

PROGRAM DATE: 2022-02-10

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS LALELA MSWANE – MISS SOUTH AFRICA 2021

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 Miss SA 2021, Lalela Mswane, who was also crowned second runner-up for Miss Universe 2021. Firstly welcome to the show and congratulations!
MS MSWANE	Thank Dr. Amaleya thank you for having me, what an honour I am so very excited to be here.
DR. MALKA	To start with, please can you tell us a little bit more about your Miss SA journey; what got you into joining and participating in the competition?
MS MSWANE	Entering Miss South Africa was in pursuit of a childhood dream, I had always envisaged myself as a Miss South Africa and I think life got in the way a little bit, you know, with self-esteem issues when you grow up, but when I was at varsity I just felt this dream hadn't really left my heart, so I needed to do something about that and then I actually had wanted to enter initially in 2020, COVID then happened, so I thought oh my word what's going on, all the uncertainty, I was so scared, I didn't even think we were going to live. So 2021 came and we were all still alive, well, yes fortunately and I thought if not now then when.
DR. MALKA	Why not indeed and how would you say that it has changed your life?
MS MSWANE	Oh wow, I think that I actually probably took it for granted just how much my life would change from the time they said "Miss South Africa 2021 is Lalela Mswane" my life is just like night and day. It has been the most fulfilling, most challenging chapter of my life thus far, I can't omit that part, but I have grown in so many ways, I am not the same person, definitely not the same person in all the positive aspects here.
DR. MALKA	That's fantastic and I always think that with something as transformative as this platform, there is one aspect which you have mentioned is the personal growth, but as the same time as you developing as an individual, you also have a tremendous array of responsibilities to your role. Can you shed some light on what some of those are?
MS MSWANE	Well I think it is goes without saying that you are now a brand ambassador and a leader and with an empowerment platform such as Miss South Africa, you know, you are an agent of change, not only in South Africa but, you know, the goal is that it is globally, that in itself is a very, very huge responsibility, one that I am not daunted by, but I don't take for granted at all.
DR. MALKA	On that notion of being a brand ambassador, part of that journey is that you are a role model to young women, possibly even older women that are emulating you, seeing you and like you said, it's not just from I would say from a South African perspective, but also from a continent-wide point of view. So how do you feel about being a role model?
MS MSWANE	It's an honour, it is humbling, it really, really is, but with that said I think it has also brought in an element of being extra careful with anything that I really do, you know, before I was very carefree, yes I am still myself, I always been so authentic, but you know certain things have consequences

	and when so many people are watching you, so many young ladies, you need to always act accordingly and at times, you know, I am human, your emotions want to get the better of you, particularly in trying times as we have seen, but always having to pick the higher road purely because you are an example to people. It's been challenging but so beautiful as well, it is very transformative as we spoke about, but in a very beautiful way.
DR. MALKA	And on that notion of role models, can you tell us about a couple of your role models?
MS MSWANE	My mom, it goes without saying, she is my absolute everything, I always say I am tenacity personified because of my mom, I wouldn't be where I am today without her, definitely, definitely and another lady whom I look up to very much is Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, aahh, need I say more, she is a powerhouse of a woman and when I grow up I definitely want to be like her.
DR. MALKA	You are so right, I can't attest to know your mom, but having been exposed to Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, she is absolutely phenomenal and has so many lessons to give for us all to learn and one of the things that I recall vividly from our conversation with her was how she said she had put into play the anti-apartheid playbook on being able to get men to participate in the gender equality debate and to make sure that it wasn't just a woman's conversation and women taking action, but men were coming to the party too.
MS MSWANE	Very important, very imperative.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Miss SA 2021, Lalela Mswane, who is also the second runner-up for Miss Universe 2021. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Now, freshly into your role as Miss SA, just two months afterwards, you were off to Global Miss Universe and crowned second runner-up and I mean at this event there is between 80 to 100 countries that are participating, sending their contestants who compete across a variety of different criteria; how did you feel being in that global arena?
MS MSWANE	It was so surreal Dr. Amaleya, super, super surreal, literally an opportunity of a lifetime and when I think about it I thought I had an out of body experience and I am like was that me, it's the most, I don't know, probably one of the most special moments of my life. It is truly an honour.
DR. MALKA	And I know that in those environments you are tested across all sorts of themes and categories, but something which stood out for me was words that you said and before I say them, as I mentioned earlier in our call offline, that something I found very poignant from the former Secretary of State in the USA, Madeline Albright, were the words that she used was "There's a special place in hell for women who don't support other women" and I will always associate her with that sentence and in the same manner, similarly, the words that you used and I will just repeat the quote for our listeners, is that you urged young women "to choose courage over comfort at every opportunity that they get." So in turn, those are going to be the words that I associate with you. Please can you unpack that statement for us?
MS MSWANE	Well Dr. Amaleya I have always believed that anything worthwhile, you know, needs a bit of courage to tackle, like anything that I have had to do in life, you know, everything I have been ... anything worthwhile for me hasn't been the easiest, it has been difficult but extremely rewarding. I do implore young women, everyone actually, to pick courage over comfort, to stand for something, even if it means standing with very few people or standing alone, doing things that resonate with you. I think we lack that

