's such a wonderfully positive and motivational attitude that you possess and it has certainly stood in your stead and benefitted you throughout the different points of success that you have had. We can hear that you are an advocate of women's empowerment and when I looked at your bio you have serviced on Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government for Women's Leadership Board, as well as being a distinguished speaker at Georgetown University's Women Leadership Initiative, you've represented the United States on two occasions for the Women Business Leadership Summit in Helsinki and you are also a supporting member of the Council of Women World Leaders. What would you say have been some of your key learnings with respect to giving back to women to help accelerate their development?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>In all of these arenas what has been outstanding is interfacing with women with great diverse careers and even last night I had a group chat meeting with my group of women that I have kept in touch with from my Harvard Board and one of them chairs the Girl's Scouts of America, another of them is in one of the most innovative business careers with olives from trees, a specific type of oil that is only indigenous to the United States and Australia, another of them was very high up in the foreign services, just retired. The diversity of careers and being able to interface with such extraordinary women at the Harvard Board and also being involved with the Council of Women World Leaders and seeing all the skills and similar skills required by many of the women leaders of the world has been so inspirational to me and has led me to always involve women in three of my absolute strong goals for South Africa.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>One of the things I find for women like yourself and many of the other prominent people that we interview is that you've made it, you've got to your level, but do you feel that enough of the knowledge and the wisdom that you have as a collective, is being imparted to younger women so that they almost don't have to walk the journey and the paths that we have all undertaken, that their route can become a little bit easier to navigate?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Yes, that's an excellent question and very, very relevant in today's world because I think as women we are under-represented globally, whether it's Corporate America, whether it's women leaders, whether it's young entrepreneurship, in every aspect, and that's one of the reasons I am working on a women's empowerment summit between the United States and South Africa. We were going to host this in June this year but now it is postponed for next year, but I am working hand-in-hand with Precious Motsepe to interface with an extraordinary women's empowerment summit, taking extraordinary women of the United States, partnering with extraordinary women of South Africa, we are going to hold this next year in South Africa and then we are going to invite many university students and this is Precious Motsepe's idea, many top young university students women and many women that are even younger than that, to interface both with inspirational women of South Africa and then also inspirational women of the United States and we don't just anticipate this as a two or three day summit, we are planning to have very many ongoing programmes of mentoring for young women of South Africa and I think this will address many of the obstacles and many of the question marks that I personally had</p>

	<p>to go through and you know, everything that I have done in my life I have done without contacts and connections or family members there to put it in place for me, I've had to achieve everything myself. I've had the blessing of my husband and my children, just incredibly blessed in my family, but I have had to achieve all of these things myself through experience and hard work and determination and I feel that it's a pivotal time again for women globally, not just in South Africa but globally, to really make a career ahead and I think the world is much more open now to women leadership and so this is a really great time to be hosting a summit between the United States and South Africa next year within South Africa.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>That is going to be such an incredibly valuable summit with wisdom and knowledge, being able to traverse across continents, but also to be disseminated to the people who need it most so that, as you said, you know, you did it yourself, you walked the trenches and if we can make that journey a little bit easier for the next generation, I think that's a contribution that the previous generation could make life easier for them. Staying for a moment on women in leadership and looking towards some of those strengths, obviously the Covid-19 Pandemic has impacted the entire world and unfortunately the effects that we see now will have really long-term consequences. Some countries are managing the spread more effectively than others and recently I came across an article which highlighted New Zealand, Finland, Germany and Taiwan on their responses to the Corona crises and interestingly, these four countries are all led by women, like Jacinda Ardern, Sanna Marin, Angela Merkle and Tsai Ing-wen. Feminine management characteristics like collaboration, transparency, empathy and delegation were credited for creating a safe base that contributed to their success; please will you share some of your views on women in leadership at really the highest level?