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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: DR. SHIRLY ZINN - NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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, from South Africa, is Dr. Shirley Zinn whose career has spanned academic, corporate and public sector roles. Some of her former positions include Group Head of Human Resources at Woolworths Holdings Limited, Head of Human Resources of Standard Bank South Africa; General Manager for Human Resources at the South African Revenue Service. She has also previously served as an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, as well as Adjunct Professor at the University of Cape Town, to mention a few. In addition, she has received numerous accolades like the World Human Resources Congress for Excellence in Global HR Leadership, Africa's Most Influential Woman in Business and Government in the SME sector by CEO Global. Welcome to the show!
DR. ZINN	Thank you so much for having me.
DR. MALKA	Looking at your profile it reminds me of a wonderful leadership quote by Harry Firestone; "The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership." Your leadership roles have been geared around human resources and cultivating talent for organisations; please can you walk us through some of the key milestones in your journey so far?
DR. ZINN	Thank you so much Amaleya for having me and a warm welcome to your listeners. Maybe I will just roll back a little bit and talk about, you know, how it all came about, but I do believe that just to your point about leadership roles are geared around unlocking and unleashing talent and potential in people is really the biggest purpose I can say for me in the work that I do and it's not coincidental that that is the case. I grew up on the Cape Flats here in the Western Cape, as we know the Cape Flats is a spatial arrangement set up by the apartheid government to create divisions amongst racial lines, it's a place of deep socio-economic challenges, of gender-based violence, of gangsterism, of alcoholism and enormous unemployment and abject poverty and very little hope and incredible despair and this is where we grew up, but somehow in all of that, my parents didn't finish their high school themselves, but they understood the importance of education and that somehow education would be our liberation and continued to encourage us to learn and to study, whether it be formally or informally and my dad used to sit us down from a very, very early age and he used to say please do not get sucked into this place, please find a way to make something of yourself and move yourself from this place and I said to him eventually, you know, what is it really that you would like us to achieve and he said please just pass your matric, just get your high school certificate and then you can get a proper job and you can take care of yourself, and my mother on the flipside was more about, well my father was more about vision, although he didn't use fancy words like that, my mom was more about values and I was going to come to realise that vision, values and purpose is such an

	<p>important part of one's narrative ultimately and my mom used to talk about respect for other people, she used to talk about humility but not a humility that is defined as you being weak, because sometimes humility is viewed, if you are too humble people think well now they can walk all over you, but it is a humility that enables you to question your assumptions, to listen to other people's ideas, to get up when you are down, to apologise when you are wrong and it is that kind of humility that she was talking about and she talked about the necessity for hard work combined with excellence, she talked about you've got to do what you do to the very best of your ability, whatever it is that you do, You don't have to be perfect, because I think that's the other trap we fall into very quickly and so just do what you can do to the best of your ability on a given day and then perhaps one final message I think that was important for me and has carried me through, especially this last eighteen to twenty odd months, is around the importance of kindness and generosity of spirit and service to humanity and our humanness and that we shouldn't lose all of that in the hustle and bustle of life. And so for me those were the key messages which have influenced and shaped my thinking for many, many years and so, you know, my sister and I went to a primary school up the road and it became very dangerous to walk that road and we sat with my grandmother on the other side of the school, you know, the extended family and the support structures are so important as well and I think that's a very big thing for us to reflect on as well, we live in a world now of remote work, hybrid work, extended hours, enormous pressure and how much has it has to be valued when you have people around you, whether it be family or just neighbours, that we're creating a world that is supportive of our children and children can be in safe places and learn and grow and thrive, especially girls. My grandmother, as tough as she was, was the one that instilled in us, you know, the whole notion of being disciplined and creating order out of confusion and arriving on time and so that was kind of the formative years and I think those are such important elements of what it means to actually try and be resilient and deal with the curve balls of life, deal with tragedy and I'm happy to talk more about this as we go on and how we unlock that potential within people and just one last little snip; when we went to high school and I finally got to matric in 1979, I had two teachers that actually sat me down and said to me you know what, you're not the brightest pea in the pod here, we know you're working hard but you're not kind of smashing the lights out, you're not the big "A" student, but we believe that you have the potential to do so much more than you think is imaginable and I was blown off my chair, because the first part of the sentence was, okay so what are we saying and the second part of the sentence was wow they actually think that I have potential and so I said what do you mean and they said we would like you to go home and have a conversation about university with your parents and have that conversation tonight and come back tomorrow, if they said yes, we're going to help you to fill in your forms and apply for a bursary and we believe that this is something that you can do. That is where the true unlocking of potential came from, those two teachers and this is the power of education; to give hope, to plant the seed, to say to someone that you have talent, you have magic, you can do this and we're here to support you.</p>
