

PROGRAM DATE: 2021-04-29

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MP NAZLEY SHARIF – DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE – PORTFOLIO OF MULTI-PARTY WOMEN’S CAUCUS

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 on the line today is Ms. Nazley Sharif from the Democratic Alliance, who is a member of parliament; she serves on the Portfolio Committee on the Multi-Party Women’s Caucus as well as the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; She joins us today in our series covering perspectives from women across political parties in the country. Welcome to the show!
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	Thank you so much for having me, I look forward to engaging on very important issues and I can’t wait to see where our conversation takes us.
DR. MALKA	Coincidentally our recording falls in with Freedom Day, which is commemorated on the 27 th of April and marks the first democratic elections in post-apartheid South Africa and with that the rights, as well as I would say, the responsibilities that are associated with freedom, so to kick-off, please tell us what does Freedom Day mean to you?
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	Thank you for that question. Absolutely, I think, you know, we have come a very long way since our apartheid past but we still are very much haunted by the legacies that stay within our country and even though it is a celebration for democracy and we are able to say we’ve come this far with a constitutional democracy; our constitution being one of the greatest in the world, unfortunately for me Freedom Day means that and it shows that there are indeed many of us in South Africa that are not free. We had the murders of the LGBTIQ+ Community, if the members of the LGBTIQ+ Community is not free to be themselves, to love who they want to love and to ensure that they live the best life possible, then how can we as a country celebrate Freedom Day. You know I think about women and I think about the fact that so many women are still oppressed, we still are left out of the economic circle to ensure that our lives, our children’s lives, our family lives are improved; when that is not happening then I don’t think we have a lot to be free. When we look at the vaccines and the slow amount of time and the lack of effort in ensuring that South Africans are vaccinated, not only does it continue to put strain on the medical professionals, which you will find most are women, and women nurses working under extreme conditions, then we are not free and we cannot celebrate or commemorate Freedom Day unless each and every South African is free under the constitution and I know that this sounds very negative and, you know, we need to look at what’s great in South Africa and there’s many great things that we can look at in South Africa, but once we speak about basic human rights, that’s where the conversations need to be happening.
DR. MALKA	Those human rights are fundamentals, they’re declared in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which really pays attention to multiple aspects, whether it’s from a gender point of view, whether it is from an education perspective, that until those inequalities are ironed out, then no-one actually can say that they’re completely free. From a political point of view, South Africa is

	<p>a multi-party democracy; today our national assembly is composed of fourteen political parties and parliament has specific committees, which you represent, which represent women from different spaces, so one being the Multi-Party Women's Caucus and one of the issues that it addresses is gender responsive planning as well as a budgeting framework; can you tell us more about this particular committee and some of the work that it does in more detail?</p>
<p>MS NAZLEY SHARIF</p>	<p>Absolutely, the Multi-Party Women's Caucus is one of the forum's that brings different political parties together, but I would argue that portfolio committees serve the same purpose in where it brings different political parties by proportion, of course, representation by proportion, so depending on how many votes your political party gets in the election, will determine how many seats in parliament you get, obviously, and also how many seats you get in portfolio committees and it will work the same in the Multi-Party Women's Caucus. Now the National Multi-Party Women's Caucus, our aim is to put women at the centre of the agenda, both internally and externally and this is very important because even though we are a forum of women parliamentarians that come from all different political parties, so how we run is we have a committee, so the committee that sets up the agenda and then we then present it to the wider committee, which all women in any political party falls within membership of the Multi-Party Women's Caucus and so what we do is we look at women empowerment, we look at frameworks, we look at systems and processes within government, we look at different departments and basically see how we, as women, can contribute to ensuring that not only women in South Africa are emancipated but women parliamentarians are emancipated. You know I'm a young woman, my birthday is next month and I turn thirty-one, I'm really excited to level up, I feel like when you grow older it's a level up, not necessarily getting older, and when I went into parliament, this is my first term, I don't have any kids, I'm not married, but one of the first things that came to my mind is what happens if I happen to fall pregnant tomorrow and I'm a parliamentarian, I'm elected in Gauteng, so my constituency is in Soweto, so it's in Johannesburg and parliament is in Cape Town and so I noticed that there is a lot of systems in place to assist women parliamentarians when they have their children or they have kids or being able to cope with a family life and being a parliamentarian at the same time and so this is one of the aspects of the Women's Caucus, that we look at how do we ensure that women parliamentarians are capacitated so that we are able to represent women properly and I think it's amazing, you know, I tell you because even though we're from different political parties, we're able to speak to each other as women, we're able to understand the experience of each other as women and we're able to get to know each other a little bit better because politicians, you know, you see us and it seems as if we are two completely sides of the spectrum, but there are many issues that brings us together and the Women's Caucus is one of those forums that allows that to happen.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And often, when you've got different political views, it can tend towards an aspect of, well a degree of fragmentation and when you have fragmentation you lose focus of the core and what's actually important, so, hearing what you're saying I must say is very comforting that women's issues take central focus within the Multi-Party Women's Caucus and when you've got everyone focused on one particular topic, it helps to unify and drive progress.</p>
<p>MS NAZLEY SHARIF</p>	<p>Absolutely, but it's not like that all the time, right. So I've had instances where we're at the Multi-Party Women's Caucus and you have political parties bringing in their own political stances or their manifestos or what</p>