	in society, but I mean in order to do that you need to pick courage and, you know, not be comfortable, those two things don't go hand-in-hand unfortunately.
DR. MALKA	You're absolutely right, those elements which test you to the limits are possibly the areas that stretch you and force you to grow. Being on this platform, you were with the most intelligent women in the world, representing their respective countries; being a young woman, can you tell us, what were some of the pressing issues that were under discussion from a global context, from a gender context?
MS MSWANE	Definitely environmental issues; climate change to be specific. Miss Universe this year focused on sustainability in fashion, you know, and that sort of just initiated the conversations about environmental issues and climate change and a quote that resonated with me throughout all these discussions was we don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children and it is indeed so, so true, because as the current occupiers of the earth we have the onus of taking care of it, not only for ourselves but for generations to come. Very cliché, but it's also just in the little acts that we do daily; imagine we all, you know, did all these little acts daily, little by little a little becomes a lot, you know. Things like driving your car less, I have tried implementing that, it is working; I also feel I am a lot less stressed, I am not complaining, but yes, environmental issues were definitely highlighted at Miss Universe.
DR. MALKA	Apart from the issue being highlighted, I imagine there must have been a fair amount of discussion on people trying to solution for things; what would you say have been some of the key areas that perhaps we could implement individually, like you talking about driving your car less?
MS MSWANE	Yes well in the aspect and space of pageantry for instance, we all know that fashion is a big thing and we all have to wear our most glamorous outfits and nobody wants to be seen in the same clothing twice, so we really focused on reducing fast fashion and actually a fun fact is my wardrobe by Miss Universe comprised of outfits that had been worn by my predecessors from all these previous years, you know, so that was quite interesting, to see how I would, you know, wear certain things, interpret their outfits and at the same time while being impactful and being conscious of the stuff that I was wearing. So it's truly little things like that Dr. Amaleya.
DR. MALKA	I love the repurposing aspect. Staying on this theme of your Miss Universe experience, you had the opportunity to interact with young women from across the world; gender equality is unfortunately a worldwide reality and in relation ...
MS MSWANE	... yes ...
DR. MALKA	... to this year's theme for International Women's Day; Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow; In part of the way that they had unpacked this theme, they recognised the contribution of women and girls around the world who are leading the change for climate change adaptation, mitigation and response in order to build a more sustainable future for everyone. How do you think we can reduce gender equality to build a more sustainable future and I know it's a bit like saying here's a crystal ball, but just share some of your views.
MS MSWANE	It's deep rooted ideas Doc, like gender stereotypes in general that I think we are struggling with, just reversing those ideas, which I know seems ... I am just saying this and it all sounds, you know, very easy, but these are very complex issues, but I do really think they are the root cause of so many of these gender inequalities that we see, such as the gender pay gap,