DR. MALKA	Thinking about all of those different dynamics, I loved what you said in terms of your mom providing some of the aspects of values, your grandmother contributing again to looking at different components of values, your dad having the element of vision and when you look at all of those elements

	<p>together it reminds me of Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle, in terms of being purpose driven and although we may not all have the words or the fancy terms to get to that point, that’s the essence and that’s the directive and when you’ve got that strong support structure and people who believe in you, like you mentioned with your teachers, that just gives you this boost, I think, and almost an anchor as well, to know that what you’re doing is right.</p>
DR. ZINN	<p>I believe that as men and women in this world where we believe in the values of fairness and of transparency and of optimism and wanting to build a better world, if not for ourselves, then for our children into the future, that we need to harness our collective energy and get behind a single vision and a shared set of goals that says we want to leave this world a better place and yes, we have many challenges around gender and race and socio-economic challenges and the difficulties that come with that, but I think that if we choose to live our lives with meaning and purpose and truly want to make a difference to this world, we can work through the conflict, we can work through the, you know, through the remnants of apartheid and you know how it manifests in workplaces, in our communities, in our societies and we can find a way to break down those barriers and as Nelson Mandela says, you know, “it always seems impossible until it’s done” and find our core reason for being and care for each other more and be more diligent. And I remember and whenever I use the word care, I like to think or it takes me to a time when I was on the executive committee of one of the banks and you know you talk about care and you talk about, you know, love in a boardroom for people it’s like, “We are a business Shirley, this soft and fluffy stuff doesn’t belong here,” but I think that all the research that is coming out is beginning to show that organisations that care about their people; people being staff, customers, stakeholders, communities, regulators, shareholders or whoever it is that is in your circle of relationships, if you’ve got a duty of care, if you are diligent in managing your relationships, if you are respectful to people, you can truly do amazing things together and I think that while our legacy or our history has been a very tough one, I think there’s so much opportunity because there’s so much work to be done, for us to deal with things like under-representation of women in the workplace or on board or in decision-making positions, because we can join hands with men who believe in fairness and in equity and in a better world, that don’t want to see their own children, their own girls, in the same predicament in the next twenty years from now and just infuse some of that thinking into the strategies, into the policies, into the structures, into the framework, into career development, into everything that we do. We still have the opportunity to do so much more and today I just hope that through this conversation we can encourage people who are able to influence this, to step up even further and to lift the agenda and take it to the next level.</p>
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	<p>Today we’re talking to Dr. Shirley Zinn who serves as a non-executive director on several corporate boards with a focus on strategic HR, business leadership, transformation and women’s development. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thinking about some of those elements that you’ve just mentioned, particularly when we look at aspects of under-representation of women, I am always so disappointed that here we are, 2022, and we are still having this conversation which doesn’t seem to be shifting the numbers. There was a PWC report in 2021 which published remuneration of executive directors in</p>

	<p>South Africa and besides looking at the gender pay gaps, which I think are quite frankly ridiculous at 50% disparity between median and upper quartiles, what I also found particularly alarming is that the only 13% of executives in this survey, and executives being CEOs and CFOs, were women. Given your human resource experience, what are some of your let's say expectations and experiences of how we can get more women into decision-making positions?</p>
DR. ZINN	<p>That's a very profound question and I can, you know, only just share some of my personal journey in trying to respond to that because I think the research is very clear and there's a whole body of research beginning to evolve and emerge around the paucity of women on boards and I think that you've got to look, from a human resources point of view, the entire kind of value chain if you like, so from the time we recruit women into junior and entry level jobs and then the development and the support for those women and growth of those women into middle management, into senior management roles, the sponsorship of those women, the mentorship of those women and creating the diversity and inclusion and equity culture that it doesn't squeeze women out and my own personal story here is, just to really make it seriously real; I have had an amazing career through most of my corporate life, all of my qualifications are in education; human resources and everything I know about it I have learned without any qualification. Sometimes we can start somewhere but the journey takes us somewhere else, so the education foundation was a very important part of moving into human resource management and understanding a bit of psychology and human development and what makes people thrive and what makes people grow and then infusing that into thinking about diversity and inclusion and career development for women and doing that deliberately, not just ticking boxes and saying okay, we'll get the numbers right but then there's the revolving door and people leave because they've just been given such a horrible experience in the