

PROGRAM DATE: 2022-02-24

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: AMBASSADOR LIBRADA ELA ASUMU – EQUATORIAL GUINEA’S  
AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH AFRICA

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 Equatorial Guinea’s Ambassador to South Africa; Ambassador Librada Ela Asumu. Some of her previous appointments include working at the United Nations, specifically UNICEF Child Protection Officer and Social Protection as well as in Equatorial Guinea’s Ministry of Social Welfare and Women Protection and the Ministry of External Affairs and Cooperation. Welcome to the show Ambassador!
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<b>Thank you so much for inviting me it is a pleasure, thank you.</b>
DR. MALKA	Ambassador over the years you have served your country in various roles, both within the public as well as the private sector; can you please share with us a few key landmarks in your career?
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<b>As we are talking about empowerment and this mission is about that, my landmark that really make the point in my life is when I joined the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women Promotion, because at that time I was coming from Foreign Affairs. The social sector is about human beings, I discovered at thirty years old that I was a woman, when I started being director of women’s affairs I didn’t know there was any specific concerns on women, I didn’t know that until thirty years. It is really a specific point of my life that changed a lot of things in my mindset because that makes me to realise how important it is to do things in the context you are doing it. At that moment I had my mindset a my very, I can say theoretical and some people just stopped me in the street after an interview with myself on the television or radio, to tell me no, you are very young, it is not like that, you have to put your feet on the earth and know what is going on here, what women are facing if you have a solution, you must be solution in the reality of that people and it was really a strange moment when I was in the village, but debating in a political event and I had to speak to the people in my mother tongue, that is Fang, that was another top of my moments, because I realised that many of these people, even if I wanted to transmit a message, it was not so easy because I didn’t have any really master of my mother tongue and as far as I tried to get information on papers in Spanish, that is our official language, to translate it in the real term that people, local people can understand, you have to go to their base. That was an important moment that shows me that if you want to find somebody’s solution, you have to go on the feet of that person, you cannot stay in your feet and try to give them what you think they need, you have to give them what they really need by knowing the reality that they face, that was very important for me. Another landmark of my career is when I realised that being a single woman is like a second-class citizen, it is not that I was a single woman, I was married, but I realised that the people really think that when a woman is single she doesn’t have any value because a man has not given enough value to marry her and I was really upset to discover that, I had had the chance to get married, but it is not an outcome itself. I think the women we have to</b>

	<p>realise that getting married it is has a lot of things to say or to do with this empowerment we are talking about, but it is not an outcome itself, it is a good thing, it is a marital status, but that is all. Another point that is very important in my life, in my career is when I decided to make a media on women. With my magazine I really gave the voice of many women that have a story to tell in different levels, even people that are illiterate but they have a very good story and I give them the opportunity to voice up their story, their lives and to give with their experience lessons learned to another people and I think there is a lot of wisdom in many women and many men, but let's talk about women, that are not literate, they haven't got school skills but they have a bit of wisdom that we can use to make it better.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You have shed light on the realities that women experience. You said earlier the fact that at thirty years of age you are seeing a different perspective of being a woman; the issue of empathy, of walking in someone else's footsteps and understanding from their perspective that that is going to find relevant solutions for them. The fact that our identities have been so compromised on our status; if you are married, that that validates you and not you as an individual and then the fourth element, which I think is so wonderful and really aligns with the platform we have, of being able to create a space, an environment where women can share their stories and viewpoints. I wanted to ask you; what is the status of gender equality in Equatorial Guinea?</p>
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<p><b>It is an interesting, important and difficult question. Gender for me first of all is a question of balance, it is not a question of being more powerful as women or less powerful as men or whatever. In that perspective, in my country officially there is not any regulations that is against men or against women, everything is really based on equality, but (there is a but) the reality seems and in my opinion I am really upset to discover that in the latest years instead of going to more balance we are really coming in the kind of situation that we accept that women are second-class citizens and women accept it, even women promote it and the men also they are very comfortable with that, but let me go to the perspective of carrying a baggage on your back. I think that if we don't have this balance, it is very heavy for the man to hold the country, to hold the world on their shoulders alone while we can share responsibilities, we can share knowledge, we can share a lot of things and we can do more for our countries if we are more balanced. So I believe institutionally we are a good country, institutionally from the gender perspective speaking, but I feel we have to do more in the conscience of the people on their behaviour that really proves that this balance we are talking about institutionally, politically, sometimes is really not there and I believe that women ourselves. we really have to treat our children, the male children as human beings and the girl children as human beings, not as male or female, I think that is why we have the societies that we have and we are complaining. I think there is a point that we can try to work a little bit more to move all the steps. Another point that I can say on Equatorial Guinea is that I believe there is a real political push on women empowerment, but it is like you can be empowered but until this level, if you want to move forward you are exaggerating because you will become a bad mother, a bad spouse, a bad daughter, whatever, if you try to push yourself over the limits that everybody says as woman you can try to reach that point, but beyond that, don't try because you have all the community against you.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>What you are saying is so true, that we wear and juggle multiple hats, multiple responsibilities, but how do you think we can help break that ceiling of expectations of women, you can be at this level, but you can't go to the next</p>

