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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

**GUEST NAME: MS. SANKIE MTHEMBI MAHANYELE – SOUTH AFRICAN
AMBASSDOR TO SWITZERLAND**

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 is South Africa's Ambassador to Switzerland, Ms. Sankie Mthembu Mahanyele, who was the former Minister of Housing in South Africa, she also served as the ANC's deputy secretary general and is a published poet writing under the name of Rebecca Matlou. Welcome to the show Ambassador!
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	Thank you very much. Thank you very much for inviting me to your show.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador, over the years you've served South Africa in numerous capacities, can you please share with us a few of the landmarks in your career?
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	Thank you for that question. My career perhaps can be broken into two; the experience of working with the African National Congress in exile and the experience of continuing the work started over the years by our leadership, leaders and the South African society, when we came back in the country on different levels. One has had the opportunity to serve as a chief representative of the African National Congress in Germany and that time one also had the responsibility of servicing Austria and German speaking Switzerland and it was quite a very exciting experience because it brought a person from the liberation movement to work with officials in the German government, to work at a certain level of diplomats, so it was like a platform for one to learn and observe how formal institutions in other countries work, so it was a very exciting moment. It was also very exciting because it was also just on the eve of discussions and talks at home where the forces that were in conflict with each other, which is the apartheid regime and the liberation movement, as represented by the African National Congress, had to now sit down and talk and have a conversation on how to take the country forward, what the future of the country should be, how it needs to be crafted, what needs to come into what we today call the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and a foundation upon which legislation that has been brought forth expresses the fundamental principle of democracy. So it was also a foundation and taking one step, the next step, moving into a future and preparing for that future, But there was also a moment where one was exposed to working in Africa, that's when at the ANC mission in Lagos that was supposed to service Benin and Togo, I was working there as the admin secretary, which meant we needed to, at a formal level, also liaise with the government of Nigeria and the OAU Committee officials and civil society in Nigeria, organisations and trade unions. It was also a platform upon which one was beginning to understand on how to think about the future, but also one of the exciting moments for me was when we came back home and we were invited, at least one was invited, to be part of the first democratic parliament in the National Assembly of South Africa, that was a moment when all of us and the country as such, because we had just gone through national elections, people had expressed their view through

	<p>the vote and we were ushering in a new future; a new democratic dispensation. So it was an exciting moment and also learning to work with issues and discourse from the part of being in the ruling party and having to deal with the opposition; all those were learning steps for us to be able to work and craft and marshal events the way they are supposed to be, as expressed in the constitution. And there was also a moment when one was invited to be Deputy Minister in the then Department of Welfare and Population Development, first time to be in government and an opportunity to now begin to formalise what we had been talking about and what we had been doing over the years in exile, during the campaign as well when we came back inside the country. It was an opportunity to implement, to begin to bring the country back on track because before the elections there was a stalemate, the economy of South Africa was not working, the sanctions were at the high peak, the military struggle also was at a peak, there wasn't governance in the country, so we needed to bring the country back on track and be part of the international community and begin to formally function as a country and all that were learning steps and improving as we go.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Ambassador you have played such an integral role in South Africa's transformation to democracy, those are all momentous achievements and I think more so to the point of being able to really see through on the implementation aspect. Given everything that you went through, from the liberation struggle to entering the first parliament, to becoming a deputy minister in a newly formed democracy and starting to implement the policies that you had worked on so ardently within exile and driving, in essence, creating a new country; looking today, do you see the country being in the place that you had imagined that it would be in all those years ago?</p>
<p>AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE</p>	<p>There have been pockets of success, there has been pockets of pride and part of it might be hidden because people are not exposed to the kind of challenges that the country or government has had over the years. What we see, it's what we hear and what we read about in the newspapers and what we hear about at the Zondo Commission, but we also have to remember that behind the scenes there were highly committed people who kept the ship sailing. There were people who were committed to say things shouldn't crumble completely, let's see what we can do and they put their energies into that and those are the hidden pockets of success that we don't know because it's individuals scattered all over, but what we experience right now, it's also an element of a bit of a loss that at this point we had expected ourselves to be operating at a particular level, but it hasn't happened and we need to then look at the situation and say in this problematic challenging moment, how do we turn things right, what is it that we need to do and correct the mistakes that have happened. What kind of people do we need to help us do that and we tap into the potential talents that we have inside the country, we look for them, we find them, we give them the space to create, we give them the space to innovate, we give them the space to drive processes, that's what we need to do and spread our eyes across the board to say who are the people who can step in and assist us where we need help most. For an example, part of the glaring issues that we need to work on urgently is the issue of management and implementation, we've got very great policies, we want them implemented and we need the right people to help us do that. We need to sharpen our abilities and our capacities in managing; we've got some of the great policies in place. We also have to deeply look into what it is that we need to do turn the economy around, that is a much more difficult area because it's not determined basically by what we will do as a</p>