workplace and there's still a lot of some of the traditional command and control cultures that prevail and when my career was literally flying I was at a company called Reckitt Benckiser, I was head of Africa Middle East and I had never imagined that my career could move so wonderfully and I would have had all these opportunities, often in male dominated environments. I found that one has to not only be working harder, one has to be well prepared, well organised, really present yourself in a compelling way and it takes a lot of emotional and time and effort and energy to actually do that. I figured out eventually, you know, in order to win respect from people I need to present myself in that way, I need to be able to give and take as well and not always be wanting my own way in these meetings, but I think that as we navigated and had some of the tougher conversations about calling it out, you know, when you see this kind of behaviour that starts to exclude people or especially women, you know, micro-bullying and micro-management, one actually has to call it out and one has to say that that was unfair if you believe in the value of fairness, that wasn't respectful, that was unacceptable and one has actually got to, you know, do that, otherwise it doesn't stop.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>But do you think that part of this, and change is one, I'd say having a person like you, occupying these types of positions because you're a woman, you understand the challenges that women experience both the positive as well as the negative, and secondly, of being able to drive policy changes within an organisation to call out negative behaviour and to try to correct cultures into a stream which would be more accommodating?</p>
DR. ZINN	<p>Ja so the policy frameworks that follow how we recruit, how we retain,</p>

how we create inclusive cultures, how we hold people accountable when they step out of the frame, how we engage so that it's not only a compliance issue, it's about genuine authentic relationships with people and understanding that diversity isn't about just gender and race, but it's about innovation, it's about creativity, it's about honouring another person's perspective. I think if we can find a way to bring convergence to all of that and then take and pull that through all our policies, pull that to what organisations are beginning to articulate now is their purpose in the world, there's been a lot of introspection, especially through COVID now about, you know, what is the purpose of business in society and in the world, so everything from diligence of care, to clients and staff to the environment, to good governance, to calling out corruption; all of those elements now are beginning to converge and that we are custodians of what the future is and we cannot be oblivious to that because we want to be profitable and that's our only purpose in life and I think, you know, before it was all about the business of business is business, but business is morphing and changing at an incredible rate right now and COVID has been a catalyst in many ways for that and the same applies to women I suppose if you want to use that overlay, but I just wanted to go back quickly to my story on Reckitt Benckiser because I think that is where a very important pivotal move in my own life, where I came to realise how important this is. So we came back from Boston and we came back to Cape Town, we moved to Pretoria because I landed a job in the Department of Public Service and Administration and then at some point we moved to Morningside in Sandton because of the job at Reckitt Benckiser, but what happened to me was, you know, we used to come up and down to Cape Town for Christmas holidays, etcetera, I gave birth to our only child, our only son Jamie, in the middle of my doctorate at Harvard, which is another story within the story and we brought him home, at the same time I brought a doctorate home I brought this little baby home and you know, life was just amazing and then my career took off and, you know, trying to keep all of these things together as women is another thing that we often, you know, beat ourselves up about, are we good mothers, are we good partners and how do we continue to be growing and taking on the bigger jobs at work and should we or shouldn't we and the self-doubt and all of the things that comes with it. But long story short, on 3rd of January 2003, to be exact, we lost Jamie in a terrible car accident and I am very fortunate to have lived through that, because they thought that in the first 24 hours I might not make it because of the injuries and Kevin, my husband, who was driving the car, somebody hit us from behind, he had very severe injuries as well but he had to call the paramedics, he had to see to Jamie, who had passed away on the scene, he had to get me to the hospital, it was the most devastating moment of our lives and of course during this period now I still have a build-up to that day and it just, you know, it was a terrible time and a devastating time I think, you know, for many of us, so I just want to hold up people as well who have lost loved ones during this time, because this is our reality and that we are vulnerable as human beings, wherever we find ourselves and often we don't give ourselves the opportunity to express that vulnerability, you know, on how does this change perhaps our perspective on things and so when this happened I didn't ever think I was going to come back. I lost my confidence, I had a long healing process to go through, I had to stop working at Reckitt Benckiser because it took me a very long time and although they didn't want me to leave, they said to me just take your leave and come back when you're healthy and there were flowers and great

