

**PROGRAM DATE: 2021/04/08**

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

**GUEST NAME: PROFESSOR HANNEKE TAKKENBURG – MANAGEMENT  
EDUCATION – ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT – ERASMUS UNIVERSITY**

<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 the Netherlands is Professor Hanneke Takkenburg who is a professor of Management Education focusing on women in business at the Rotterdam School of Management. She is Co-Executive Director of the Erasmus Centre for Women in Organisations at Rotterdam School of Management where she leads the centre's research initiatives. Welcome to the show!
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Thank you, thank you for having me.</b>
DR. MALKA	Prof Takkenburg to begin with, the Rotterdam School of Management at Erasmus University is certainly committed to readdressing gender balance or let's say imbalance, so much so that it established the Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations which delivers the research, the programmes, events, which I had the privilege of attending, mentoring, coaching as well as networks to empower women, so can you tell us firstly about the origins of the centre, how it came into being?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah, I'm delighted to do so. Well actually it was a remarkable woman who in 2015 founded the Erasmus Centre for Women in Organisations and that's my dear colleague and friend Professor Dianne Bevelander and Dianne is originally from South Africa and I met her a couple of years ago, just after she became a professor of management education as well at Rotterdam School of Management and she came into my office, I also work in the Erasmus University Medical Centre in the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery as a professor and back then I was the chair of the Erasmus Network for Women Professors and I had sent her flowers to congratulate her and in return she paid me a visit and we started talking and I guess we never stopped talking. She told me about her centre, about the observations she had made within Rotterdam School of Management, but also in business, that there is a gender imbalance and she'd been doing some research into that and she found out that basically when you look at people who collaborate within companies, that men like to collaborate with men and women like to collaborate with men and women and they also like to hang out with men and women, but when asked by Dianne who they would choose for a risky project, actually men would choose men and women would choose men and that sparked her interest in the topic of gender differences in leadership and why would women not choose other women if they were executing a risky project. So she started looking into the literature and she started digging a little bit further and then she found out that if you look at business education, if you look at leaders, they're mostly displayed in the form of men and especially in the Netherlands this is something that's a very sturdy thing and so she dug a little bit further and she found out indeed that there are differences, not only with regard to representation, there's much more</b>

	<p>male leaders than female leaders, but also when you look at other aspects and she thought how can that be and that's when she started the Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations and she developed a course called the Kilimanjaro Project that was solely for women, ambitious women, while climbing Mount Kilimanjaro actually developing their management skills and their confidence and their capabilities of making it to the top and that was such an inspiring story I said I want to be part of that organisation. So I joined in 2019 and have been working with Dianne ever since and it's been a beautiful journey.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Listening to everything that you've said, I mean these are all issues and I find it frustrating at the same time that we're in 2021 and we're still confronting these issues where women are undermined, women are not perceived to be leaders and the image of a leader is still very much a masculine perspective. You've now come into...well 2019 was when you came into the Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations, but taking on more of a leadership role here, what would you say is your greatest challenge in this position?</p>
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<p><b>Well the greatest challenge is the fact that there is so little awareness of gender stereotyping and the effects it has on the perception of leaders. You have feminine characteristics, you have masculine characteristics; usually feminine characteristics are more obvious among women than among men but both have them and then there's masculine characteristics and most men have mostly masculine characteristics, but also some of the women do and I do believe that it's these stereotypes that make it so difficult to realise that leadership and leadership characteristics are usually displayed through masculine characteristics and that's why we associate men more with leaders than women and the fact that we are not aware of it is not helping very much in redressing this gender balance. So that's one of the main challenges and of course another big challenge is that and I have to go back to another story by Dianne is that she went to her dean and said look at what I've found in my research, there's such an imbalance and then she expected the dean to indeed be surprised, but he says well everything seems to be working, so what's the problem? That's the other challenge that we're really facing on this subject and that's a hard one because that's culture.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Those are big challenges, how do you think we can overcome them though, because it can't be taken as business as normal or it's accepted just because that's the way life has been?</p>
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<p><b>Well yeah and that's a really major challenge and of course it's not by training talented women to become leaders, that's one part of the solution, we do believe that women are part of the solution and that women indeed are change agents and can change their organisations as well, but of course there's also responsibility within the companies themselves, making sure that for example, the procedures that you use to attract personnel and to advance personnel are transparent and are gendered and then finally I also believe that changing the culture of our companies is very important in redressing the gender balance because what you see a lot of the time is that women do enter the workforce, but they never feel part of the in-crowd and making sure that everybody, regardless their gender or whatever diversity they have, feel that they are a part of the company and a part of the in-crowd is so important in a sustainable manner, making sure that you redress that balance. So that I think is a truly big challenge, so it's at an individual level and I think women play an important role and men, it's at an institutional level where you make sure that your procedures are in place and you make sure that</b></p>