	<p>they believe is right and there has been times where the chairperson has had to reprimand the Caucus and saying leave your political hat outside and wear your woman hat inside and then, you know, we all get right and you're like actually, you know, we're losing focus so we need to come back together. So it's a natural thing, I suppose, human beings have a tendency to bring their opinions and assume that their opinions are better, but we always and when we're in those forums and the individual people in those forums, it is up to us to make that switch and say you know what, even though I am dealing with the ANC, the EFF, the ACDP, the Freedom Front Plus, I am a woman, we are all women and we need to look at the women's issues and once that starts to happen on an individual level you will find that things start to change.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>You mentioned that this is your first term in parliament and you are a relatively young MP, tell us about your journey into politics; what got you started and interested?</p>
<p>MS NAZLEY SHARIF</p>	<p>Oh man, that's a couple of years ago, so I joined politics in 2009 and my first year at Wits University I joined the Democratic Alliance Student organisation and I joined the DA because I honestly and truly believe that the DA is the only party in South Africa that can bring a necessary change in order to change our social fabric and ensure that we have opportunities for every single South African in this country and you know being part of the DA has never been easy because it seems as if the DA is, you know, one of the parties that people find easy to criticise because we're so diverse and we, you know, have so many different people that represent different things, because we all come from different backgrounds. I mean if you look at the DA and it's leadership, which I'm sure we'll speak about later, we have a different array of people coming together for one common cause and so I joined the DA, the DA was my party of choice, I wasn't going to join any other political party, especially because of my values and growing up with a single mom, you know, I learned liberalism from a very young age; being able to choose for myself, being able to think for myself and being able to use my talents and hard work in order to get somewhere in life. So I was an activist for six years, I led the DASO branch at Wits University for two years, I then did my honours degree and then moved into my masters and when I was doing my masters I was elected for my first term as a proportional representative councillor in the City of Johannesburg and I was really excited because this was my first opportunity as a public rep. I then served on the Portfolio Committee of Gender, Youth and Persons with Disabilities as well as various other committees. I was then elected again in 2019 as a PR councillor, but I was also elected as the youngest chairperson for Gender, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, I loved it, we did amazing things, in fact we had the first ever LGBTIQ+ stakeholder engagement where we went across Johannesburg and we spoke to members of the LGBT and put together recommendations. Unfortunately I had to leave the City of Johannesburg in 2019 because I was then elected as a member of parliament. It's been an interesting journey, I am very grateful that I am able to serve my country at such a young age and bring new ideas to the forefront and being able to look at things differently. The work I do is very important, I speak specifically serving on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, my issue driving is gender based violence and femicide, as well as looking at women empowerment and emancipation and how we can bring women to a level where they're able to compete fairly amongst men who have so many opportunities simply based on their sex. I'm also very passionate, I'm a feminist, as many would know, I'm also very passionate</p>