	<p>country, it also needs a response from other economies globally, other trading areas. It will need responses in terms of people being available to come in and invest and getting things going, so we are trying the best that we can and from where we are, I'll give you an example, we will be next week or so, be talking to the chambers in Switzerland and linking them up with Invest South Africa to get them the opportunity to talk to people who need to unlock doors for them, we need to explain the procedures, we need to explain the workings of the economy in the country. So these are all the items and the efforts that we are putting into place and contributing towards getting the country on track again.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Yes and everything is interlinked, these days the entire global system all has an impact, what happens in one country has repercussions on another. You spoke about next week you're having conversations with the chambers in Switzerland with regards to Invest SA...</p>
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	<p>...yes....</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...would you say that investment and creating financial, let's say foreign aid and...not aid...creating foreign investment into South Africa forms one of your core roles as an ambassador?</p>
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	<p>Yes it does, it does; it's one of the key critical roles because of the challenges that we find ourselves in inside the country that would inform and impact on our policy orientation in terms of where we are. So the economy is very much central in making sure that we, from where we are, we assist the efforts of what's happening inside the country and this would come from different angles. It would be direct investment of cash coming in, foreign direct investment, it would be investment in getting people interested in investing in our country because competition is now becoming very stiff, all economies are affected in the world because of the pandemic, so we've got to take our best tools to be able to attract people back into our economy and it will be done in different ways, it will be in done more and more talking to people about the country, what is South Africa, where is it going, what's the direction, where does it want to find itself in the near future. But there is also a very important aspect of this element of the economy which cannot be ignored, this is an area of research. Research, innovation and science and the Swiss are very strong in that area, so we've also been keeping a close look into this area and making sure that we take the opportunity and make sure that we utilise the benefit that we can have, liaising with counterparts, it could be through linking investors in Switzerland with investors at home with, for an example, we've got projects going on to assist management and financing the local government, looking at issues of water preservation, looking at issues of green buildings, which will be a climate change aspect, but we are also looking at the very interesting issue working with one of the Cantons, which is a province, where they are very strong in terms of backing up the start-ups, SMME's, and we are working very closely with them to see how we can tap into their experience and utilise that to assist our own SMME's at home currently. We are also trying to get an SME to benefit from an offer of coming into a programme with the investor of them, to be able to be helped along the same ways, what to look for when you're an SME, challenges, experiences, funding, finance and all of that. So these are the interlinked activities that contribute towards the broader aspect of getting the economy back on foot.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Those are fantastic initiatives and I particularly like the emphasis with regards to research, innovation and science, because those are the subjects that move the world ahead and forward and create the innovative aspects.</p>

