



HOST:

BONNIE ERBE

GUESTS:

ERIN MATSON,

DEL. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC),

MERCEDES VIANA SCHLAPP,

GENEVIEVE WOOD

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2013

**TRANSCRIPT PROVIDED BY
DC TRANSCRIPTION – WWW.DCTMR.COM**

BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, safe harbors for trafficking victims. Then, women reject the government shutdown. Behind the headlines, the president of a prestigious women's college on not having it all.

(Musical break.)

MS. ERBE: Hello, I'm Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to *To the Contrary*, a discussion of news and social trends from diverse perspectives. Up first, decriminalizing prostitution?

New York's new anti-trafficking program is a first among states fighting modern day slavery or trafficking. The state has created a separate court system that no longer treats prostitutes as criminals. Experts believe 95 percent of those charged as prostitutes will end up in Human Trafficking Intervention Court. There, the judge, prosecutors, and attorneys will decide whether a defendant needs help to escape the industry or is an abuser. The courts will connect trafficked women and girls with resources such as health care, job training, drug rehabilitation, and education to give them a chance to return to a normal life.

A number of cities have these safe harbor laws, but this is the first statewide effort. This is also part of a trend to decriminalize prostitution and charge pimps and johns with criminal activity.

So Mercedes Sabio (sp) Schlapp, should other states be following New York's example and giving safe harbor to sex workers?

MERCEDES VIANA SCHLAPP: Absolutely. When you look at the common age of these prostitutes, they come into it 12 to 14 years old, they deserve a second change.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON: Yeah, this is a better idea. Punish source. Help the victims.

GENEVIEVE WOOD: Well, this is a great example of where states can be the – you know, exploratory avenues for us. We can see if it works here. We can see if it works in other cities and then maybe it applies more nationally across the board.

ERIN MATSON: Great idea. If you want to address and reduce sex work, what you got to do is address the root causes.

MS. ERBE: Well, has prostitution itself changed since we've been hit with what seems to be this massive wave of trafficking spurred on by the internet, by increased international travel, but also just home here in the United States, we've got a ton of

teenagers lured mainly by the Internet – you know, they think these guys are their boyfriends and then they kidnap them, stick them in hotel rooms, send 30 guys in a day that they have to service. They get them addicted to drugs.

MS. SCHLAPP: It's really just so sad. And then what happens is that you have these older men that are really victimizing these younger girls and these girls get stuck and they feel they have no way out. So in order to – in developing this sort of court system, it gives them a chance to be – look, we're the victims. We're the ones that need help. You see the success stories of women coming out and finding a network of support, and then also being able to, you know, get a career and build a life again. And so I think that it's just been so sad that, you know, for so long it's been viewed as they've been the criminals, but at the end, we're not giving them the support that they need.

MS. ERBE: But has that changed? I mean, that's my question to you, Congresswoman, is it – prostitution 20 years ago, was it a different kind of situation where older women voluntarily went into it?

DEL. NORTON: And we have to understand that a lot of the women we're talking about are not 12 to 14, but they have become careerists in prostitution. You could get them early. But even if you get them when they are adults, they're still victims, or are certainly treated that way by their pimps. And if they're not, if somehow they're in the racket themselves, then it still goes through the court system. Those will be weeded out. But for the most part, we're dealing with women who are in this – how should we address it now – in this profession because they've been driven either by economic reasons, if they went into it voluntarily, or pulled in because they were very young and exploited.

MS. WOOD: I think we have to give a lot of kudos to nonprofits and frankly even the government, both in this country and other parts around the world that have really put the spotlight on this issue. I think one of the reasons, in addition to people being younger and younger who are pulled into this, people now know about it. They know that it's not just something that happens over there or only happens in the dark corners of New York City. They know that it's happening in Cleveland. It's happening in D.C. – it's happening in neighborhoods –

MS. ERBE: Minnesota is a big area for –

MS. WOOD: Right. And so people realize, I think, A, that it's happening, that it's much closer to them than they think and if there is something we can do about it – so I just – so we give – I think the spotlight has really changed public perception on this and it's changing the way that we're looking about how do you deal with it.