	<p>about ensuring justice and making sure that choice is...free choice is on the table; like I said, I am a liberal and so free choice is very important to me as part of a value. So that's my journey, it's been interesting, it's been almost twelve years now that I've been in politics, I've grown a lot and I see myself growing even more as I move and progress forward within politics.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Thanks for sharing your journey to where you are today; some of the points that you mentioned, with respect to the work that you're doing in the field, so looking at this from aspects of gender based violence and looking at aspects of women's empowerment and emancipation, access to rights and certain freedoms; can you share with us some of the detail that goes into how those projects are materialising and what outcomes are we going to see come to fruition, because it's one thing to talk about issues and sure, we know that these are problems, but how are they going to change and what are the types of results that we can expect to see?</p>
<p>MS NAZLEY SHARIF</p>	<p>Great question and this is something that, you know, whenever we sit in the portfolio committee our main question is how is this going to benefit women on the ground, how is this going to benefit a young woman, a young disabled womanhow is it going to be felt on the ground so that she benefits from it and often times being in opposition, it's very frustrating because we don't necessarily see the work being felt on the ground. The DA in the Committee of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities have undertaken a countrywide oversight tour to look at exactly what has been happening on the ground, so we go and we visit the Thuthuzela Care Centres, we visit victim empowerment centres, we go to police stations and we look at the entire system of how it's meant to be and what's actually happening on the ground. If I can take viewers back to September 2019, many would remember that the country came to a complete standstill because women said enough is enough, we are tired of being beaten, we are tired of being raped, we are tired of being murdered; we want to be free, we want to be able to live our lives the way we're wanting to live. There was the total shutdown march, which I completely supported and from that came the Declaration of Gender Based Violence and Femicide, which was then signed by the president. Straight after that government then went into reactive mode and I say reactive because, you know, once I explain what has happened you'll see why I'm saying reactive; they called it the Emergency Response Action Plan, so it can respond to gender based violence and femicide. It was a six month plan that was allocated 1.6 billion Rand; from that was going to come the National Strategic Plan, which is about a seventy-four page plan, on what government needs to do in order to combat gender based violence and femicide and I want to put it on record that I absolutely support the National Strategic Plan because it has really good ideas and it comes from civil society and it's important to speak to civil society because they are the people who are dealing with this every single day; it is NGOs, it is community organisations, it is ordinary people in communities that deal with these situations every single day. And so what had happened is the Interim Steering Committee on Gender Based Violence and Femicide had been disbanded in 2020 and so what happened is we had these plans that has not been implemented and so when we go and we do oversight and we go to the Thuthuzela Care Centres and we say have you felt that you have been given more support, because one of the targets was to increase capacity at Thuthuzela Care Centres, and these frontline workers would look at me like they have no idea what I'm talking about. So basically my point is that you're absolutely right, we can have great plans, we can have policies in place, we can have legislation, but if it is not implemented and there's no monitoring and evaluation to ensure that</p>