	you know, that is still so existent, you know, women are being paid much less by virtue of being women and that is super, super unfortunate and it is funny, because of Miss Universe, so many of the ladies shared stories of because I am a woman, they said I couldn't, dot, dot, dot, you know, so many things purely because we are women and there they were, living testimonies of just how powerful we are, the strength we possess, the ability, the capability that we possess. So, definitely gender stereotypes and laws.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Miss SA 2021, Lalela Mswane, who is also the second runner-up for Miss Universe 2021. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	One of the things that I wanted to ask you is how you plan to use the Miss SA platform and the types of projects that you hope to roll out?
MS MSWANE	So I know there are various social ills in South Africa, I am very aware of that, but when I entered Miss South Africa, when I embarked on this journey, I made unemployment the cause of my choice, purely because the youth is just primarily affected by it and up until I was employed by Miss South Africa, I knew how that felt, you know, being qualified yet the opportunities are so far and few in-between. So I then focused on a campaign for #beready which focuses on imparting entrepreneurial skills to the youth in an aim to sort of empower them so that they can create their own economic and employment opportunities and so with the assistance of the Miss South Africa organisation, the campaign will be underway I think in the next couple of weeks, very, very soon, so I am super, super excited to see that, you know, becoming a practical thing.
DR. MALKA	Could you just repeat the name of your campaign, it broke up slightly?
MS MSWANE	Oh I apologise; hashtagbeready.
DR. MALKA	#beready.
MS MSWANE	Yes.
DR. MALKA	When you were talking about unemployment, it is such a tremendous challenge in our country, if I recall from towards the end of last year when Stats SA released their official figures, so unemployment figures at the time then were recorded as 34.9%, but then, when you take up the expanded definition of unemployment, that takes it to 46.6%, nearly 50% of the South African population is effectively unemployed.
MS MSWANE	Yes, it is shocking, it is and it's not even ... I viewed unemployment from all sorts of aspects and, you know, it is not even a lack of, for me, the skills, a lot of people have been educated. I went to varsity with so many people that sit today without any jobs, it is the opportunities that are lacking, so but I also feel like at a point we need to sort of take our power back and see how we can initiate ways to, you know, change our own lives, to be of impact to not only ourselves but other people around us by creating these employment opportunities, you know. The notion of building your own table as opposed to waiting for seats to be allocated to you.
DR. MALKA	And that is a really important mind-shift because I think a lot of us have been almost ingrained in this thinking of going to school, going to university, earning your qualifications, you are going to have a job at the end of the day, but the reality is that those employment opportunities have not been created and we have to start becoming more self-sufficient and...
MS MSWANE	... yes ...
DR. MALKA	... creating jobs.
MS MSWANE	Of course, we can't wait on the state to assist us, we need to take our