	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to South Africa’s Ambassador to Switzerland, Ms. Sankie Mthembi Mahanyele. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador earlier you spoke on let’s say part of your role within the liberation movement and we know that within the liberation movement there was really a great sense of equality between the responsibilities of men and women, that people really fought shoulder-to-shoulder, but still, gender equality remains an ongoing struggle and different countries have applied various mechanisms to try to address it and if I take South Africa, looking at one example regarding, for instance, the amendment of the Employment Equity Act which really states ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. In your position I would imagine that you’ve experienced a multitude of cultures, whether it is from a German, Austrian, Swiss perspective or looking at aspects from Nigeria, Benin and Togo from an African point of view; considering some of the dynamics that you’ve been exposed to, what would you say are some of the positive interventions that you’ve seen in various countries that promote gender equality?
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	Mmm, that’s a very exciting area because we have had an opportunity as female ambassadors out here to sit and make an assessment of where gender equality is in terms of the different countries that are represented here and it was a very exciting observation to be exposed to because when people were talking about what’s happening in their countries, you’ll find that there are different tools that countries use to promote gender equality. There are those who have got mentor, mentoring programmes, they have women’s unions, they have got a commissive for advancement of women and protection of women’s rights and you’ve got...you’ll have in parts of Europe, special envoys for gender equality. For an example, to implement the requirements of the UN Security Council Resolution 2025, you’ll have other...you’ll have the Gender Equality Act passed in the different countries. Countries will work differently because they are informed by their own conditions where they are, for an example there was a country where we were told that in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs you’ve got an advisor who deals with gender issues, who will make sure that women’s needs are taken care of, when they go on maternity are the properly provided for, how do you support younger women to understand how foreign policy works and in some countries they will send out the trainees, for an example, as part of their training programme, to be stationed the different embassies just to observe how things are done and you’ll have the gender focal point persons in the different countries. So there are various ways in which people have looked at the issue of gender, you’ll have the equal treatment officer to look at issues of equal rights and to make sure that there’s no discrimination against women, so there are lots of different instruments that countries have used, but the important thing to take away here is that countries will use what is feasible for them and utilise that to achieve their objects. So it’s been very interesting.
DR. MALKA	Yes, every country has its own culture and if I look for instance within the Nordic space, they have always scored right there at the top with regards to being very egalitarian, I mean they frequently have more female presidents and prime ministers, I think, and I stand to be corrected here, more so than any country in the west of the planet.
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	They are far ahead. They are far ahead, the issue of gender equality they took it very seriously and actually made sure that there’s action taken to ensure that it becomes a reality and but you also see other countries coming up, in our own continent you can see the leadership that’s

	<p>provided by Rwanda, you can see the possibilities for South Africa for the mere fact that we've got a high percentage of women represented at local government level, in government in the National Assembly, that bodes well for us because we can only aim for higher achievements around that issue, but basically the foundation has been laid, so we do have the possibility to move further up on that issue, without ignoring the fact that we are operating in a patriarchal society where you still have, you know, people who might not understand what these gender equality issues are all about, issues of equal rights. However, we have an advantage in our situation because we have a map guided by the constitution that we have, Section 9 of the Constitution insisting on issues of non-discrimination and issues of equality, you've got a Bill of Rights supporting that, you've got the legislation that is being passed in parliament reinforcing that fundamental principle of equality inside the country. The big challenge remains that of changing the mind of society, because in society we create a history, we construct positions, we construct images, we construct languages, we also find a class of people who will create a space for themselves to be the ones controlling and leading how things should be and how we look at ourselves as women, how we look at the male species in our society, how we look at society per se. So these are things that have been constructed and have gone as a history of a nation and in certain situations become a culture, which we need to unravel and unwind, by then going back to the drawing board and say how do we begin to unlock and change this mind frame. We have the laws, they are there, they are on paper; we need people to act upon them and it's very exciting to observe that finally we are having a male organisation Not In My Name beginning to address those issues. We have a strong organisation, the ANC Women's League, focused on these issues, we need these kind of things to spread across the country because we are not going to achieve a lot just as a women's organisation, we need the male to come in and join us. Issues of socialisation, how we socialise the male child, the girl child; all of those issues come back to the heart of where this should begin and that's in the family unit and that is a big problem because we are at a point that we are coming in as a generation carrying this history that accepted, but also at the same time fought against patriarchy and into a generation that goes to kindergarten, primary school and beginning to learn on issues of equality, issues of rights, issues of non-discrimination. So you also need people who will begin to teach this philosophy in a manner that is easy to absorb, in a manner that is acceptable and not having another species feeling that they are alienated. You don't want the issue of women's equal rights, the space for women to develop to the highest level that they want to be to be a point of resentment by some males who think something has been taken away from them, which therefore presents a challenge of saying how do we pick up both together, parallel, so that it's a notion that is accepted and nourished by the acceptance of saying this is what we want for our future. The challenge is there in society is social cohesion....</p>
DR. MALKA	...yes...
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	...and change and reconstruction of the mind.
DR. MALKA	You have raised some incredibly valid points which we often speak about on this show, whether it's aspects from a cultural point of view and this pervasiveness of patriarchy that penetrates through cultural systems and the issues of socialisation, of being able to drive change amongst a younger generation, because it is incredibly hard to shift older mindsets and have them

