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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS YVONNE CHAKA CHAKA – AWARD WINNING SINGER,  
COMPOSER AND HUMANITARIAN

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 a familiar voice who first came on the show eight years ago, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, who most of us associate with her prolific music career which spans over three decades. Her hit records have earned numerous awards, be it SAMAs, KORAs, and she has performed across the globe with other mega star musicians like Bono, Stevie Wonder, Alicia Keys, Aretha Franklin, Angelique Kidjo, Annie Lennox, Youssou N'Dour, Queen and Johnny Clegg, and whilst her music has entertained millions, her humanitarian efforts campaigning for causes that affect millions of people, some of which include being chosen by Nelson Mandela as the First Ambassador of his 46664 Campaign; serving as an Ambassador for the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund; becoming a Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Rollback Malaria Partnership and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Malaria. She has also been awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in silver for her contribution to the field of music and social cohesion. Welcome to the show!
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>Wow, thank you Doctor Amaleya, at some point I thought who is she talking about, but thank you very much to you and your listeners.</b>
DR. MALKA	You have touched people in so many ways, today I'd like to revisit some of our previous conversations and also tap into your journey since we last met. So to begin with, from an early age you realised that you could utilise your talents to fight inequalities and injustices, which are reflected in some of your hit songs, I Cry for Freedom and Motherland, and I'd like to share with listeners that Nelson Mandela wrote to you when he was in prison, describing how your music sustained him and you did something very unique with that note; please can you tell us more about that period, in particular those songs and how you felt when you received that letter and what you did afterwards?
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>Well it was quite nostalgic really, a friend of mine, Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabusa called me (there were no cell phones at that time) on my mother's landline to say Winnie Mandela would like to see you and I freaked out because at that time we thought okay, this is a political person, you know, what have I done? So I obliged and I went and it was just a note for that matter, you know, coming from your fathers, the note said, but because I was very scared that who am I to even get this note, I took it and I chewed it; I tore up the thing and I chewed it because my mother was not very happy, she said you know what if the special branch if they come here and they arrest us and really, why are you getting notes like this, are you a comrade; you know how older people were. Looking back today, I wish, if I had kept it I really would have auctioned it for a lot of money, but that really humbled me, that a person like that, I am sure he did that to lots of other people and Winnie Mandela for me was the epitome of love, of caring, of being there for ordinary people like us, because whether we had gone to shows, whether it was at different venues, you know, Winnie Mandela supported us, she supported us and she always insisted that sing songs that are provocative, that will get these people to know what is happening. She did so much and she unleashed that potential in us to be</b>

	<b>able to know that when you are given a platform, use it correctly.</b>
DR. MALKA	That's the thing about you in particular, is the way that you utilise your platform, the way that you use your voice and lyrics as instruments. Music has always been this huge inspiration to people but it's the words behind that, it's the story to tell; what influences your song writing and creativity?
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>You know Doc, growing up in Soweto during apartheid, I think all my age-groups, all my peers know and then they knew as well, it wasn't very easy; we were non-entities, we didn't vote, we didn't even know who our ministers were at that time, whether it was Pik Botha or it was Malan, we didn't know them because we were not part of the system, we were just not counted, but we continued with our lives. So when you were given a chance or a platform, I guess each and every one of us were conscientised because we knew that the platform was not levelled for all of us, so when you are given this platform, what do you do, you conscientise people, you tell the stories, you talk about the atrocities that are happening in our environment and where we were living. I mean I know so many people who went to school and were fed by money from brewing, you know, whether it was brewing Umqombothi, where police would come and spill that drink ordinary people were trying to make the living out of, so it was total abuse; we had to protect each other. I remember in 1976, I was ten years old when the riots started, my eldest sister who is three years older than me, they were going out there and toi-toing and having stones and shields and nothing else and these young boys were actually shooting with live ammunition. We did not even know what teargas was and for them, we were like just stupid people, they were throwing the teargas, we didn't know what it was so we would run to it to want to see what is the smoke and it will gas us, we would start coughing, we would start wetting ourselves; these young boys who were in these Hippos, you know, these armed cars would really laugh. So we have such a history to tell, so when you look back into those things and you have been in that situation, what a pleasure, because now you've got a story to tell; whether in an art form, whether drawing a sculpture, whether singing it, whether acting it or using it in a theatre form; so there are so many things that gave us an ammunition to be able to talk about them or sing about these issues.</b>
DR. MALKA	When you think about this, gosh more than 46 years ago, which in the space of history is a relatively short timeframe, so much has happened to be transformative; thinking back to that period and comparing it to today, do you feel that South Africa is in a place that you could have imagined it to be in?