	power back, put matters into our own hands and, you know, try to see what we can do with that, I mean I still do believe that the state could assist, but you can initiate things, see where you can go and that's where I truly want to make people feel empowered through my campaign, to let them to know, a change of perspective because as you've just said, I think growing up, the only way we know is you need to go to school, then get to varsity, obtain your qualification and then you are secured of some sort of financial success, which is not really true anymore.
DR. MALKA	I know it's early days, that your campaign is still in the process of kicking off, but do you see imparting these entrepreneurial skills through a series of workshops, through scaling things up with online courses or programmes; if you can share with us some of the high level views?
MS MSWANE	So I actually have various parts of my campaign and I am super, super excited, from one where people can obtain funding, like younger people, like 18 if you've got a bright idea and you are able to pitch it and have people who would be of assistance in whatever field you are in, really pitch to people that matter or would be of impact, you know, within your business field or idea that you are going for and then another one is what I said would be the imparting of the skills. I think a lot of people don't have the entrepreneurial know-how, you may sit with this idea and it would be a great idea, but where do you even begin, how do you go on about everything, so we're just providing a more practical way of, you know, showing people how things can be done and achieved entrepreneurially, so you do feel empowered.
DR. MALKA	It's a fantastic initiative and in the stats and the figures that we've just highlighted it is sorely needed in our country to drive and boost the economy forward.
MS MSWANE	Definitely.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Miss SA 2021, Lalela Mswane, who is also the second runner-up for Miss Universe 2021. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Going back a little bit to yourself; you mentioned that you have your degree and I understand you are a bachelor of Law graduate and prior to doing your degree at the University of Pretoria, you studied ballet with the Royal Academy of Dance; with your academic achievements it sets you in stead of the long line of women who have walked before you, walked this journey and also have their academic achievements to use this as a sounding board or a platform to step up. Can you please share with us your views on education as a tool of empowerment to help women?
MS MSWANE	Oh that certainly is true, I have always said that education for women is truly just so empowering, I almost said empowerful ... empowering, purely because it grants women the opportunity to participate in the formal labour market, you know, yes we could argue that there are women already but we take it for granted that I don't think like in rural areas, access to education, particularly for women, and that's driven by gender stereotype and gender roles and it's super, super unfortunate that we still, in 2022 sit with such issues, but I mean educate the women and the whole of society benefits really.
DR. MALKA	It does indeed and if you think about things, if a woman is educated, her children become more educated, she will look after them more effectively because she's got the tools ...
MS MSWANE	... ja ...
DR. MALKA	... and hopefully driving on from an income point of view. Our programme is

	all about gender equality and increasingly, and I'm glad, it has become more and more of a global focus, but part of that element and driving the momentum is building female leadership capacity, it is important for the future of women worldwide; how do you see female leadership?
MS MSWANE	I think female leadership is the only leadership and I say this because women have the ability to lead with so much love and kindness, I think also nurturing. Another big thing that I value in women leadership is our ability to multi-task, that for me is very amazing and the fact that we are very empathetic.
DR. MALKA	Those are all important qualities which adds to the diversity dimension of things and you know ...
MS MSWANE	... ja ...
DR. MALKA	... last year I was reading an article, one aspect we were talking about for instance was women in rural areas not having the education to be equipped to go on and advance themselves, but even if we look today, broadly speaking there is less than 5% of female CEO's in South Africa of listed companies, which really is shocking. Which areas do you think we need to build on the most to help benefit women in the future?
MS MSWANE	That's a broad question. I don't know if I am answering your question if I say that I feel like where we struggle, well areas which hinder women's progress is definitely certain ideas, such as gender stereotypes and gender roles, but beneath that, purely by virtue of your gender, you should be confined to certain positions or certain roles in life and I think that is truly ... I mean it holds us back from so much and it is a very deeply rooted notion that has been in existence for so many years, but I don't know how we should reverse that or what the steps are necessary to reverse that, but I definitely that as a cause that prevents us from progressing as women.
DR. MALKA	Your observation is so, so true. Today we live in a world of social media and access and it's almost a deluge of being plugged in and we just receive all of this information and part of the beauty of it is that we can be in touch with literally anyone, but ...
MS MSWANE	... yes ...
DR. MALKA	... social media has had a massive impact on being able to accelerate and getting movements to drive change forward or to bring about some type of reaction. In your opinion, how do you think events and aspects of social media and movements help in terms of being able to change the narrative of gender equality?
MS MSWANE	I think for very long, for lots of years women often felt silenced, social media provides a platform for you to really speak out and be unapologetically so, it's just been beautiful to see people and I don't like calling women who have gone through certain things victims, more like victors, but really sort of claim their power and social media also holds people accountable, we are able to name and shame, to claim our power back and that for me has been so beautiful to witness, you know, and the support that we all give each other on social media, we do get a sense of women empowerment and unity and that's truly been amazing to see.
DR. MALKA	It fascinates me with the scale that you can reach from a geographic point of view but also the numbers of followers that you can attract and communicate and connect with.
MS MSWANE	Definitely Doc, I think social media is definitely the future, it really, really is and I mean we can all say all these negative things about social media, but I mean with good comes bad, right, and for me one of the highlights has just been seeing how you can be supported and not feel alone when