	<p>wishes from everyone and there was so much kindness and generosity and reaching out and I think what happened to me during that time was a shift that said if I ever have to go back to corporate, I want every corporate to care about its people in this way and I didn't think I was ever going to go back, so I started Shirley Zinn Consulting and did a little bit of client work and projects and eventually some search firm came along and said the South African Revenue Services is looking for a head of HR, would you want to show up for the interview and I said no, I couldn't do that, but eventually through much persuasion I went and this is where I was able to rebuild my strength, but literally having to harness my intellectual capability, my emotional capability, my social capability and perhaps my spiritual anchors, whatever that might mean, it all had to come together to get me to lift myself up, get the help I need and find a way to move forward and I'm telling you this because we were talking about, earlier, about the you know the whole value chain of somebody, especially women, applying for a job at entry level and working your way through an organisation or multiple organisations and the journeys that we have to go through as women in workplaces is often that they do not understand these complexities or appreciate it or care, quite frankly. So I think that a lot of what we're seeing in, to go back to your original question about, you know, what can we do to ensure that we get more women on boards, it's when I am able to sit in a boardroom myself, which I have been very fortunate to, you know, serve on five listed boards all at the same time now, to say that we have to make sure that in every opportunity we get we are having a common conversation, not about we need to get the numbers, but about the richness, the depth, the opportunity to do what is right.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you for sharing your story and I'm sorry it was so devastating, listening to you it also made me realise the authenticity that comes through from you and the fact that as a whole person, a real person living in this world, these are unfortunately the realities that we experience and taking into consideration the last twenty-four odd months of the COVID pandemic, these are things that people experience and we cannot divorce the person from the position. We are whole people and these are elements that we encounter on a daily basis, that's where I think that word that you use, "care", comes through so strongly, so thank you for sharing your story on that and giving us such a reality check.</p>
DR. ZINN	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	<p>Today we're talking to Dr. Shirley Zinn who serves as a non-executive director on several corporate boards with a focus on strategic HR, business leadership, transformation and women's development. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk..</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Dr. Zinn we've been talking about aspects of women in the workplace, naturally because of us having this gender based show, we've focused a lot within the corporate space, there's one more question that I wanted to ask you in relation to corporate boards, it stems from a report that I came across from Professor Anita Bosch from Stellenbosch University, which covered women in South African boards and also extended across to BRICS nations and she used the following descriptions describing different phases of female representation at board level, the first one was; "One woman on a board is the invisibility phase, two women on a board the conspiracy phase, three women on a board, critical mass." What are your views about these phases?</p>
DR. ZINN	<p>Ja, I have been following Professor Bosch's work with great interest and I do believe that what she is saying is true because I've been there in many ways, you know, I have often been an only woman on an executive</p>

committee when I was an executive and now I can often find myself as being the one woman on the board and ja, there is an invisibility phase and it's incredible hard work to kind of be visible and be heard. I must say, the boards that I have been serving on, they have really worked to get, you know, to the critical mass stage, you can't just have one or two and think you can tick the box, because you do not get a balanced dynamic going in a conversation when you only have, out of ten people, one or two that is differently gendered, if you like. So I think that that is a huge challenge and I think, you know, representivity now, I mean we're focusing on gender but it's across LGBTQI+ it's around age, it's around, you know, millennials, it's around depth of experience and skills and all sorts of different perspectives and lenses that people bring into a meeting, but the fact is that there are some boards with zero women on them and that just has to be completely unacceptable. In a world where we have all these regulations, legislations, we don't necessarily have quotas as they have in other countries like Norway and others where they have actually said 50% and we'll get there and if we don't these are the consequences, so we've made it voluntary here for, you know, you put forward your targets and you report on how you're progressing against your targets every year, for example, if you're listed on the JSE for example or otherwise it's government and BEE and all of those disclosures that you have to make. So the unfortunate reality is that there are a lot of organisations still in the zero space and we need to figure out, you know, what special sanction needs to go into that, because they slip through the reports every year and because they see that oh well there are no real consequences and nothing happens and there's so much focus on some of the other elements, there needs to be some groundswell around that and then I think, you know, where there's one or two we need to be saying we need to see one or two more, you know, when a vacancy emerges, you have to be properly focused on making sure that you are going to choose a woman for your next vacancy and then there's always the story of but we can't find them, you know, and then you also have the virtuous circle of you start to choose people, the same people, and then people start to have conflicts of interest because now we're on this board and we're on that board and they're doing things together and then it's not optimal, so it doesn't work and I think the important thing is also the networks and not networks just for the sake of I know somebody who is going to help me to get onto a board, it's real genuine relationships with people who really care about your progress and you care about theirs as well. So, being on professional bodies, having your voice heard, not just being a passive member but being active in your work and in your profession, joining in initiatives like *Business Engage*, I'm serving on that particular board as well so I'm not pushing it but I'm saying that they represent what was called the 30% club where it was a worldwide movement from both men and women in the C-Suite to say we will move towards 30%, we're now saying we want to move ... we must get at least a 50% now, okay, but the concept was there that, you know, equality and representation and then I'm on the *International Women's Federation of South Africa* for example and other bodies like *BWA* and organisations like this where we can strategise, where we can get together, where we can sponsor, mentor and support and give of our time to grow others, not just women helping women, but men helping men and women to understand the role of women in society, in businesses, in the economy. I think those are some of the things that we have to do and now is probably the very best time to start to address these questions in a very significant way and going