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Yes and I think each of these women that you mention in addition to other women in leadership that I have encountered at my Harvard board or in other places around the world, have all had a tough time to get to the very top and they have displayed incredible ambition, resilience, tenacity and obviously smart women and they have shown tremendous leadership and one of the tremendous aspects is being very hands-on and very detail oriented in following through on things and I think that is a characteristic unique to women and in this very difficult Covid-19 environment we are in, we also have some terrific women in South Africa, [health attache] PEPFAR coordinator and then also Ambassador Birx who is head of the head of the PEPFAR programme in South Africa, who has emerged as a world leader for the Whitehouse on Covid-19. So again, these are women who are at the pinnacle of their careers and have put in tremendous hard work, tenacity, resilience and very detailed-oriented.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Ambassador Marks, we collectively in our conversation this morning, highlighted women and named them specifically, but why is it that we are not seeing more women come through. When I was looking at the research, there is an estimate that there is approximately just 7% of women occupying higher levels of leadership. We have these characteristics, we have these strengths, we are seeing the success of women leaders in terms of the effect that they have on whether it is their nations, whether it is their companies, but why or rather what can we do to try to get more women into the top level of the hierarchies?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Yes, thank you so much for highlighting this, you know, even in the United States where women have tremendous opportunities it's still a very low ratio in terms of Corporate America, leadership in terms of government leadership, in terms of many aspects of leadership and I think, you know, in the past women always led a traditional role, that was as the homemaker,</p>

	<p>raising the children, etc., and we are now at a pivotal time. The equation is not correct, I totally agree with you, 7% globally is a pretty abysmal number, but I do think we are at a pivotal time and for many women that I have encountered across this wonderful land South Africa, women are now emerging out of this cocoon of being the sole homemaker person who raises the children and are now being exposed to another life, one of education, one of entrepreneurship, one of leadership and I think the whole world is changing at this time and that's why I just feel it's a pivotal time and whatever we can do to assist the younger generation is incredibly important, you know, for people such as myself in my position, which I am blessed to be in and thanks to President Trump, and then also to other women in leadership positions throughout the world, not just in South Africa and the United States, but throughout the world so that we can mentor and always be cognizant of the younger generation who now will have this tremendous opportunity perhaps that our mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers perhaps didn't have in the past.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>I like what you are saying on how we're paving the way for the future, the next generation that comes ahead so that everybody's life successively becomes better than the previous generation. Ambassador Marks, turning towards more of a personal perspective and you highlighted some of your achievements earlier on in our conversation, one question that I would like to ask you is about some of the factors that you consider have been attributes towards your success. Some people speak about their upbringing, others talk about perseverance, one person spoke about the fear of failure and I know that you've touched on trust and diligence; could you share with us what have been some of your key drivers to success?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>I think in addition to trusting myself in having the ability to push forwards, I think the enormous diligence but one aspect that I haven't touched on yet, which is incredibly important, is communication. Whether one is communicating with academic mentors, whether one is communicating with entrepreneurial mentors, whether one is communicating with one's own mother, with business leaders, with people at the American corners; wherever it is, if one does not communicate constantly in all aspects, then one in my humble estimation, won't achieve the pinnacle of what is possible. So whether one is communicating with a minister about a certain idea which could be pivotal for South Africa or one is communicating with folks within our mission to achieve this in a particular way or whether one is communicating with the folks in Washington, ongoing communication incorporating all aspects is incredibly important. I would say that you can't assume that somebody knows what you are thinking, knows your abilities, knows your diligence and knows your hard work; you sometimes in the most correct manner have to articulate all of these in communication at the right time. So I would say ongoing communication, whether it's with somebody within your family, whether it's with the president of your country, whoever it is that is within your horizon, it's really, really important to communicate clearly, succinctly at all levels.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Yes, until we are able to develop skills of telepathy, you are absolutely right, no-one can read people's minds yet and having the core essence of communication is vital. You mentioned Dame Lois Browne-Evans as being one of the key women in your life and having cemented a firm friendship; are there any other strong women that have had an impact on you as you've grown up through your journey?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Many, many women I have been fortunate to come into contact with whether it's in my entrepreneurial career, my business career, my sporting</p>