	level; what do you think we can do to break that and change invalid perspectives?
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<b>It's a question of confidence in ourselves. All that I am telling you I have experienced in myself in my own skin, I try to be as realistic as I can because I think it is important to move from the theory and try to give your case study, let's say, you can find I am an ambassador, I am in a very big office, I have good responsibility, I represent my state, whatever, but it is for me very sad when I realise that even a single young male of 14 years believes that I go behind him because he is male and I am a woman. So, whatever you do there is always like a footstep that is behind you telling you don't go far because you are only a woman, you are only a woman, you are only a woman, so you have to do your roles as women. Without the change of our mindset, having more skills, reading a lot, knowing about what happens in different countries, the more balance and the less balance you can compare where women have a better status and where they have a less status than you and you can compare to see the strength point in each of them to move forward. I also think that we have to make girls to really believe that they have a dream and they can conquer their dream, they don't have to put limitations on their world and I believe women must do more than we are doing to really achieve that balance.</b>
DR. MALKA	Ambassador you have really highlighted the issue that particularly and I would say within African society that being a female leader touches on sensitive topics from a cultural point of view, religion, tradition and the fact that we are judged differently to our male counterparts and we have to create these efforts to change that stereotypical thinking.
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<b>The stereotypes is something that I really hate because as I read somewhere, it is a bad story that somebody has just said and it becomes the story and I think stereotypes they really persevered by the people that don't have enough confidence in themselves. My belief is that if you have confidence in yourself, whether you are a man or you are a woman, you are not afraid of somebody else's confidence in himself because it doesn't really touch your own beliefs, your own mindset, your own status as a person. That is why I think it is very important that men have enough confidence in themselves, that they don't find that women's empowerment is a kind of danger for them or a kind of disruption, I think it is the word, correct, disruption of the norms. A book that I was really scandalised that they gave the right to women and now all the families are broken because the women are so focused on their professionalism, on the career that they have forgotten their duties as mothers, duties as spouses and whatever. It is not the truth, we don't have to choose every time. I think we can try to make things balance, making your career, making your motherhood, making whatever, but for women we are somehow pushed to choose or you are single and you are a second-class citizen, but you have a career or you are a good mother, a good spouse and you confirm that you are married, you have status, this is like the highest thing you can do.</b>
DR. MALKA	Do you know what else reminds me of what you are saying, is that a lot of people are locked into stereotypes and they feel comfortable by putting you in their box; it is not your box, it is them.
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<b>Oh you are always in somebody's box and I think this danger that I am talking about, it is about control. You don't need to control even women's thinking; you don't need to do it if you are sure of yours. You don't really need to be upset at a woman or the girls who want to be better than their fathers or they have to improve and go beyond that point of that society admits they can go.</b>
DR. MALKA	Ambassador thank you for sharing some of your perspectives and also the realities that women continue to confront from a gender equality point of view.