	<p>beyond the theory to the practice and a call to action that says let's try and be more inclusive, let's look at all the possibilities of women and then there are lots of incubators and women in the pipeline. The problem with that often can be is you're always in training and you never get the opportunity and all of us have to be given the opportunity because all of us have to start somewhere with something, so I think we have to stop this narrative about we can't find people and we need to broaden our horizons and we need to go out there and give the opportunity to younger women especially coming through the ranks.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you for all of those statements and also about the bodies, organisations that are out there and doing the work to try to build a more inclusive society, to try to mentor, coach and sponsor women so that they get access to these opportunities, because you're right, if you don't have access to an opportunity one will never know how you can deliver, how you can perform, but the evidence comes through when you're presented with that opportunity and are able to deliver on it. We are unfortunately coming towards the end of the show; I know that in our conversation earlier you spoke about some of the value elements from your mom, the vision elements from your dad and those for me have constituted as areas that are factors to your success, but to just elaborate on that point, please can you tell us about some of the factors that you consider to have contributed towards your success?</p>
DR. ZINN	<p>I think that I was very fortunate to have parents who were not financially, you know, capable, but who had a vision around, you know, education would liberate you somehow, so I continued to learn, I think that was the big message. Now I quite literally took that to heart, I'm not advocating that everybody goes and does, you know, all these degrees, but what I am saying is that again because the world is changing so quickly, a lot of what we learned a few years ago is obsolete, so we've got to stay on top of our game, we've got to continue to learn, we've got to be in peer groups where we share information, we've got to listen to these sorts of podcasts and we need to find the role models, people who we can aspire to, maybe people we might even meet and reaching out to people. So what my book has actually also done is enable people who I might never have engaged with to share their story with me and I think we all have stories and often we don't share that enough to inspire others and so that was really what the essence of that book was about, for me just saying no matter what the adversity is, no matter, you know, what the trauma or the tragedy is, we have amazing resilience to rise above that in ways that doesn't diminish us, but you know, grounds us and lifts us even higher. These are all sort of pivotal for me and I know that some of those hopefully could be pivotal for many others out there.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>For me the amazing thing about this question, is that everybody comes from a different context, there is no one recipe for success and I think it's so refreshing for people to hear that, to know that and to understand that their journey is their journey, but to take learnings from other women who have walked their own respective journey's to see that maybe that element will work for me and I can incorporate that into my particular success story. I get a sense that you are fed by so many different people and that different people touch your life in different ways, but equally so, you give so much back, you don't hold onto that selfishly, it's about being able to impart it and being able to share it. So lastly, as we close out our conversation today and as we roll into 2022, I'm still struggling getting 2022 off of my tongue, please share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to pass onto girls and women in Africa that are listening to our show.</p>

DR. ZINN	Thank you so much, that's such an honour to do that and I want to encourage girls and women to share their stories because we all have one and I want to say to them "let nothing dim the light that shines from within in you", and I'm now quoting from Maya Angelou, and I have learned in life that I still have a lot to learn, so remain teachable and then one of my favourites from Nelson Mandela is "a good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination" and I am fundamentally an optimist. So those are some of the things that I think are important and perhaps one last thing; "what counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived, it is the difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead" I think he has put that in such a profound way, in such a wise way and I think that to every woman listening out there across Africa, we know that with the rising, you know, of the sun and the coming of the rain and the ebb and the flow of the oceans, we have a huge contribution to make to life and the quality of life on this planet for our communities and for our children and for our families and for our places of work and our own businesses, if we're running our own businesses as well and that I just want to wish them a wonderful 2022, one that is safe, one that is peaceful, one that is deeply fulfilling and one that is incredibly prosperous, not just in a material way, but in a deep spiritual way, so thank you very much for allowing me to give that message, from my heart to yours.
DR. MALKA	Thank you for sharing that special message as well as for sharing your conversation and your story with us on the show today, it's been a pleasure to host you.
DR. ZINN	Thank you so much Amaleya and wishing you the very best too.
DR. MALKA	Happy, happy new year!
DR. ZINN	PROGRAMME END