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>You know I don't think we ever thought we would have freedom in our lifetime, but we knew that so many people were incarcerated, other people were killed and other people left the country to go and fight for this freedom. So there's so many people who were involved and so many organisations and so many countries that were really involved in wanting to see South Africa being a home for all those who lived in it and fast forward, so much had gone into it and thank you to all those who supported this whole endeavour and today people at least they live anywhere, people are able to do the things that they were prevented from doing. I remember as a ten-year-old going to school, at Unified Train Station a train left me because I was at the first class station where only white people were supposed to be and the guy probably could even see these three girls, that they were late going to school and he just thought if we are at the platform they would let us in, but because we were at the wrong platform for white people only, they shut the train and they left. So it's all those things that really come to my mind, but today we are walking freely. What has changed is that so much now is happening, freedom came with so many things; there's gender based violence, there's</b>

	<b>intolerance, you know, the intolerance of your LGBTQI, there's rape of women, killings of women, maiming of women, so to me those are those things and even though we say we are free, there are still so many people who have no roofs over their heads, who still live in squalor and so those are the things that are really, really happening and you ask yourself is this correct?</b>
DR. MALKA	Thinking about some of those points that you mentioned; gender- based violence, poverty, intolerance, a lot of those components affect women in particular.
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>Most of them. Most of them, you know, I am a strong believer that every woman needs a man and every man needs a woman, but women go through so much. Some are trapped in their own spaces, in their own homes, a woman in South Africa cannot walk, just take a walk and be free, without being harassed, without being raped, without being held up. A woman is not safe in their own homes and you then ask yourself, what has changed, what has gone wrong into the society, particularly we African people, we come from so far, we looked out for one another, we cared for one another, we were there for one another, but all of a sudden things have really changed. You can't even leave your daughter or even your son with an uncle or with a neighbour, because you don't know if that child would be sodomised, would be abused or would be raped or killed and be buried in a shallow grave. So these are just the social ills that are there today and you ask yourself what has gone wrong and what do we need to do to go back to the drawing board to fix all the ills that are there.</b>
DR. MALKA	And I would imagine with someone like you in particular, being a mom to four boys, I know that they're grown up now, but these are the realities and the responsibilities that come with motherhood, of socialisation and teaching what's right and what's wrong.
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>You know I constantly say I don't think it's just easy being a mother, whether you're a mother to a daughter or you're a mother to a boy child, it becomes very difficult to be a mother of a boy, because you can say I am giving all these teachings to this particular child and you don't know what they will turn out to be. Even a girl, you can instil good morals in them and they can decide we want to be whatever we want to be, so I think it's for us as the society, because you know, things are fast growing today and our children aspire to be different things, what they see, what they want to be, what they wish for and these things sometimes get them into trouble.</b>
	<b>AD BREAK</b>
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to award winning singer, composer and humanitarian, Ms Yvonne Chaka Chaka. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	At the moment we're talking about gender-based violence, we're talking about gender related issues and you also brought into the conversation aspects of social media, which years ago people didn't have to contend with. With us being a gender-based programme we often look at issues that affect women, especially young women and we know that there's been a number of different social movements like Me Too, Time's Up, publicising sexual harassment; unfortunately many women in the entertainment sector in particular confess to being victims of harassment; what do you think about these campaigns in terms of being able to transition and change thinking and make a difference?