	<b>AD BREAK</b>
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Equatorial Guinea's Ambassador to South Africa, Ambassador Librada Ela Asumu. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador you are coming into the role of serving as Ambassador in South Africa for Equatorial Guinea; can you tell us about a few of the objectives that you would like to accomplish during your ambassadorship?
<b>AMBASSADOR ASUMU</b>	<b>I am new so I am still knowing the country, trying to put my feet on earth, but I would like to really make South African country, government institutions, people, Equatorial Guinea in different sectors because I think an exchange a relationship is also about knowing the best possible the other part. I don't want to stay only in politics, I want to move forward and beyond that to really make relationship exchange, partnership agreements in the most sectors I can reach, the more happy I will be and I also want to know South Africa, the best possible. I think I can do better if I know better who I am dealing with and I can try to make this relationship a good friendship. We start the relationship years ago, there were men, my predecessor, I am trying to give this female aspects on things, a practical way of doing things and going to the reality also more than the political aspect that also there you have the guidelines to follow, the government institutions, so this is easy to do because you have to do what is being done and you follow the instructions of your head of state, but you have to do more than that to make the difference while you are here and you are the first female ambassador of Equatorial Guinea to South Africa, I will try to make my signature as women.</b>
DR. MALKA	Ambassador I wanted to ask you from an Equatorial Guinea point of view about a few of the women who have been important change agents in the country?
<b>AMBASSADOR ASUMU</b>	<b>When I read that question yesterday I was thinking a lot; what will I answer. I have one person in my mind that it may seem to be politically correct that I say that, I am going to say that but I am going to explain why I say it and the second person it might seem to be a little bit of "preportency" is it okay to say that?</b>
DR. MALKA	Arrogant?
<b>AMBASSADOR ASUMU</b>	<b>Yes, in it seems to be some kind of that but I want to explain. The two ladies I have chosen, the first one is the First Lady. Why the first lady? That is why I said it can sound like oh yes she wants to be politically correct, she is Ambassador and so on, but I am going to explain why I chose the first lady; Madam Constancia Mangue Nsue Okomo (Mangue de Obiang), I have said the full name, her full name and later the first name given to the First Lady aspect, because I admire this woman because despite the fact of being first lady, she has all the power, the money but she goes to work every day, she is a teacher, she has been working and building a real structure of schools, building schools, primary schools until she created the foundation that really relates all the schools, it is when I realised myself that there were many school children than all these years. She could be like other First Lady, I am not going to talk about anyone, but she could be making the shopping every day and making beauty every day and just being in this position of First Lady, but she is an entrepreneur and she gives her profession as teacher and pushing the sector of education is making the difference in the kind of schools she is really behind and it is something that for me it is very important because I believe education is one of the main keys to change any society. So, interesting in that, being First Lady she could have done something that is more productive, but she stepped in her teacher mindset to push education, this is for me she is making a difference and she is</b>

	giving us, for all of women that we are in some specific position that we have to believe in ourselves and we can do it. You can be First Lady, you can be as a spouse, but you can also be a professional and you can do entrepreneurship, you can do politics, you can do whatever you want.
DR. MALKA	And education is so empowering, it is enduring, it is not just a legacy that you leave behind as an individual with a network of schools and systems she has created ...
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	... it is more than that ...
DR. MALKA	Absolutely.
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	It is more than that, that is why for me, it is important to really highlight this aspect why I believe she is making a real difference, because having a specific position as First Lady you don't need to do a lot, you can just stay behind your husband and live very well, it is enough, but in her case she is pushing the principle point of her work is on her professional sector, that is why I really clap my hand for her in that case and she is making a difference and she is also working in the agricultural sector, we see her on television making the plantations and so on, like everybody, so it gives you a mindset that it is not because you are in a chair, you are in a good position that you cannot just dirty your hands doing the real job, I think that is important and the second woman is myself. That is why I said it might sound arrogant, but I'm going to say why I decided to say myself, because I realised with the years, when I started this women issues with the magazine, EWAIISO, there was a real impact on my society. One aspect is giving the voice, as I said before, to women that maybe they don't have any other scenario they can talk about their story or they can share their experience, but also given us the opportunity to be visible, to be celebrated, because the people also use the people that are more let's say economically more comfortable, they use us in my papers to celebrate their marriages, the anniversary and so on. You will never be in the Times or whatever big magazine to celebrate yourself and your success. I give them the floor and the space where we can celebrate our success, our welfare, our money or whatever, on the same hand we have this place to share stories, good stories, on the other hand we can celebrate our success. This is a difference I have really made, my work. Another point that maybe it can sound for you it doesn't have any importance, for me it is very important; I was working on fashion and I realised the models were conceived as prostitutes by the community and with the work that we are doing during almost three years, for once the community, the people start to consider modelling is not prostitution, it is a professional sector, whatever, and also for the same girls they were all in the university, in the secondary school and they didn't abandon their themselves because they have success modelling. It is something that makes different that there is now we can say like, I quote, "an industry on fashion" and I can say I give my small contribution to really build girls' confidence, I want to be related on fashion, without being abuse or conceived as just easy girls. I am very happy for that, for example and I think it is a very good thing, I am very proud of being some of the contributors of that because girls are very vulnerable and everything can just set up in a bad way if you don't give them the floor of confidence, yes.
DR. MALKA	I'd like to continue our conversation with you on your personal level. One of the questions that I ask all my guests on this show is about some of the factors that they consider have contributed to their success. Everybody brings a different recipe of ingredients, so if you could please share with us what have been some of the key drivers that have contributed to your success?
AMBASSADOR	I don't have any specific ingredients. My key aspects is a very