	<p>career and my diplomatic career, there have been so many. The ones that I have highlighted have really, really stood out in my life and I feel very blessed to have been able to interface with these extraordinary women. There are so many throughout this journey and I personally thank all those women for their incredible friendship and sincerity over a long period of time. I would say I also am fortunate to have kept up my friendships within South Africa and I particularly want to mention three women in that regard because they have been so helpful in being close friends at this time that I have taken up this ambassadorship in South Africa. So I want to mention my closest friend from junior school, [Dr. Kate Wells], we used to sit on the playground together dreaming about what we were going to do when we grew up at Sterling Primary School in East London, and she went on to get an award with the Foreign Minister of South Africa Naledi Pandor, the Living Legends Awards, so [Dr. Kate Peters] became an extraordinary woman of leadership in South Africa, receiving this award, the Living Legends Award together with Dr. Naledi...Professor Naledi Pandor a couple of years ago, so she stayed onboard, we retain a very, very close friendship and I am so grateful to that. Then the next person is Gail Wilson who was my closest girlfriend from high school at Clarendon High School in East London, a most lovely and wonderful woman and we have retained a friendship right throughout and she to this day she sends me recipe's, she's cooking and baking, she's in the Cape currently, as Dr. Wells also in the cape presently and then another woman she was Jennifer [Skoetskie] and she was my closest friend from university and she is now in Johannesburg and again I have retained a very, very close friendship with her and so having these three women as close friends in South Africa and each one has achieved tremendous success in their own arena, all being entrepreneurs, all being at the top at the top of their careers, terrific women and each one of them is just outstanding and I feel so blessed to have these three terrific South African women as friends over perhaps fifty years.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>What a beautiful set of friendships that you've managed to nurture and maintain and I think one of the key take-outs for me of the conversation today is strength of networking, strength of communications, believing in trust, trusting yourself rather and building again within this entrepreneurial network, almost I would see it as a safe zone of women where you meet, whether it's face-to-face encounters or in the world that we live in now, virtually, to reinforce ideas and that trust and confidence to deliver and build on your dreams.</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>No, no, a hundred percent, you've summed it up really, really well and you know if I may I would like to also mention one of my favourite comments by Franklin Roosevelt, in his Four Freedom speech, when he enunciated core American values that would become the foundation of post-war American Foreign Policy and guiding principles of much of the work that I do today and everyone does today and I would say that all marginalised people everywhere, including women, should experience this and they are; the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom from want and the freedom from fear, for everyone, everywhere in the world.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Very powerful message, that's going to be my new mantra for the week. And finally, as we close out our conversation today, we ware now entering June, which is youth month and incidentally when you mentioned that you left South Africa in May 1976, June obviously commemorates the 1976 uprising of the youth, so could you please share a few words of wisdom or inspiration for our young women as we go into the month of June?</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Yes. One of the pivotal things in my life was my father was friendly with Donald Woods the incredible anti-apartheid editor and when he was at our</p>

	<p>house one day and he shared the stores of Steven Biko, I think that after that my life was never the same when I heard about this incredibly terrible story from Donald Woods himself at our house and thank God in today's times young women in South Africa are not living under those times and have a most extraordinary opportunity. I understand there is unemployment, we are working on that with various projects together with South Africa and I would say with young women you have a very unusual time in South Africa where there is tremendous opportunity, whether it's in farming, whether it's in technology, whether it is in the service industry, whether it's academically, there is fantastic opportunity and if you reach out and communicate to perhaps our American corners, to any facility or programme, be persistent, avail yourselves of these opportunities because this is a very, very unique time with South Africa's history under President Ramaphosa and the incredible cabinet that has, for young South African women.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you very much, that is all about reaching out and taking hold of those opportunities; don't let go, make your dreams come true. Thank you so much for joining us Ambassador Marks, it's been a pleasure having you on our show today and for you to share your journey thus far and we look forward to hearing more of the achievements that you undertake and to be involved potentially with the Women's Empowerment Summit planned for 2021.</p>
AMBASSADOR MARKS	<p>Thank you so much indeed for giving me this amazing opportunity to share and I hope in my tenure here that I am able to give back at a level that I am capable of.</p>
DR. MALKA	PROGRAMME END