	reframe their perspectives. You also spoke about the view from a point of image and what constitutes visually of where we see women in society, where we see men in society and how that influences our behaviour.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to South Africa's Ambassador to Switzerland, Ms. Sankie Mthembu Mahanyele. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomaniTalk.
DR. MALKA	Thinking for an aspect, for a moment, in terms of gender equality and leadership; we have cited a couple of examples within the African continent, so from a Tanzania point of view, Malawi, Ethiopia, Liberia; all countries that have had some form of female leadership within them right at the very top of the structure.
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	Yes.
DR. MALKA	How do you see the role of female leadership, whether it is in the political sphere, the business sphere or any other field for that matter?
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	It's not an easy question because you are talking about individuals who are on a daily basis attempting to punch and break this ceiling that tends to want to press them down, you know, you are a woman, you can't do this this way and it's a situation where they are fighting all of these areas of discrimination, be it in business, be it in politics, be it in the social sphere. So you've got that individual person fighting this within their space and around them it's a continuation of what we've expressed as a mindset and the pervasiveness of patriarchy, so it's now this person who find themselves having to fight all of this, it's like swimming against a wave, you know, in the high seas, you are swimming, you want to get onto the other side. So they've got to do that and represent success, represent achievement within that space and they are not doing it for themselves only, they are also doing it for those who will come behind them, well that is expected of them, but we are also saying the opportunity of making sure that they become mentors to the younger ones should be appreciated, the opportunity of formal training of the younger ones should be formalised and become part and parcel of our societal attempt of reconstruction and development of society. We need to find formal structures of saying how do we link our CEOs, the success element in our society, they are people who have achieved their academics, they are professors, they are in university, they are all over; how do we bring them in and benefit from their success story by generating an inspirational base for those who want to emulate what is correct, which therefore brings us to the point of saying the biggest challenge that we tend to have as young people as we grow, it's a challenge of choice. We've got to be able to make the correct choices so that when you get onto the other side of your life, what we have done should be able to give you a leap into a better future and there are so many things that can destruct and take away the attention of young people from things that they need to be focusing on. So you constantly need these people to remind them and say this is the way to go, that's where the mentorship will come, this you can do, this is short term, look at the long-term and all of that. So we need to formalise and also do it at an informal base, create the space to do that.
DR. MALKA	You know, what you've just said now is echoing the last conversation that we've just had with Nomsa Marchesi who is a member of parliament with the Democratic Alliance and she said, and I'm laughing here because she said it was ridiculous when we were younger, she said my view was I was going to take the easy road, I was going to do biblical studies and geography and...
AMBASSADOR	[laughs]