MS. MATSON: Well, it's a wonderful thing from a harm reduction perspective. You think about people who are already victimized. Oftentimes, they have no control over their lives at all. And throwing them in jail is not the solution to the problem, right? So you do want to address those root causes. Hey, can I get some education? Can I get

some access to work? Can I make sure that my record's clean so that I'm able to get a job when I'm applying for a job later? And so it's the humane thing to do.

DEL. NORTON: Well, this is a kind of decriminalization. It's much like the drug courts and I'm a big fan of the drug courts. They handle – these people technically are guilty of some form of illegal activity, but experience teaches that they ought to be treated differently from those with the source of this activity.

MS. ERBE: What do you mean? Are you talking like the mules as opposed to the dealers?

DEL. NORTON: Yeah, exactly. You know, and let's –

MS. WOOD: These young women versus the pimps –

DEL. NORTON: – let's take that. With drug dealers, we don't go after the victims when we go after people who are possessing large quantities, we're seeing they're selling. We go after the dealers. These men are the dealers. We ought to go after them first and foremost, try to help the women.

MS. WOOD: I think one thing that we should point out, there's a difference between decriminalizing this in the sense of trying to not prosecute the wrong people, but I don't think we want to move legalizing prostitution. That, I would be opposed to it. There are countries that do that.

MS. SCHLAPP: Which that is in France –

MS. WOOD: That's right. So there's a big difference between saying it's legal and fine than there is actually protecting the people that are –

MS. ERBE: OK, but, as far as I know, there's no movement – the feminists are for helping these women and not prosecuting them, but certainly not legalizing prostitution, as far as I know.

MS. MATSON: There's no effort that I know of that's against helping victims of human trafficking anywhere. I mean, that sounds like we have consensus at this table that this is a wonderful thing. In terms of sex work itself, that's a highly controversial topic within feminism, inside the movement. And if you want to know where I stand personally, I think that it actually would be a good idea to decriminalize sex work across the board. I think that really –

MS. ERBE: You think that would help women? I've never – I mean, I hear what you're saying and I've heard from particularly European sex workers who say I do this on purpose. It's easier for me. I love my life. I'm sorry. I don't believe it.

MS. MATSON: Sure, yeah, well, I'm happy to speak a little bit to why I would say that. One, I think, you know, you can put in place protections when people don't have to operate under the radar. And so you can make sure that people have access to health screenings, a critical issue for that population. I think another issue is you want to make sure that it's easier for people to get support they need to get out of the trade if they don't want to be there. And one of the ways we do that is we focus on the root cause, which is poverty, not the practice of sex work itself.

DEL. NORTON: And that's exactly what –

MS. SCHLAPP: I think we don't want any of our –

MS. ERBE: Congresswoman, first, then –

DEL. NORTON: This is exactly what these courts are doing. I mean – so I mean, I think without legalizing it, this form of decriminalization is much better. We don't have the stamp of approval on it. In fact, we have the stamp of disapproval on some of the men who've gotten away with it.

MS. SCHLAPP: That's right and I mean, I don't think we want any of our daughters becoming sex workers or prostitutes for that matter. So you know, it's helping these women understand that they can have other choices and being able to provide that support. And I think that this – going through this approach through the state court system, it gives them a chance to feel like, you know what, I may be able to have a different route in my life. And they might not be aware of the options that they have because they're being victimized by these – you know, these men that are making the money off of them.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe or @TotheContrary.

From trafficking to government.

Polls show few Americans favor this week's government shutdown, but women less so than men. A CNN poll found about a third of men approved of the shutdown. Only a fifth of women did. Women are also more likely to blame Republicans. This comes at a time when Republicans are trying to rebrand their party to attract female voters. They've launched Project Grow to excite women about the GOP. But polls show it's not working. Of the women polled, a third said the party was drifting away, compared with 14 percent who believed it's becoming more appealing. Meanwhile, women's groups are mobilizing against the shutdown. They fear repercussions on domestic violence centers and aid for poor mothers.

So Congresswoman, since you're in the center of all of this, are women voters and women non-voters – are the Republicans exacerbating their women problem with the shutdown?

