MS. ERBE: A tenth Democratic contender? Should Senator Hillary Clinton run for president, and if so what impact?

MS. WOOD: Will Hillary run in 2004, I doubt it. But the fact that people are talking about it still shows just how weak the Democratic field truly is.

MS. CONLIN: The Democratic Party needs a candidate that can articulate a vision about what the party is for, not just against, and if Hillary can provide that compelling vision, then she should run.

MS. WHITE: The impact, Bush wins. Hillary may be the darling of the Democratic Party, but she's a godsend for the Republicans.

MS. SOSA: Whether America is ready for a woman president is another question, but if anybody has the intelligence, the character, and the political machine to become the first one, it's Hillary Clinton.

(Musical break.)

MS. ERBE: Hello, I'm Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to To The Contrary, a discussion of news and social trends from a variety of women's perspectives.

This week, the American foster care system in crisis. Then, the buzz over Senator Hillary Clinton, and whether she may join the list of would-be presidents. Behind the headlines, while overall fewer Americans are smoking, the opposite is true for gay Americans.

Up first, Americans and adoption. Several high profile news stories coupled with some new data make the case for a social service and foster care system in crisis. As Michael Jackson faces criminal charges for molestation, new questions arise about his fitness as a parent, and his desire expressed just days before his arrest to adopt additional children. A separate case involves a New Jersey family being investigated for starving four adopted foster children. In the U.S. today, nearly a half-million children are in foster care, a number that has nearly doubled in 20 years, but only about 120,000 of these kids are eligible for adoption. To speed up the process, Congress passed the adoption promotion act. It offers financial incentives to states that find adoptive homes for foster children, especially those older than nine. Experts say these kids are hard to place because they have special needs, or may have suffered abuse or neglect.

The Department of Health and Human Services reports each year about 20,000 foster kids reach 18 and age out of the system without ever finding a permanent family. Still, the new bill has its critics, including state officials and child welfare experts who worry, pressure to quickly find homes for foster children is in and of itself dangerous, especially when state agencies are facing budget cutbacks and seriously strained
resources. Finally, 88 percent of parents adopting foster children receive cash payments, raising questions for some about parents' motivations.

So, Dana White, let's start with the cash payments part of this. Is it a good idea to give foster parents who want to adopt children cash payments to do so, is that the only way a lot of couples can afford to take in these kids, or does it bring in people who are going to do this as we think we saw in New Jersey for financial motivations, not because they truly want to be parents?

MS. WHITE: I think you have to give cash payments, and you have to offset the financial responsibilities of having these children, especially special needs children. But I think what we also have to deal with as a society is, what do we want to do with these children overall? Do we want to make the priority reuniting families, or do we want to start to really build a base, and start promoting programs that help foster parents adopt children and start promoting those things, and resources that states may have to help blend families?

MS. ERBE: Well, there is and has been for a while now a social service movement to keep at-risk families together. We've reported on it on this program over the past five years, but let's face it, the states are in terrible financial shape right now, they have strained resources to begin with, and there are more and more couples who are splitting up, kids being born out of wedlock who are going to end up in the foster care system, fewer resources to deal with them.

MS. CONLIN: That's the cash incentive. Cash incentives in the public sector and the private sector, there's always unintended consequences. So, there's a fear, I think, for everyone about quick and dirty placements, and the wrong kinds of families adopting these kids. So, two things, one is that we really need to take a look at trying to improve and widen that pool of foster parents. And then, secondly --

MS. ERBE: How do you do that?

MS. WHITE: I think promoting different resources. Hopkins has a pilot program where they bring in a foster parent and teach them sort of a comprehensive way to bring in a foster child. If we start to advertise that they get these cash incentives, then you can start advertising and widening the pool, because most foster parents are good parents. These are variables. They want to do this. People want to do this. Social workers want to help, but they do have too many people. And the thing is, you have to widen the pool of the families who are taking these kids in.

MS. WOOD: I think we have to also realize, too, that this is a societal issue, not just a government fix-it issue. We've got to widen the pool, as you said, of parents who come in and apply for these foster children. I agree that we've got to give monies there to offset it. But what a great place for the faith-based programs to come into play, and we ought to be spending money, if we're going to spend it on the government side, to advertise to communities that we know will take care of these children. We've got to
broaden the pool, but we've got to make people know what a crisis it is. And I think a lot of Americans don't know.

MS. SOSA: It was interesting when I was reading about the issue, I thought of why the pool is not widened. And I was thinking, it's not only -- you know, why we don't have more middle class families willing to adopt. And I said, you know, the fertility treatments have been an impact on that. So many parents that before couldn't have kids, they would adopt. Now, they cannot have kids, they try fertility, that reduces the pool, if not they adopt. So, it's a real problem for increasing the middle class.

MS. ERBE: I know a middle class couple that just went to Russia and adopted. They have one or two grown children, almost grown children, they adopted three Russian children, including one who is 16 years old. What does that say about -- now, obviously this is one example. But what does that say, is adoption too difficult in this country or, if you loosen adoption standards, do you run into more situations where the Michael Jacksons of the world will be adopting kids, which is not what anybody wants either?

MS. WOOD: Yes, there's too much red tape, sure there is. But I think a lot of the problem is that kids who are in foster care oftentimes are children who came from mothers who had drug backgrounds, or kids that have problems. And, you know what, a lot of parents don't want kids that have problems. They want to go and adopt the perfect child. Most of them don't want to even adopt a 9 or 10 year old.