	<p>these targets are being met, that implementation is happening, that training for SAPS is happening, that training for courts and prosecutors is happening, that Thuthuzela Care Centres are being empowered and being capacitated, then nothing, nothing government does is going to make any difference and it's up to us and the opposition to ensure and hold ministers and the president accountable and this is why I've written to Minister Maite Nokoane-Mashabane to ask what is the consequence management of the department for not even meeting one of the targets. You know, I asked the Minister of Police, I wrote to him and I ask him an official question and I ask what is the current backlog of forensic cases for GBVF because we can complain and say there's not enough rape kits, but even if there is enough rape kits, there's not enough staff and forensic staff to be able to look at the DNA so that we can get prosecutions. So when we look at the entire system of chains of events that need to happen in order for GBV victims to get justice, we will notice that there are weak areas and that is the SAPS, that is justice, that is ensuring that we have enough forensic nurses, social workers. So that's basically my job; my job is to go out into communities and find out if government is doing what they're saying, if not, hold government accountable to make sure that they are doing what they're doing and let South Africans know what their government is failing to do and that is one way we can hold them accountable and of course bring our own solutions, right, as the DA.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>The accountability aspect is obviously crucial and that's why you have monitoring and evaluation components coming into the mix, but I can't help but thinking, all of the elements that you've described, all of the elements that we're being exposed to, whether it is a rape crises centre, whether it is reporting aspects to police, whether it is having enough forensic; these all for me are post the event, from a social fabric of society, the very acts need to be prevented in the first place, which requires such a greater degree of socialisation and from my point of view when I think about the cases, that poor young girl who committed suicide, but she was assaulted by a female peer, a teenager herself, that there is something very wrong with society's fabric, that those are the aspects that actually need to change and then we wouldn't have to be dealing with all of the services that we put in place to help try and prevent it.</p>
<p>MS NAZLEY SHARIF</p>	<p>You're absolutely right and these are the thoughts that go through my mind continuously, you know, that we live in an absolutely violent society, you know, reading about the cases of the LGBTIQ+ and you know speaking about the lack of legislation, I do think to myself that yes there is a lack of legislation, but there is an intrinsic violent streak within our society that needs to be dealt with and that comes, you know, the only thing when I think about it, it must come from a generational trauma perspective, where we have been dealing with so much pain through generations that we have lost touch on how to healthily deal with this pain and so we automatically turn to violence and I wonder and perhaps somebody who has studied violence might have a little bit more insight, but perhaps we need to look at how it is engrained in human beings as a human perspective, because obviously we all have, you know, the opportunity to be good and live with love and live with kindness, but when people are living in dark holes and when we don't make healing available or if we don't have access to healing as a nation, then will continue to see violent acts and we will have to continue to put plasters on these symptoms that we're finding. But I do just want to make a point that even though I agree with you that we're treating the symptoms, we have to get these basic systems done and ready and moving like a well-oiled machine in order to deal with the bigger societal issues. If we don't have rape crises centres or Thuthuzela Care</p>

	<p>Centres working at the optimal level, then dealing with both issues is going to become even more difficult. So for me I agree let's deal with the bigger societal issue, but also in the same breath, let's fix our current processes and symptoms and one of the ways we can do this is by school and having classes that speak about gender identity, speak about consent, speak about what it means for consent, what does no mean and how do you deal with your emotions, you know, in fact if I had it my way, I would make therapy a component for every single human being so that we can start learning to deal with our emotions in a healthier way, but until that is done, we have to be able to make sure that our government departments and our centres work at its optimal level.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>As we move away from this point I just want to provide listeners with a bit of context so that they understand let's say the scope and the scale, that over 90% of sexual offences are committed against women in South Africa and it's estimated that almost 30% of those crimes go unreported. In the last ten years running from 2008 through to 2018, five hundred and eighty-four thousand, four hundred and ninety-seven sexual offences were reported to SAPS (South African Police Services). So this is an undeniable concern in our country, but as we move away from this and perhaps into let's say another cap that you wear in your let's say many chapters within the government space, one of the areas as a gender based programme that we constantly focus on, is the importance of building female leadership capacity for the future of women in our country and let's say the ripple effects into the continent. The public sector I think is doing relatively well; we've got a cabinet, probably 50/50 in terms of female to male representation, but the picture of women in corporate leadership in South Africa is appalling. There are various studies that have been compiled, whether it is Grant Thornton, McKinsey, Business Women's Association South Africa, looking at figures as approximate averages, women only account for 30% of executive managers, 19% of directors, 7% of chairpersons, 4% of CEO's and these are average figures obviously, they change and fluctuate slightly over time, but given that we represent over 52% of the population, we should have considerably better representation within the private sector. How do you see female leadership in South Africa, whether it's political, academic or professional?</p>
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	<p>We have come a long way but we have a longer way to go and I am of the view that the women who are in those spaces, it is up to us to start creating more spaces for younger women coming after us. You know I'm of the opinion that if I...if a young women has to come in after me and she still has to go through the same struggles that I am going through, then I have failed and I say this because everywhere a woman is, whether it's in a family dynamic, whether it's corporate, whether it's in politics, whether it's in the NGO sector, whether it's anywhere in society, we always have the responsibility to ensure that we create the space for more young women to come through and you know often times and this could be a little bit controversial but I want to speak about it; I've had instances where women have tried to keep me out of places, where women have chopped down the table instead of making the table bigger, because it's felt that only one woman can be here and I'm going to be that woman and that sort of mentality is what's keeping a lot of us behind and we don't often want to speak about it because, you know, it's a bit of a touchy subject, but we have to speak about as women.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And when you raise that point because it's something that I hear and it prompted me to go and investigate it further, and part of it stems from the fact where we will be given arbitrary quotas where an entity will say ah, we can</p>