DEL. NORTON: Well, you know, if you really want to rebrand, you got to understand that's really not about messaging. It's about what you do. This is about what you do and the kinds of who depends on government programs more than anybody else. Who doesn't like forceful kind of activity more than anybody else?

Now, you know, it's easy to say both sides are to blame, but you know, women are not stupid. They know who controls the House of Representatives. They know and have said overwhelmingly there must be better ways to change a law that's been approved by the Supreme Court than to try to get your way by shutting down the entire government and cutting us, we the people, off from every government program on which we depend, won't rebrand.

MS. WOOD: Well, first, I think we should be clear that when we talk about government shutdown, we're not talking about Social Security checks not going out. We're not talking about things like that.

DEL. NORTON: We're talking about women stuff.

MS. WOOD: No, no, no that's not right.

MS. ERBE: But you are talking –

MS. WOOD: But you –

MS. ERBE: Wait, wait, wait, let me respond – talking about no Head Start, you're talking about no treatment for children with cancer. You are talking about programs –

MS. WOOD: Well, we should ask Harry Reid about that. The fact to the matter is the Republicans in the House passed the continuing resolution, which funded everything that the government was doing a week ago and they could still be doing today, including NIH, National Institutes of Health –

MS. SCHLAPP: With Democrats support –

MS. WOOD: With Democrats support in the Congress and the like. It is the president of the United States, President Obama –

DEL. NORTON: Very little Democratic support.

MS. WOOD: – and Harry Reid who have said we're not willing to compromise on anything. Look, you can say whether it's appropriate to do it around a – around the debt limit or whether it's appropriate to do it around – whether or not it's time to pass another budget, but at a certain point, as a country's facing a \$17 trillion debt, as many people are very concerned, including many women, that they're losing their health care

or their hours are getting cut – back at part time jobs because of “Obamacare,” that at some point, you got to revisit the law. And we’ve revisited it for businesses. We’ve revisited for unions. We’ve revisited for members of Congress and their staff. But somehow, the individual taxpayer, women and men –

MS. ERBE: OK, but let me – you’re talking – I hear. I hear you on the debt completely, the deficit as well. The shutdown is costing \$2 billion. That’s an awful lot of money that Republicans are costing over this grandstanding. Doesn’t that figure into it?

MS. SCHLAPP: Well, and I – just to add to that, I mean, you had a White House senior official come out and say we are winning on this. You know, so we are winning. We don’t care how long it takes if it means the government is going to be shutdown. Coming across, talk about bad messaging – they’re coming across saying like it doesn’t matter. We don’t care how long the government’s shut down. We’re just going to cross our arms, which is exactly what the president is doing and what the liberal Senate Democrats are doing, and not negotiating. We know that in almost all these different administrations, you know, going back to Reagan, going back to Clinton, when there’s been a government shutdown, the president has not been – you know – has not been just about his party. He’s been about for all the American people and bringing, you know, the two parties together to negotiate.

Right now, the president just appears to be the head of the Democratic Party. And he represents all Americans, which means he needs to bring both sides together, be the parent in the room, and get this resolved.

MS. MATSON: Two points, one about optics, the second about substance. First, optics. The first day of the first government shutdown in 17 years, you have Eric Cantor tweeting out a photograph of eight white men sitting at a table saying we are ready to negotiate with the hashtag Fairness for All, completely illustrating who is getting hurt by the shutdown right now.

And in terms of the substantive piece, what we’ve seen is that the Republicans – leadership in the House used initially one of the opening salvos of trying to block a clean continuing resolution was to try to mess with the birth control mandate in “Obamacare,” which showed that honestly their commitment to a regressive social agenda is as strong as their unseriousness about governance. And so this is awful. You’ve got children – the WIC program – it’s crazy to me as a mother of a newborn infant to consider that there are kids screaming and hungry and that’s getting caught up – formulas being caught up in this political game. It’s irresponsible.

(Cross talk.)

MS. WOOD: – a deal with the “Obamacare” issue at the same time.

MS. ERBE: But when you hear something like that, OK, as a Republican strategist, both of you, you know, what goes through your mind about what the message is that's getting out to the very women who the Republican Party need to recruit if they're ever going to need a national election.