ASUMU	<p>professional and very personal aspect, is being myself all the time. I try to be myself all the time. I want to give this impression of being myself every time because I think it is important to fit, it is important to be skilled, it is important to be professional and whatever, but if you don't have your own signature, something that makes you Librada, it doesn't for me have any value, because it is copy paste, we can all do it, but you have to have your own signature and I believe my key point is that I stay myself, always. Whatever I do, wherever I am, I try to keep being myself all the time. Another thing that I think as being very key for me; I discovered that, it might sound a little bit stupid, but I discovered that love, it is very important. It is not meaning of love of couple or whatever, love itself, if you love yourself and you can transfer this love to other people you can harmonise your environment. I had some very bad moments sometime ago and these very bad moments showed me how important it is to have the good moments, because when we are in this successful level you forget that there are some bad things and so I realise having love as your resource is the best thing to move from a bad moment to a good moment. When you start looking at things positively, that is love, and it is also love when you believe that I can do it, it gives you confidence. When you start going now, you start going to old, that for us women is like a very specific moment of sadness; I am getting old. No, it is a good thing to get old because that means experience, that means life, that means a lot of things that you didn't have twenty years ago, so you have to take this age and ageing with love. You have to love yourself, you love your body, you love your fat, you love everything, your cellulite, everything, you like everything of you and so if somebody approves or somebody doesn't approve of you, it doesn't matter for you because you love yourself and it is related with be yourself all the time to be a success. When I had the responsibility as ambassador I was asking myself, I have to do it, but I have to do it in a way that the people might say oh, when she was there, there was this done; she brought these things, so you have to keep being some kind of different. If you want to be like everyone, I think it is not successful being like everybody. It is more successful having innovation, having a new thinking, having a new way of doing things, whatever happens, you have to be different, it is also a key of success. If you go through the history you will find the great people, the great names of the history, they did things differently as they found it, they are part of something new and do not try to set up an atmosphere or an environment on the boxes that doesn't belong to you. I always say that I am a human being, born female, but I am a human being, it is my first signature as a human being, not a woman. I am a human being before and after I am a woman. I used to say I am a citizen of the world, being a citizen of the world, but with a difference and a specific thing of being African or having this ethnicity and so on, because you cannot be from everywhere all the time, you have to have your own inheritance and you have to be very happy with your DNA. If you don't have this happiness of being you yourself, you cannot give any contribution to the world. This is my perspective, otherwise you will be just like everybody, you will not make any difference to anybody's life, I try that. I think question is followed by the strong women in my life; can I go to that?</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Absolutely! What I value though in what you have said here is that you have shared your reality, you have shared your lived experience and the emphasis on individuality, of being able to express yourself, of having your own stamp and that allows you to innovate and be different, because what does vanilla get us, it is just more of the same and you need innovation to create disruptions that are positive and stimulate change.</p>