	<b>you create an optimal working environment for everybody and then there's the culture.</b>
DR. MALKA	Given all of those challenges, which are no doubt significant, we're still continuing to grapple with them, I would imagine that it forms a significant part of the type of research that you do within the centre, so could you give us a bit of a perspective in terms of some of the research that you're doing on how you are being able to empower and connect women so that they can drive their careers forwards and be recognised?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah I think there's a couple of examples, well first of all what comes to mind is the network analysis that we do, because women network in a different way than men do and they are also more often less aware of its importance, so you can teach women actually to more effectively navigate and network and make sure that they know that there is a visible organisation but also an invisible organisation that consists of all types of networks, we call that the 'Water', so we're doing research into that. Second, we are also doing research as a form of advocacy for raising awareness, for example, looking at big companies on the stock exchange, taking a look at the public information they display there, looking at the composition of their boards, but not only looking at the numbers; how many men and women are in the boards, but also taking a look at the language that they use, is it gendered, is it very masculine, is it feminine, and also taking a look at the images that are displayed in their annual reports; are they in sync with what you see in the numbers and in the language that they use. And thirdly, there's a research project that I'm really fond of because that's how I came into ECWO and that's the Horizon's 2020 Research Project, so a big European project that we run for Rotterdam School of Management and that is actually the aim of that project is to develop and sustainably implement gender equality plans in European business schools, starting with Rotterdam School of Management, but also a couple of other big European business school, and basically what we're doing there, is we're doing research and at the same time we're changing the system. So we are counting the representation of men and women across all levels in the organisation, both academic and support staff, we're also taking a look at the policies that are in place, for example parental leave and all kinds of other policies that are gendered and we're taking a look at the safety of the organisation and doing a scan of the organisation to take a look at social safety and based on these exercises we're developing a gender equality plan and we start talking to the organisation and say what do you find most important and we'll go ahead and implement it. So we're not only doing research and gaining knowledge, but we're using that knowledge to truly create change within the organisation and that's a wonderful thing to do.</b>
DR. MALKA	It seems to be transformation in action and thinking about Horizon 2020, bearing in mind that last year was 2020, how is the implementation tracking?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Well right now we started the projects in the end of 2019 and we have three more years to go; right now we made a scan of the organisation and we're discussing it with the leadership and the next step is to take the organisation by the hands and helping them to continue to monitor how they're doing in their organisation and at the same time providing them with tools to change the organisation in a sustainable manner and that can be, for example, through making the HR processes more transparent, but we're also providing them, for example, with courses that help personnel to stand up and reach out if they see the unwanted behaviour on the work floor, very practical, and of course we are going to provide</b>