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<b>You know Dr Amaleya I think these campaigns are very good, they have to be there, there is a reason for them to be there, because sometimes you sit there as a woman and think I'm not alone, it did happen to her, at least she's coming out, I can't sit there and die inside; at least somebody is coming out. So I think these campaigns are very important and it's</b>

	<p>imperative that we need to listen to those who come out and say it did happen to me and so with these campaigns, what happens next? Are people being socialised in a correct way, are people being conscientised, are people being made aware of the nitty-gritties to look at or to look out for, for not falling into the trap of being abused, because sometimes you get abused and you are in that situation, you are not even aware of it. So I am very, very happy with all those men and women because you know there are men who are very good and who advocate for women and who support women's issues and those women who stand out there and come out, I am one of those people who constantly say let us not say men are trash, because we're playing into their hands, because when we say that then they think I've got nothing to lose and they end up being that trash. Let us call them when they do trashy stuff, to say this will not be accepted, but we want you to know that a woman was taken out of a man's rib to be loved, to be protected and not to be seen as an object of desire, but to be seen as a flower.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You're right, we cannot tar everybody with the same brush, because there are good people out there and unfortunately it's the negative side of the things that we hear more often than not. Staying for a moment with the entertainment industry because that really is one of your core sectors; how do you feel as a woman in the music industry in terms of equal opportunities?</p>
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<p>You now the music industry has totally transformed from where I come from and from where those that I look up to, things have really changed. You've had real superstars like Dolly Rathebe, Miriam Makeba, Abigail Kubeka, Letta Mbulu, who would sing in venues which were perceived to be for white people and when police were coming to raid, these people would have to run to the kitchen and wash dishes and pretend to be maids. So when I think of those things and just visualise them, it makes me very angry, but on the other hand, it makes me say we persevered, when it was very hard and you've opened the path for us, we are able to perform in different venues without being harassed, these are the people I want to pay the tribute to, because they did it for the love of it, they did it to cultivate and to preserve the culture, you know, the creative culture and I have a lot of respect for artists who came long before us. Things have changed now for the better, there's social media, people can be seen anywhere in the world, which were things we did not have, you know, we only had radio and television and newspapers to rely on to expose your art, to exposure your works, but now things have really changed and I am really, really happy but sometimes it becomes a huge problem when you hear even these younger artists to say, you know, a producer or a promoter is asking for favours; these are the things that really make me upset, because we cannot afford to exploit young people who want to be in this industry. Let them be here out of merit, because they've got the talent, because they are ready to learn, they are ready to burst their bubble and be whatever they want to be and so I urge whoever, whether it is a woman promoter or a man promoter, never take anybody for granted and do not expose them in the funny shenanigans for them to be up there. So when I do all my classes or you know, do my public speaking with young people I always say to them, have your feet firm on the ground, but stand your ground as well and say to whoever, I am here because I think I've got what it takes and I don't need any favours and no-one will make me do you favours, because you stand firm and do what you are here for. So it becomes very, very sad because, you know, other people just think ag, it's okay, let me do it because I need this job, I need to be there, I need this publicity; I don't think it's correct. People use their spaces to exploit others and that should not be allowed, not at all.</p>

DR. MALKA	Very wise words and I think those traverse every industry. We were talking offline earlier about the creative dynamic and let's say the remuneration factor in the creative space. I know that there has been some contention in terms of bills that are pending from the Copy Rights Bill to the Performers Bill; can you just elaborate on that and what that means to you in particular?
<b>MS CHAKA CHAKA</b>	<b>You know it's actually very sad that up to today we're still really fighting for the Copyright Bill. People cannot have their works published out there and get exploited. So in South Africa we know that the Copyright Bill apparently was tagged incorrectly, so it needs to be tagged correctly, so I want to ask all the powers that be, obviously from the president's office, to make sure that that is done, because there's a difference between the Copyright Bill and the Performer's Bill. People who are in the performance spaces have to be looked well after as well, because it's sometimes very sad that people who are in the creative industry are taken as poor cousins, it's like we don't generate any funds into the country, whereas this is an industry that generates a lot of money. So for younger artists sometimes it becomes very difficult to even say to them, there is longevity there, whether a person is a writer or an actor or a musician a person who does sculptures, it becomes very difficult because it's like this is the industry that is forgotten. So if all the bills can be put in place and the copyright is done correctly, I think our people will see the need to be part of this big creative industry. CISAC, which is an organisation that looks after the composers and all the creative people, we want to make sure that people's works are exposed out there, but as the Vice President of CISAC I always said we need to make sure that we are credited for what we have worked for and what we have done. So the exposure that needs to be there, needs to be done correctly, people should be correctly remunerated, we need proper exposure, but I think the most important for me, it should be being remunerated correctly. So it's all those things, fair pay, fair play and fair share in the market as well.</b>
DR. MALKA	And once people can recognise the, let's say the tangible benefits from a remuneration perspective and really be able to quantify, then there's a higher appreciation, because unfortunately people do still have this prevailing attitude of they judge worth according to the price tag that's attached to it.