MS. WOOD: Well, I think there's a heck of a lot of disinformation in the media. I have never seen so much attention –

DEL. NORTON: In the media.

MS. WOOD: – by the broad media to try and define what they call these hard cases and pretending that it's happening all over the place.

DEL. NORTON: Could I –

MS. WOOD: Well, let me just – first of all, even talking about, I love this, all the government workers in D.C. who are being furloughed or laid off right now. How many times in the past like five times we've had a government shutdown under Clinton, under Reagan, all those government workers have gotten back pay, OK? So it's not – and they all got paid on September 30th.

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: We are getting way off topic here. The topic is and the question is the perception that American women have of what the Republican Party is doing.

MS. WOOD: I know. And I'm telling you that part of that perception is often shaped by stories played out in the media, such as – the very first night, they go to this woman in Chicago who works for the EPA and she's talking about basically how she can't pay her bills. Well, it doesn't make any sense. She got paid last week. She'll be getting paid again in two weeks. It's what it was scheduled. So if she can't pay it, it's not because of the shutdown.

DEL. NORTON: The last refuge of the losing side is the media did it to us. Who is doing it to us? And you know what that does? That really insults the 72 percent of the American people who say they don't want the American – they don't want the government shutdown in order to deal with everybody's problem with "Obamacare." I think we ought to listen to them and not blame the media.

MS. ERBE: All right. Behind the headlines, can the modern woman win her battle for perfection? In her new book, "Wonder Women: Sex Power and the Quest for Perfection," Debora Spar, president of Barnard College, my alma mater, by the way, says they can't find and there's nothing wrong with that.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: In her book, Debora Spar proposes that despite all the progress women have made, they must still face the reality they cannot have it all. And her observations may offer women some relief.

DEBORA SPAR: What I've been hearing thus far and what I'm very happy to hear is people sort of breathing a sigh of relief and saying I felt good reading the book because I've been beating myself up. And so I think it is useful for both, you know, middle age women, older women, younger women to just recognize that if they're not perfect it's not because they failed in some way. You know, they're not perfect because nobody's perfect.

MS. ERBE: Twenty-five years ago, Spar never would have imagined a career in academia. She wanted to be a spy, but her desire to have a family led her to compromise her dream job. She warns younger generations of the inevitability of facing similarly tough decisions.

MS. SPAR: You know, saying to young women or midcareer women that, you know, as you move higher in your career, if that's what you want to do, there are going to be different pressures and different realities that you just have to face and decide whether or not you want to go that route.

MS. ERBE: Before becoming president of Barnard College, a private women's liberal arts college, she worked as a Harvard Business School professor. The transition opened her eyes to key differences in leadership between men and women.

MS. SPAR: I feel like I underwent a massive hormonal shift because it really was – was a huge difference jumping from a place that was really run by and dominated by men to a place that's really run by and dominated by women. They tend to want to be liked more than men do. It's more important to be liked. So there's less of sort of a top down management down. There's less of a hierarchy at Barnard. And there's more of a consensual style of management.

MS. ERBE: Spar observes the desire to be liked can be very positive and make women more effective managers, but it can also negatively affect a woman's advancement.

MS. SPAR: I think a lot of women are reluctant to make the final steps to being a boss because either consciously or subconsciously they're aware of the fact that once you actually are the boss, you're going to have to make decisions that inevitably are going to anger people.

MS. ERBE: Spar's book is full of paradoxes. She describes how the feminist movement and women's progress have placed women in a burdensome situation, an era overwhelming women of all ages with too many options and expectations. And although women in their 20s may have learned a great deal from their mothers, they are more confused now about whether to follow in their mothers' footsteps.

MS. SPAR: So they've watched their mothers juggle, oftentimes struggle. Many young women I see are sort of confused about how they validate their mothers' stories. You know, if their mother dropped out of the workforce, how do these girls honor their mothers? Do they honor their mothers by choosing to drop out as well or do they honor their mothers by staying in?

MS. ERBE: The sexual revolution, access to contraception, and reproductive rights are also gains Spar identifies as potentially misleading to younger generations.