	you have to go through certain things, sort of like the movement like Me Too and certain pages on social media that I follow that are very sad, but when you find yourself in certain situations and you go and see these pages, you sort of feel empowered to know that there is light, I will be fine, I'm not alone, the support element of it all is truly comforting.
DR. MALKA	Thanks for sharing your perspective.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Miss SA 2021, Lalela Mswane, who is also the second runner-up for Miss Universe 2021. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	One of the questions that I ask my guests on this programme who have all made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about what they consider to be some of the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people will talk about perseverance, hard work, particular people in their life, but everyone's got their own special recipe which is unique to themselves, so could you share with us what have been some of your key drivers of success?
MS MSWANE	Definitely tenacity, I always say that is an innate quality that I possess, my tenacity is something that I value so much. My authenticity, I have always been a person that has never shied away from being myself, no matter how that would have been perceived and I also clearly believe that in life in order to succeed in anything really, we need to be consistent, I am a very consistent person, so with that I have been working towards what I deem is my little ladder of success.
DR. MALKA	Very nice and as you were growing up, I am sure there must have been some pivotal moments which have helped shape and steer you into the direction that you've reached today?
MS MSWANE	Yes definitely, as I said, I have always been tenacious but the passing of my dad 12 years ago really just turned my life upside down, but I am the type of person like if I am finding a situation that is quite unfavourable, I always just am motivated to rise, it is just that little bit of, I don't know, a kick, a punch where now I really have to make it. I often say if you want to see me really do well, tell me I can't do something or put me in situations that seem impossible, then you will truly see me rise. So definitely the loss of my dad, I then saw that I need to work harder than I have ever worked before in my entire life to just secure my future and to ensure that I still grow up and my dreams are valid and my dreams are realised, they're fulfilled and I am of impact in the world and all the things that I set out to do prior to his passing, I still get to achieve and even, you know, more than that. So that's really shaped or been a pivotal part of my life.
DR. MALKA	I am sorry to hear that he passed on, but it is great that he lives within you and can still drive you forwards.
MS MSWANE	Definitely.
DR. MALKA	You mentioned your mom earlier as being a role model and instrumental and almost behind the tenacity aspect of yourself; please tell us a little bit more about her and what's so special?
MS MSWANE	Oh, what's not so special? I love that lady, I genuinely do and you know what, the strength of seeing my mom rise above my dad's passing and just how she carries everything with so much grace, you know, that is where I learned compassion, genuine grace and compassion and always just choosing the high road, being the bigger person for my mom, her life changed, she lost her soul mate, the love of her life and she still carried on with life, championed through and never once complained, not a single

	time Doc. We never heard my mom complain once and she had to now lead the family and my siblings and I, take me through varsity, take my siblings to varsity single-handedly, she never once complained, I am still to hear her complain and to be able to do that, I mean, it is telling of the woman that she is.
DR. MALKA	It sounds like she's got incredible strength.
MS MSWANE	She does.
DR. MALKA	And lastly, as we close out today's conversation, please can you use this platform to share a few words of inspiration or motivation to young girls that are listening to us on the continent?
MS MSWANE	I have often said I pick a word for the year, that's like sort of my theme for my year going forward and last year I made my word relentless and this year it remains relentless purely because I have just seen how my rein demands me to be relentless, so in closing I'd like to just implore young girls all over the continent to be relentless in pursuit of everything that they desire and to always know that they can absolutely go for and achieve anything they want and since the beginning of time we have had everything within us to achieve anything we wanted, it was the world that convinced us that we did not.
DR. MALKA	Fantastic statement. It's been great chatting to you really appreciate your time, thank you for joining us.
MS MSWANE	Thank you Doc.
	PROGRAMME END