<b>MS CHAKA CHAKA</b>	<b>It's very true, I think even today people will pay a lot of money to go and watch a classical event, because there's an orchestra and they would pay that R500, for example, for a ticket and you then say there's a show for Black Mambazo or Mahotella Queens or Brenda Fassie or Yvonne, people are happy to pay R100 or something like that, but obviously there's different genres of music, but we are all in this creative space and if there's some kind of appreciation as well and the powers that be, knowing that the bills are in the right space, even those people, you know, who are either actors or musicians, they will know the importance of paying for their VAT, paying for their taxes as well and just begin a proper governance for their part of work. No, people don't see the need of paying taxes, people don't need their contributing and it becomes a vicious cycle, so there is a lot of education that needs to be done around that.</b>
DR. MALKA	You are very prominent in educating people and not just in terms of people in the entertainment industry, but thinking more towards some of your humanitarian efforts, particularly in the malaria space; please can you share with us how you have used your platform to be able to amplify the voices of the voiceless and contribute to society within the African context on issues like malaria?
<b>MS CHAKA CHAKA</b>	<b>You know I was very lucky to have started singing in 1985 and by 1986/1987, I was travelling to places like Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and</b>

	<p>Kenya and my popularity through Africa just grew and I never took that for granted, for me it was like these are the people who make me who I am and how do I then contribute as well. So obviously I think it is true that you never thought it could be until it happens to you. I think as a young performer I was happy just to travel and be on stage and earn that salary, you know, and having people wanting autographs, but as I grew and understood and saw what was happening in different countries as I was travelling, I thought there is a need to do something, you know, as I said when people give you a platform to perform, you need to see the need to serve as well. So I would do small things here and there in Uganda because there was home for HIV, people I would go and visit and donate a little bit of money. When I went to Zimbabwe there was a place, a home for abandoned children so I went there and I donated and did an auction, just to make sure that those people have got something and I've always seen a need to when I travel to every country, I wanted to know from whoever brought me, to say okay is there a home where one can go and visit or donate and sometimes it was not monetary, but to go and say to the people I see your plight, I understand how you feel, that I know that you are all human just like me and I have just come to spend the day with you. So in 2005 I travelled to Gabon with my band and little did I know that one of my musicians contracted malaria and when we came back to South Africa, she unfortunately died. That was a big wake-up call for me. I read about malaria, I knew about malaria but I must say for me it was like I am a South African, there's no malaria in South Africa and we talk very little about malaria, but I knew when I went to Zambia and Kenya and other countries I had to have that yellow card. So when that happened something said to me I have to do something and whilst I was thinking of doing something, I didn't even know where to start and what to do, I got a call from UNICEF, they were looking for a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Africa, but they actually wanted me to do something about HIV because there was so much controversy in South Africa at the time about ARVs and all those things. So I sat there and I listened and I had encountered different people who they told they were HIV, but I mean there was so much stigma there, people were not accepted, people would not want to take ARVs, there was a big problem about ARVs and there was just this big whole hullabaloo about HIV, so I thought I don't think I want to get into that, it's too political. So, I listened and then I got invited to go to Ethiopia, so when I got there, you know, they explained to me and I thought okay, what does it then take to be a goodwill ambassador and they explained to me Bjorn, bless his soul wherever he is, he passed on and I told them the story of Phumzile, it was exactly six months after Phumzile's death and I said if I were to work as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador or getting a support from a big organisation, I would love to give malaria a face, because one of my musicians had died from that and that's how it started. So, in the past sixteen years just travelling to different countries, making sure that people have got their long lasting meds, people do allow people to come and do the indoor residualspraying and that when people felt like they were sick from malaria, they would take their medication. It has made me feel very, very good to say at least walking the talk and seeing people's lives being saved, I say to myself I may have wanted to do something, but God knew my destiny and I was able to do the little that I have done.</p>
	<b>AD BREAK</b>
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to award winning singer, composer and humanitarian, Ms Yvonne Chaka Chaka. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.

DR. MALKA	You've really had this incredible impact, touching people's lives and borrowing part of your expression, almost art as ammunition, to get messages to the right people but also using your platform to combine with UNICEF and being a goodwill ambassador for malaria. In keeping with this theme, one of the other areas that you've done is that you have created your own radio programme, which is in the same vein as this show, focusing on women, called 'Women Radio'; please tell us how that came into being and how it's going?