AMBASSADOR ASUMU	Absolutely. It's risky because the status quo normally don't really like disruptions, but it is not bad, if you see in a positive way, everything that you see in a positive way can give you inputs. If you have it in the negative way, it is just a destruction it is a question of perception.
DR. MALKA	From a positive point of view, it is about progression.
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	And moving forward, it is a good thing, it is a good thing.
DR. MALKA	Yes.
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<p>And for me the strongest women in my life, I really want to talk about this because I have said it many times, but I have, when people for example criticise me that I have a male character. I have been told that many times and that was upsetting me when I was younger, you have a male character, you have to be more of a woman, you are not female enough, but now I am very happy with that because I realise that I cannot be different because of my DNA. My grandmothers, both of them, my mother from my father's side, she was a chief. When I was born 52 years ago, my grandmother she was the chief of the village. A woman! It is very strange, but she was the chief, I don't know why. So, now I realise that this character of this power character on that side or on that side is because of that and my other grandmother, the mother's one, she was a good and big entrepreneur. She got married at 13 years, she was widowed at 21 years, eleven children, seven were killed, who died in childhood and so on and she managed herself to leave her village to go to the capital and start making business, until she becomes a very good business in Cocoa, Coffee and so on. So I cannot be different, this is my DNA and I also have got admiration of my mother that this marital status changed her life, even as I love my father, but when they got divorced, he took everything from her, everything, she just stayed with the clothes, but she survived because she is a teacher; she survived doing her profession, so I have a lot of respect for her. I have a lot of respect for my elder sister, she has passed away, unfortunately, and my daughter. My daughter she is 21 years old, I teach her very well, but she created her own personality that does not have anything to do with me and I have a good admiration for her because I don't know where she brought all of that, but she did herself the research, she reads a lot and she created something that is really specific and I am afraid that I don't recognise, that is my feeling. For public people, I used to say I have a lot of respect for Madonna, the singer, because she is 'checkmate' and I really love the people that she goes beyond the rules, that she is star now because she believed in herself and she has done it. Numa is a woman that I know, she is a Somalian woman that I know long time ago, I learned a lot from her and is one of the people that I really say all the time that she fits a lot in me and I really have a lot of admiration. There is Michelle Obama, being First Lady she stayed behind, because that was the role at that moment, but when that finished she became again with her duties, with her professional duties, I really have a lot of admiration for her. Winnie Mandela, to be in your country, I have a lot of admiration of women, they led the fight, the aspect of the commitment and so on. Sirleaf Johnson, the former president of Liberia, she did it well, I really love her slogan in the campaign that "Let a woman try it, because you did it bad, now let me try". And Tina Turner, very strong personal story, but she moves from that and she became what she is now and I can go more and more and more, there are many women that I have but I tried to choose the ones that really fresh me up and gives me like, you don't have the right to give up, even when everything is difficult, I can tell you I have passed by difficult moments not very long time ago and I will tell you myself, when I was looking at</p>

	<p>myself in the mirror, look at you, you don't seem to be the person I know and I wrote even two books. When I am reading some of my books now, some of the things that I wrote and say I was really broken, I was really broken emotionally, how could I write this, but it is good thing because now it gives me that there was that point and now I really have the success of becoming myself again and to remove this aspect from my life because now I can read it and laugh and now that I am really in a different step I say wow, I did it. It doesn't look like me now, I am back on my feet.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You have really demonstrated the capacity of change, of overcoming conflict and the fact that we can become anyone that we want to become.</p>
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<p>Absolutely, we have to. I think it is so important that when things go bad you have to look and travel inside you, your only one resource is always you. Whatever the people do you, whatever the people support you, you could never do it if you don't believe in yourself and one day you say, stop this, it must be over, I have to move from this because I don't recognise myself anymore. It is very important to have this key on you and say I have to do it, I have to do it, I have to do it. You have to believe in yourself, believing in yourself that gives you the strength and also, we don't have to be approved by anyone to be considered as people. I think this is a bad thing that is now really running the world that we have to be approved by the neighbour, by the supervisor, by your staff; anybody has to approve you to be a person. No please, go beyond that. I don't need to earn their approval of anybody to live, you have to live the way you want to live and you have to sit up and fit with the environment, but the environment has not consumed you to become a different person that you are.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Ambassador thank you for sharing those wonderful words, really heartfelt, we've got individuality, we have got reform, reinvention and this continuous drive of overcoming challenges, going beyond them and becoming the person you want to be and the fact that we can continue to change and evolve. It has been an absolute pleasure hosting you and we wish you all the very best in your tenure as Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea to South Africa.</p>
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<p>Thank you very much for inviting me it has been a real privilege and my pleasure to share these moments with you. I hope I haven't been so direct, sometimes I am not very politically correct, but I think it is also my signature to be trying to have this diplomacy side, but also the real side on the life is important. I hope to give all the girls, the young girls a very small advice, I have said it before; please try to set up your future by your own values, try to follow your dreams, don't make your dreams come true just when you find a man. The man is important, we are partners in this world and it is very important to be in partnership, but make your own dreams come true before making somebody else's dreams come true, because you will be frustrated at the end of the time and I think most people might be happy and find the room to make dreams together or aside/aside. It is very important, we have the control, we have the power, we are here to share with the other people, with the men, we are not here to fight against them, but if we have to fight, we fight. We are not weak.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>That is a great message, thank you once again for joining us.</p>
AMBASSADOR ASUMU	<p>Thank you very much</p>
DR. MALKA	<p><b>PROGRAMME END</b></p>