MAHANYELE	
DR. MALKA	...she said my aunt quickly came in and said not a chance my dear you're not going to be doing those subjects, you're going to be doing mathematics, physical science and as a result she went on to do pharmacology, studied microbiology and she just said, you know, your doors of opportunity are completely guided by those decisions and if you are young, naive and following your peers, you could end up going nowhere.
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	Absolutely true, absolutely true. We all, as we grow up, need somebody who can hold our hand and guide us. You know, one thing just to share this with you, in the ANC, when we joined the ANC, we were very young, just early adulthood and coming from a violent environment and you come, you've got no choice, your options are very limited, you just say ag, go into exile, there's nothing more to do here and you go there you find a different atmosphere of what has been created over the years. Mentorship, guidance, political training, formal and informal, now the choice remains with you as to whether you are ready to take up the opportunity and learn from those around you, that also it's about choice, every day we are faced by having to make choices and we just hope that the choices we are making are the correct choices that are going to make you feel like you've achieved what you want to achieve because you've made the right choices, but you need somebody to hold your hand to do that and we continue to do that in our lives, you've got your boss, you've got your parents at home, you've got people who we associate with and if it's the right people, you will help each other move and struggle through the challenges that can sometimes entrap and destroy one's future. So, young people need to be aware of those challenges.
DR. MALKA	You've achieved so much in your lifetime and not just from a personal point of view, but you've really made fantastic contributions to your country. One of the questions that I ask all my guests on this show is about some of the factors of success that they have identified. Some people speak about discipline, hard work, focus, faith, values; what would you say have been some of the key drivers to your success?
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	All those words chosen have been chosen carefully and they are very much correct. You need the discipline to achieve whatever you want to achieve, whether you want to be a ballet dancer, you want to be a swimmer, you want to run on the track and compete against some of the best in the world, whatever, get into the lab, whatever you want to do, you've got to have the discipline to be able to achieve your desire and your dream and that's where the element of choice comes back again; choose the right environment for you to sustain your dream. You've got to focus, if you don't focus you won't be able to achieve anything because there are so many things that compete for your attention, for an example, let's go back to the youth days, you are there on campus, there's a party going on somewhere and you know it's a Friday evening, but you've got an exam or an assignment for Monday, you've got to make a choice, you can either say okay, it's Friday, we'll go and party, I'll do something on Saturday, you go and party, you come back on Saturday, you are very tired and exhausted so there's minimal energy into what you want to achieve, so you expect that kind of outcome. So, you've got to also be able to accept that you can't have it all and deny yourself certain things, because your mind is set on a particular goal, because you can't have it all, you really cannot have it all. It's about choice and have faith in yourself to say yes you can, you just need the support, you just need the correct environment that is conducive for you to achieve your goals, but you must have faith in what you want to do, it doesn't matter what it is, have the faith that you do

	<p>have the ability and along the way you'll find challenges. Sometime you will fail, you'll fall and President Mandela has put it very succinctly; the greatest moment that you need to give to yourself is that when you have fallen, you've tripped and fallen, you have to be able to stand up, brush off the dust and walk on. The same road that we are walking on, that's when you trip off and fall, brush off the dust, continue your walk and you'll see that it will lead you to your destiny. Of course in order to be able to do that you need to have strong values, you have to have those strong values that will back up that emotion, that desire for you to achieve that and what is also important is that it's also easier when you are surrounded by people who share the same values, then it means you are backing yourselves up and assisting each other along the way. Those are some of the things that we need to consider when we set ourselves for goals and the commitment of being able to push, no matter how long it takes, we push and push on.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Ambassador there are many, many more questions that I would love to ask you, but unfortunately we are running out of time, so lastly, as we close out our conversation today and in commemoration of the forty-fifth anniversary of Youth Day, which is remembering June the 16th 1976, please will you share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to pass onto young girls and women in Africa that are listening to our show today?</p>
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	<p>1976 occupies the pages of our history today, because on that day the youth of South Africa stood together to express themselves in the manner that captured the attention of the whole world. The UN at that point was aware of that, governments that had representation in South Africa were aware of what was happening, it was at the peak of the struggle against an unjust system. People came forward, confronted this gigantic heavily militarised system and many lost their lives, before then, on that day and after that day, so they shed their blood for us to be able to do what me and you are doing today, for us to be able to have a moment of reflection as a people, because they've laid down their lives for us to be able to pave the way and lay out the foundation for a better future. We have the opportunity of a young continent, our continent is very young, that is our human capital, utilise this youth, the future is in Africa, this is the generation that is going to change the face of South Africa. The generation of ourselves and other people have made their contribution, they can go thus far, they need to pick up the baton and say Solomon Mahlangu didn't die in vain, Oscar Pietersen didn't die in vain and many, many other people who were hanged, Solomon Mahlangu and others did not die in vain because here the youth will be saying we are picking up the baton, we are moving forward and indeed our continent will be a better place in the future.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you for that very poignant message and I think my one key take out of today's conversation has really been about choices, that the future is founded on the choices of the past and the generation that we have today are the people who are going to adjust the course of the future for the people that are to come. Thank you very much for joining us today.</p>
AMBASSADOR MAHANYELE	<p>You are welcome and thank you for inviting me onto your programme.</p>
	<p>PROGRAMME END</p>