	<b>for talented women in that organisation, the courses that we provide for many companies and also in our open programmes that help women advance in their career and to navigate the system.</b>
DR. MALKA	And the last question I wanted to ask you about your research, which sounds absolutely fascinating, when you were talking about the network analysis you said that you were looking at invisible networks and you'd called it 'Water'?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>That's right, yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	Please enlighten me because I'm sure that would be a question that our listeners would have on why the choice of 'water' if it is water as we all associate or if it is an acronym for something?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah well actually, you know you're in it but you can't actually see it, the organisation, so you have a formal organisation and that organisation of course is well defined in the annual reports, so you have the formal organisation and you can find that for example if you take a look at the annual reports or if you take a look at the website of an organisation you'd probably see a board of directors, you'd see the CEO, the CFO, you see a management board, you see the departments and everything, that's we call the visible organisation and of the course people, especially all the way up in that organisation, are very influential, but there's also what I call the Water; the invisible organisation and that much more has to do with informal networks and not as much the formal networks you see in all those official documents and it may very well be that people who really are the change makers in an organisation are not so visible in that visible network, but they are there and you need to identify them and it's usually through the more informal relationships that they have formed within that organisation that it actually becomes clear why they are so powerful and why they are so influential in an organisation. A lot of women, they just look at the visible organisation and they realise that's the way up or that's where I need to go, but very often that's not the case and I always say most decisions are taken either before or after a board meeting and that's through the informal, invisible networks that are around in any organisation and trying to understand that, how these people connect, is so important if you want to navigate your way through the organisation.</b>
DR. MALKA	That's a critical aspect and I have seen it time and time again, when networks, the power of networks, have been underestimated.
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah absolutely, yeah. I have many examples of those and then I think in hindsight I find out oh, that's how it works; it's because this one guy knows this other guy from the golf club, but they are invisibly connected and not through the formal rules that the organisation has, yeah.</b>
DR. MALKA	Or what I find even worse than let's say at the golf club where you can say that this was at a particular age category, is I went to school with someone and it was primary school or secondary school, that those networks go back so far into history.
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>I know, I have a...I remember that one of the leaders of my department, I didn't understand why he was backing up one of the other, well, people high up in the organisation, but it turned out that twenty-five years ago one of them had been the best man of the other at their wedding; I'm like oh, that's why, you know, because and they're so strong, it's so important to realise that's also something, the information that you may use to advance your career, that's what I also make people understand. So it's also your friendships and the people you meet throughout life, you should really cherish them because first of all it's wonderful to have these long-lasting relationships, but second of all, it may also help you by accident.</b>

DR. MALKA	I'd say almost being able to bank your social capital.
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah, yeah, it sounds it yeah. We don't do it on purpose, that's what I say; use it with your right mind.</b>
DR. MALKA	Staying with this aspect of networks and the power of networks, you chair the Dutch Work for Women Professors and when I looked at the figures, it seems to be in the region of one thousand three hundred women professors and associate professors; we've spoken a little about the attributes of networks, but how do you foresee that having this established group of women in a network, how can they utilise the network to be more beneficial?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	<b>Yeah, the Dutch Network of Women Professors I'm very proud that I'm currently leading that network and actually it's more than a network of women meeting each other and supporting each other, it actually has grown into an organisation that is helping to change policy in academia in the Netherlands. So besides the fact that we of course have network meetings where we meet with each other and discuss, for example, the fact that we're still under-represented in academia, that we're still paid less than men are in academia and that far more for women than for men, social safety is an issue in Dutch academia. Now what we also do is we do research into the representation of women among all layers in academia, we do research into the remuneration and not only money, but also the corner office and the secretary and the support that you may or may not get and we have done, I think most importantly, research into harassment in academia, which is a big issue and which is much bigger for women than it is for men in academia and this is not only 'Me Too', this also has to do with bullying, excluding people, physical and verbal threats, ridiculising special needs, for example if you come back from your pregnancy; it's all these types of things put together. So what we did is we did the research and using the research both when it comes to representation, we do that every year, then we publish a monitor, a female professors monitor and we go to all universities and we go to the Ministry of Education, we go to the Royal Academy of Sciences and we talk about the numbers and how they are going to change the numbers, because still only a quarter of all professors are female while there is so many talents. Also with regard to harassment, our report not only looked at the types of harassment, it also looked at the underlying causes and they very much have to do with the fact that academia in the Netherlands is very hierarchical, it's very individualistic, competitive, there's a high dependency on the people above you, so if you're a supervisor you have a lot of power of the people below you and these are all factors that are helping to create unsafe working environments. So but it also means that these are the things that we need to address to make sure that we get rid of this unwanted behaviour and so this research resonated very loud last year and the Dutch academia, a lot of cases women and men found the courage to stand up, so right now, throughout the Netherlands all universities are addressing harassments and they are putting in place, how do you call...the Ombuds people, that's how we call it, where you can go to and file a complaint. They are also talking about how can we, as a community, change the way we deal with unwanted behaviour or that does mean also that we need to change the way we are as a community and become less individualistic and competitive and more of a community where everybody feels included and there we go, I guess the circle is round, that's where you want to go, is to a community where it's not about the excellent individual, but about the team of people that is actually addressing research questions and solving it as a team and</b>