	have 20% or we can have 30% women, so if there is only one space available, that's where it breeds unnecessary competition.
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	The competition goes a bit further, right, if we look at it from a societal perspective; we compete for the attention to get married, we compete for you know, being able to, you know, go into different spaces, for friends, for relationships you know, women are constantly competing against each other and it starts from a very young age and that's where I think we need to start unlearning many of what we have been taught because patriarchy in itself is that; it's an extension of patriarchy that we perpetuate as women and so for me, as an example, I've never had mentor, so I started a mentorship programme where I'm taking two young women that is interested in politics and just teaching them what it's like and campaigning door-to-door strategy policies, just imparting my knowledge onto them so that they can be able to create more space for more women around them. So I think that we have great potential in this country, I think we have amazing women doing amazing things, I just think it's up to us to start opening and creating more spaces, so when you are in a leadership positions and they say only 20% women, you can put in a counter argument and say actually no, let's do 40% women, let's do 50% women. So we start using the power that we have fought so hard to get.
DR. MALKA	I really like what you're saying there in terms of being able to change the system from within, not taking no for answer, where if you look at it logically, half of the elements that have been imposed upon us make absolutely no sense and it is only through the efforts of women in leadership who've been able to drive this change for the benefit of other generations. Knowing what you know today and thinking about the future for women; what else do you think needs to be put in place to help ensure that we really get towards greater equality sooner rather than later?
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	For me I think it always starts at home, I think we need to start breaking the barriers of patriarchy at home, in a family level, with your friends, with your peers, in very space that you come across we need to start breaking those stereotypes that women are a certain way and women can only do certain things and we need to continue breaking those glass ceilings. We need to ensure and this is so important, women and all those who identify as women, to start picking each other up. It's very easy for us to think about negative thoughts, think about I could have done it better, she's not doing a good job and let's work on capacitating each other, you know, I don't know everything, you don't know everything, but if we come together we can both learn about each other and I think that's so important and I wish I had known this growing up, you know, I suppose growing up in a single parent household with just women, all I know is to be surrounded by strong women and so I have that benefit of being surrounded by strong women constantly and, you know, my mother was one of the strongest women I know and I dedicate everything I am and who I am to her and I miss her every day, I hope her soul rests in peace. So for me it's about making the table wider, bridging the gap and making sure that we are safe whenever we are together, you know, when I see a woman I want her to know that she's safe with me around and I want to know that I'm safe with her around and I think if we come together and we mobilise we can see a better future, not only for us, but for our daughters and our granddaughters and those who are different, those who identify as LGBTIQ+, we are their allies and we need to stand up for them when they are not being heard. So that's what I would say.
DR. MALKA	Thank you for all those points. We have touched on some of the elements of