MS. SPAR: They're dealing with a whole new set of sexual norms that is being advertised as being very empowering to them. But in many ways, I think, you know, it has also just created another set of expectations that they're supposed to be hooking up and carefree and enjoying it. And if that's not what they like, again, it's just created another set of expectations that they feel compelled to follow.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: Agree or disagree, Erin?

MS. MATSON: Strongly disagree. There is a sticker that they make that says this insults women, that you can slap on something, I would slap it on this book honestly. You know, who needs generalizations about who women are and what women want just kind of from the source of whim basically? And so I'm concerned by a number of different strains in the book. There seems to be an element of blaming women for not achieving enough. I'm also deeply concerned as a committed feminist to this idea that feminism is about individual traits versus a political social movement for equality. It's not about having it all. No – what woman out there is trying to, quote, “have it all?” It's time to retire that discussion entirely.

MS. ERBE: I agree and, you know, and I feel sorry for young women now because you got on the one hand, you know, “Lean in” says you can have it all, and this one saying you can't. There was a scene in the movie “Chinatown” where Jack Nicholson I think was slapping Faye Dunaway – he's my father. He's my lover. He's my – it was about whether – she had a child with her father was the end of the story. But she's being slapped back and forth with a different – the opposite answer each time. And it's like these lean in, lean out books, you – you know, do they – do we – do they make any sense anymore?

DEL. NORTON: But I think we're at a different period. Look, as – from the prior generation of, quote, “have it all,” remember what that was about. It was from the era when many women, at least white women weren't supposed to work at all, when if you did work, you were supposed to be satisfied with whatever job you get – got to help you, not in a job that was, quote, “equal.” So have it all then with no amenity surrounding you got to mean I really can be something more than a housewife. I can work.

Now, what I think she's trying to explain now is the complexity, one of which we have not dealt with. And I must say, I was disappointed to hear her not deal with this. It's probably easier to, quote, "have it all," however you want to frame that, if you live in a society like all of the – like our allies do, which has educational childcare. But remember, these women trying to have it all have children and have a real dilemma, particularly in those ages between zero and five, how do I live up to all the expectations built for me by the prior generation, which I accept, with – now, that I don't just have a job, I can be the boss, and I don't have society surrounding me with any of the supports that are necessary?

MS. SCHLAPP: Right and there's two realities here.

MS. ERBE: And you do have it all, I have to say. I mean – (laughter) – and then some.

MS. SCHLAPP: And then I need to take a nap here.

MS. ERBE: Five daughters and you have an important job, you're a political analyst and a consultant. And you know, so how do you do it?

MS. SCHLAPP: How – well, you know, it's your support system. It's having that partner, your husband, that person be by your side. I mean, I would say my husband is, you know, a feminist in his own right because he understands the importance and the value that I add to not only my family, but to our society. And so it takes that effort of saying we've got to raise these five kids or we might be working toward 80 or 90, but, you know, there's this responsibility that we have in addition to being able to provide service for the community, as well as, you know, be a voice out there as well.

Now, to add to that, when we're dealing with the younger generation, which is interesting, is that their choices are a little more limited. They're getting out of college, these young women, they can't get the jobs that they want because they're not out there. So talk about have it all, they're stuck with this reality that they might be getting out of college and not being able to pursue the career of their dreams. I mean, we've been blessed to do what we want to be doing, but in the case of these younger women, it's a different reality for them.

MS. WOOD: Well, and I think this is why you keep having the books written. (Laughter.) It's because, you know, I'm not a feminist in the way that Erin is, but I do believe that women should have choices, but every economy is different, every period is different, and you're always kind of the yin and the yang to get the right balance. And I don't think we're ever perfectly going to get the right balance, but you keep striving for it. And so I think that's why the books keep coming out because you have women from different generations, many now from "Lean in" to the most recent we talked about today, they've been the top of their game, whether it's university, whether it's Facebook, whatever it is. And that's a different perspective than women 20 years ago were able ripe

from. So it's a kind of a constant churning and I think people look back at their mom, their grandmothers, and they go – they see good and bad from it.

MS. ERBE: All right. And that's it for this edition of *To the Contrary*. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe and @TotheContrary, and visit our website pbs.org/tothecontrary, where the discussion continues. And whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

(END)