	<p>through not being all identical, but being diverse, that is very important aspects of how we can progress science as well. So on the one hand we want to get rid of harassment, on the other hand we want to embrace the fact that we need to be an inclusive environment in order to be innovative and in order to be scientifically excellent and that's routine science. So these are the things that we're addressing as a network and we're making great progress right now, but still have a long way to go, because I mean it is an absolutely enormous challenge for institutions that have been around for centuries and where the culture is, yeah, is hard to beat, hard to change.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>It's systemic and that's what people have come to expect and sometimes I think, for instance from a South African point of view, the South African Constitution is recognised the world over as being something which is very, very progressive, but I think about it and I do consider it to be progressive, but then I think to say countries like the United States of America and think that South Africa's opportunity has been because the constitution has been recreated in the present, whereas older constitutions were created two hundred odd years ago and they're just not relevant to where the world is today, so it's always really challenging to undo culture and recreate something.</p>
PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG	<p>No it's going to take a century I think [laughs], it seems like it indeed, although you know, if you only look at gender, if you take the gender perspective, feminism has been around for some time, you know, it was also there in the sixties and before and slowly you see change is happening and it's happening all around the world at a different pace, that's what I see, but it is changing and I do believe it's irreversible and in the end it's not only...it's not gender. It's I guess diversity in a broader sense of visible and invisible diversity and the fact that everybody is unique and should actually be valued because they are unique and not because they fit a certain culture and that's going to be the big challenge towards the future, how do we get towards inclusion and perhaps go even further, how can people remain fully themselves and therefore contribute the most to the system that asks for a system that is open to any kind of perspective and that's difficult for the Europeans, I guess, because it's always been very much, I guess we call it silo'd, everybody is in their own silo and not talking to each other and right now what you see in the world, what's happening right now, there's no way to deny it, that we need to collaborate across disciplines, across continents, across different lines of thought and that's what makes us stronger and survive. So I'm very positive, but I hope my daughters will live to see the day, but I don't think I will, no.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Well at least you've been pioneering in the efforts and having diversity that creates innovation and that in turn leads towards sustainability and acceptance of inclusion and we live in a globally connected world, you cant...I'd say that progress is denied when you try and bucket it into different silos.</p>
PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG	<p>Yeah, absolutely.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>So in terms of progress and sustainability, we know that there are the seventeen sustainable development goals that were established by the UN and I think we're due for those to materialise at least by 2030; the efforts of the Erasmus Centre of Women and Organisations really contribute to Goal Five of those sustainable development goals, which is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; in your view, given what you know today, how do you think or rather what do you think needs to be done to help ensure that women do have a better future?</p>