	<p>your life as you were growing up, through your career, whether it's at university, the influence of your mom; one of the questions that I ask my guests on this show and this is with a view of taking away those learnings, in the same way that you speak about mentorship and being able to give back instead of people having to walk through your journey, let them walk through their own journey and rise off of your shoulders and the paths that you've taken, so given that, what would you say have been some of the factors that you consider have contributed towards your success?</p>
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	<p>I think, honestly, I have always been straight to my values. I am a change-maker and I am using politics as the vehicle for change and many people use different vehicles for what suits them and I have chosen politics and I think one of the reasons that I am here today and I am so proud to represent my country as a member of parliament is honestly believing that I can make a difference and even if I make a difference in one woman's life, I feel like I have done something important and that is what keeps me going; it's just to make a difference with my hands, not with my voice, with my hands.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>We all have platforms and how we affect those platforms to achieve our respective agendas is very fulfilling. You mentioned your mom as being instrumental in your life, who have been some of the other strong women that have been strong influences?</p>
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	<p>You know, it's an interesting one, you know, we spoke about how women have historically, you know, felt that you know there's not...you know, I grew up in a family where the women, the older women, were not necessarily always supportive on that and so my mom sheltered myself and my sister a lot from the negative energy from the other women in our lives, but as I grew older and I look at the younger women in my family, man, they inspire me. They're resilient, their optimism, their want for a better life and their need to change society is a beautiful thing and so I find myself playing the role that I wish I had had when I was younger and so naturally you look outside of your family structure and you find women that mean so much to you and I'm going to be honest with your viewers, don't laugh at me, but growing up Disney princesses were some of the women that I look up to and you know Pocahontas was one of the Disney princesses I looked at that would oh my word, she looks like me, but also she's so strong and she's got the...and you know more recently I look at Kamala Harris and I think, you know, again she looks just like me, a mixed race heritage and she is the vice president of the USA, it blows my mind every single day. I look at women like Hellen Zille, who has come out of odds and continues to keep her vision and her opinion and even though people may not agree with her, you cannot argue that you know who she is and you know what she stands for and this is why I joined the DA; I joined the DA because I saw strong women in the party standing up for themselves; Winnie Mandela, Helen Suzman and even though they had such different experiences, they stood for what they believed in and I am all about that.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Lastly, as we close out the show today, please can you share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that commemorate Freedom Day for girls and women who are listening to us on the continent?</p>
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	<p>Okay, this is a very important part because I know that my words have power, so let me say this; believe in yourself all the time. Society is going to see that you're a strong woman and that you know what you want and you're going to go for it and they're going to come at you and make you doubt yourself; don't allow them. Don't allow their voices and their words to penetrate through you and make you believe that you're not worthy</p>

	<p>because you are. Don't let society dictate or determine who you are as a person, because you are beautiful and you know what you're capable of. I have had many people from across the board tell me that I am not enough and I'm not worthy and I believed them and I'm here to tell you not to believe them, because now I know better and we are worth freedom, we are worth love, unconditional love, we are worthy to receive and give unconditional love. We are unique and women, we are the creators of life, don't let anybody tell you any different, we are the creator and we are the creation and don't ever forget your power because you are very powerful and they're going to want to take it away from you, but don't let them do it. That's what I would say.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you for that great message and particularly in this spirit of celebrating Freedom Day and what it means and we wish you all of the very best, continue to be the change-maker that you are, the champion of women's rights and driving things to make not just South Africa a better place, but the continent, thanks for joining us.</p>
MS NAZLEY SHARIF	<p>Thank you so much, thank you for having me, if any of your viewers want to connect I am on Facebook at Nazley Sharif MP, reach out to me if you want to speak about the work I do, if you want to get involved, let's do it. Thank you so much.</p>
	<p>PROGRAMME END</p>