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<p><b>Thank you very much Doc, you know, in 2014 I had this idea, because I had worked for a radio station before, but I just thought different radio stations, you know, you come and you talk about something and you leave, you talk about something and that's it. So I thought okay I think I need a platform where women can go and express themselves, where women can know their limitations and accept their shortcomings, but stand firm to say this is who we are and we've got the right to be here and we've got a purpose; that's how Women Radio was born. Fast forward, you know, sometimes I think of so many things and I wake up at night and I write them down and some of them, I pursue them and some of them I just leave them, so in 2018 I was invited by the Gates Foundation to go to Rwanda, there was a conference for maternal health, so I went with one of my friends, Bonnie and I said you know, this is what I have always wanted to do, so she said to me okay talk about it, so just what I have been telling you, I thought you know, there's a need for a women radio station where women will just do everything from the producer being a woman, the technician being a woman, the compiler being a woman, everything just a space where women can just say this is our space, we are in control and we want to do things and she looked at me and she said do you know women fight when they are together, I said that's that, we want them to understand each other, learn from one another, tolerate one another and say things that they would not say when there is a male. So that's how Women Radio was born, because we are not a commercial radio station or a social enterprise and an advocacy radio station, this is what I call, we then tried to get funding, it was very difficult, eventually we got a little bit of funding, thank you to DBSA and Women Radio is up and running. So we work with young people, we work with women, they are the technicians, they do everything, so it's a platform where we promote women's music from all walks of life, from the whole of Africa. We do play men, but those who would think good about women, who will appreciate women, so we've got different programmes, you know, on Women Radio, so What's On Her Mind to On The Couch, which is my programme. From the other we've got, you know, transgender on our radio station, so it's about tolerance, it's about respect, it's about serving, we are not here to judge anybody, I think for us it's our business, it's not to judge anybody, but to bring in all women, learn from one another, stand firm, know why we are here and to say this is our radio station and we are going to bring out our voices, without mocking any man, without putting anybody down, but saying this is our place and this is our safe space and it's a movement of women.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	I think that it's a great platform and a way of being able to showcase the voices of women and the stories of women; what we need to hear, what we want to hear and being in this environment and setup, I completely concur with what you've said.
MS CHAKA CHAKA	Well yes I must say, it just makes me so happy when I see all these young people coming into the office, going into the studio, our youngest anchor is 14 years old, her programme is called Youth'ish. She talks about the problems that youth people have and it's just so interesting to us, you know, seeing these beautiful young ladies just coming and it just makes

	<p>me so happy, because I learn from them as well, you know, but here there are no limits and obviously language is very important, but they say it as it is, they talk about their problems, they talk about their opportunities, so we unleash their potential here to be able to say anything without the feeling of being judged or ostracised or limitations On Women Radio there is absolutely no limitation.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Well, we love the sound of that and the safe space that you've created for people to share and collaborate. We're unfortunately running out of time, which is always a challenge, but as we close out today, please can you share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that you'd like to pass onto girls and women in the continent who are listening to us?</p>
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<p>I just want to say thank you very much to you first and this channel, that you've given me the platform, you could have chosen anybody else, but I am just grateful that I'm alive, to start with, you know COVID has been a big problem or a big challenge, you know, we've lost loved ones, companies have shut down, people have lost their jobs, I know people committed suicide because they could not afford their homes, you know, their cars and all sorts of things, so but I am just grateful for the life. I think COVID has really taught us that we are human and we are vulnerable as well and that we should be grateful, you know, when COVID started a radio station called me and did an interview and I said this is time for us to showcase our Ubuntu and this person said why, I said we don't know where we are going, we don't know how long is this going to take, but this really humbles you to even know who your neighbour is, whether they have had something to eat or what, you know, in the townships where most of our people live, we know each other, we know one another, but in the 'burbs people don't care for one another, you don't even know who your neighbour is, but I think there's a lot that COVID has showed us because we ended up, all of us, even those who had money, they couldn't travel, they couldn't go anywhere, we were all kept in one place and we were made to be here. So it shows that we are always so vulnerable and we need to love and appreciate each other and appreciate and respect the space we are in and appreciate the environment, because you know, obviously whatever happened, it's like don't care for this environment and the planet, so the planet obviously would get upset as well. But I wanted to say, you know, like I said from the beginning; we all need each other, every woman does need a man and every man needs a woman, so there is no-one who is better than anyone and those who are same sex, you know, relationships as well, we are all God's children, God doesn't have step children, it's his business to judge, not ours. So it's all about human rights, it's all about respecting the cultures, it's all about respecting each other and it's all about all of us saying we were born with nothing and when we die we take absolutely nothing with us.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Very poignant words. As always, it's a pleasure chatting to you and thank you for coming back onto our channel eight years since we first met officially.</p>
MS CHAKA CHAKA	<p>Thank you very much for calling on me, as you said, eight years later and you still look as beautiful as possible and this programme has stood through the test of time and it's still going strong, thanks to you and everyone on this channel.</p>
PROGRAMME END	