<p><b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b></p>	<p>Oh yeah, well there's a long way to go, that's for sure, 2030 is very ambitious and also because these sustainable development goals are worldwide and I guess over the world there are different challenges when it comes also to gender equality. What I hope for by 2030 is that at least we have created awareness, that it's important and valuable to have equal opportunities for both women and men, that it is important that in order to achieve this we must start with children. I truly believe that the children that are born today, if we bring them in a world where we feed them with the beliefs that women and men are equal and they have equal opportunities and it's okay for a man to be a nurse and for a woman to be a fighter pilot and they won't know the difference; that will be very helpful and if we can just make that happen, that will be sustainable, because we can start working on adults but there's...yeah you can make a little bit of change but in essence they've already been formed. So I truly believe that inspiring our children and making sure that when they go to school they can all go to school, because that's not a certainty in all parts of the world for girls and boys and that when they're exposed at school to learning materials, that these are also very balanced when it comes to gender and when it comes to that any boy or girl can identify with the images that have been given to them. In the Netherlands for example, this is not the case; a friend of mine, she analysed text books from middle school and high school in the economic classes that were taken and most of the successful people that were portrayed there were men and only a few were women and those women were usually a single mom on welfare or the friend of a single mom on welfare, so that's where the picturing and where the dreaming then is, at least for a lot of girls, being disrupted, it stops there, because they simply don't identify with the role models that are being offered. So I think that's a very important measure to take and of course there's many more that we need to take when it comes to sustainable development Goal Number Five, but that's one of them.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Thank you very much for sharing your insights into that and especially the importance of creating almost gender neutral roles and the socialisation aspect of children so that they develop and you don't have to reformulate fixed mental models.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Today we're talking to Professor Hanneke Takkenburg who is Co-Executive Director of the Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations at Rotterdam School of Management at Erasmus University. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.</p>
<p><b>AD BREAK</b></p>	
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Prof Takkenburg we're coming towards the latter part of the show and in this section I'd like to ask some more personal questions; the first one is that you wear three hats that I have been able to count in today's discussion, so being Co-Executive Director of Erasmus Centre of Women and Organisations, being the President of the Women Professors Network in the Netherlands and on top of that you also work within the Cardiothoracic Surgery space within Erasmus University; how do you manage to wear all of these hats and juggle between them?</p>
<p><b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b></p>	<p>Yeah well first of all I don't think too much about that I wear three hats and I do love the fact that the things that I do are very complementary because it's through my work in cardiothoracic surgery that I became aware of the inequalities and especially gender inequalities in my fields, especially when it comes to of course representation, there's not a lot of female cardiothoracic surgeons around, still nowadays, less than there are female professors, I can tell you that, and also because I would want those</p>

	women to have a better working environment. So I guess it's complementary, but on top of that I only do things that I love to do and I've done that throughout my life, I've never been led by fame or fortune, I have always gone for what I call the really cool water slice that gives me the feeling that I truly contribute to my fields and in a broader sense to the organisations that I work in and if you do that, and of course I say no much more than I used to in the old days, that works out pretty well.
DR. MALKA	What would you say have been some of the key drivers to your success?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	I stay close to my own values and I think that's the most important one. If I don't feel, well I go outside my comfort zone all the time, I try to be vulnerable all the time and I also try to pick up any critique that I receive and make it into something positive, so I continue to learn, I think that is also very helpful and basically I follow my heart. I am sort of a person that finds it very hard to see injustice, I need to do something about it and I like then not to complain, but rather start working on the topic and deal with it and transform it into a positive thing and I think Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations is such a tool that helps me to create a more equal environment for everybody, men, women, within the companies that they work in and so that includes my own work here at the Erasmus University, yeah.
DR. MALKA	And lastly, as we close out our conversation today, could you share a few words of wisdom or inspiration that you'd like to pass onto our future generation of young women and girls that are listening to us on the continent?
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	Okay, yeah well I think most importantly I have to think of something that Dianne tells me over and over again and that is women can lead from wherever they are. So it doesn't really matter where you are, whether you are very young, still in school, whether you're all the way up there as the CEO of a big company, you can lead and that's important to realise, I truly believe that women are change agents, so from wherever you are you can lead. One more practical thing that I always like to add, any recommendation, we notice that a lot of women do not automatically support other women and that has not to do with the fact that we are Queen Bee's, this has to do with the fact that we're often under-represented, so I try to tell all women that they don't have anything nice to say about another woman, don't say anything at all and if you get the chance to support another woman, please go ahead and do it and amplify their voice. So if you are in a meeting and another woman says something very reasonable, you say that's a really great remark, so you try to amplify their voices. So these are my wise thoughts and I try to apply them every day.
DR. MALKA	And they're practical, they're easy to apply, there's nothing challenging about them, so thank you for those words of wisdom and for joining us today, it's been a pleasure to host you.
<b>PROFESSOR TAKKENBURG</b>	Thank you so much for having me.
	<b>PROGRAMME END</b>