MS. ERBE: But, see, that can't be changed. I don't see how society can deal with that at all, it's a huge responsibility to take on any child, much less a child with special needs.

MS. CONLIN: The kids, the majority of kids in foster care, what they want is not to be adopted. The majority of them want to be somehow reunited with an original family member. And so that's why I think more resources need to go into providing rehab, and healthcare, and all sorts of services for families so that they can be repaired.

MS. SOSA: The problem is, as we look at new law that they passed, and actually happened first in '97 and now is just being reauthorized, is that the focus has continued to be giving more money to the states to speed the process. So the way the states are going to get the resources to do the work is by increasing the number of adoptions, and not by the quality of adoptions, not by the quality of the staffing in these agencies, and the other services that they bring to bear. And it's interesting, because the stories continue, but what is motivating the policy, and what everybody is bragging about is the number of kids that get adopted.

MS. ERBE: Okay. And what's motivating me right now is, we need to move on to the next topic. From new households to the White House.

New York Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton repeatedly denies she's running for president. She promises to keep her pledge to the voters of New York not to run for the
Democratic Presidential nomination. But speculation that was already the buzz of the party regenerated after her appearance at a party fundraising dinner in Iowa last weekend. She is among if not the top fundraiser for Democratic candidates, and says her goal is winning back the Senate and other parts of the federal government for her party. But a series of polls shows she is outpacing the other nine Democratic contenders for the party nomination, and her supporters hope she'll jump in even as late as next spring if there's no clear winner in the primaries.

Should she, will she, Patricia Sosa?

MS. SOSA: I don't think so. I don't think she's going to run, because she's very smart, and she's not ready for it. Will she run eventually, absolutely. I mean, there is no other woman in this country that is as capable, as well-positioned as Hillary Clinton. I feel with a great degree of certainty that she can probably win the Democratic candidacy. I think the challenge is, can she win the presidency, can she win a national election.

MS. ERBE: The question this year is, can any Democrat win the presidential race next year?

MS. WHITE: I think if Hillary were nominated, and it's great that she's very popular, she gets standing ovations, they don't have anyone who is energizing the Democratic Party, but that is a clear victory for Bush because she's a divisive individual.

MS. ERBE: But, you know what, so was Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, and they all seem to -- to me what's going on in politics these days are, all the old rules are out, and there are no new rules yet. And so why couldn't she remake herself. She's already annoyed liberals in New York for not being liberal enough. She's very much moved to the center. If everybody is remaking themselves these days, why can't she remake herself, and cut off some of that divisiveness?

MS. CONLIN: The fact that there's so much speculation still, and I think will continue to be over will she or won't she really speaks to the fact that the party, the Democratic Party is in crisis. And the table needs to be not just kicked over, but kicked over and completely reset. What is the governing paradigm, what is the vision, what are the ideas, what are they for not just what are they against, and I think that's why we're getting a big attention on the rise of these third party independent candidates, because there's a vacuum.

MS. WOOD: Well, let's keep in mind with the Democrats, Bill Clinton was kind of the savior for the Democratic Party. But, look, Bill Clinton was the guy who signed Welfare Reform in 1996. I bet Hillary was kicking and screaming and having scenes over that one. Hillary represents to a great extent the old ideas of the Democratic Party, when you look at what she was for during the Clinton Administration, the government-run healthcare programs, those are things that are old Democratic ideas, and I agree with you, they need some new ones. I don't know that Hillary is going to have those. She's not her husband in that respect.
MS. SOSA: Well, Genevieve, I completely disagree with you. She's proven to be an incredibly effective Senator. Even Senator Byrd from West Virginia, who at the beginning said, I don't want to deal with this woman, and even Republicans are saying, she's an outstanding Senator. She's a practical woman. And I actually think she's electable. I mean, I put the question --

MS. ERBE: I will tell you this, which I find very interesting, which I find as a Republican concession that she is to be feared, which is George Allen, the head of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee sends out his fundraising letters time after time saying, oh, my God, she's going to run, she'll roll back all --

MS. WOOD: There is no doubt that next to maybe Ted Kennedy, Hillary Clinton raises more money for Republican Conservative organizations than anybody, because --

MS. ERBE: Which means she's feared in some sense.

MS. WOOD: She's also got extremely high negatives as a candidate, and the Republicans have had that, too, people like Newt Gingrich did, and you can see he got elected. But she's got extremely high negatives. There are people in this country who will never vote for her.

MS. SOSA: Bill Clinton had a lot of negatives, but he got elected.

MS. ERBE: We're about out of time, and I want to throw this out there, within the last month there was a poll out of New York State showing her approval ratings at 60 percent. However, next question, if she runs against Giuliani, who would you vote for, he trounced her like two to one.

MS. CONLIN: More pressure for her to run.

MS. ERBE: More pressure for her to run, because if she gets defeated in '06, if Giuliani doesn't become the next Republican vice presidential candidate, or vice president after the election, both of which scenarios I hear talked about in Republican circles, if he runs against her and beats her in '06, there's no way she can run in '08.

MS. WOOD: Well, I'd love to see Hillary run now, get beat, and never see her on the political scene again. But I'm one of those folks, I agree Hillary is smart, I think that she's a very good speaker, she can be a great candidate. She clearly raises money for Democrats. I would love to say she could never, ever be elected. I don't know if that's true. But I think she's got a lot of negatives that make it very difficult.

MS. ERBE: All right. And the test of time will be, let's watch and see if she can make herself over, whether that's even possible.

Thank you, Genevieve Wood, for joining us for this portion of the show.
Behind the headlines, there's been little research on smoking in the lesbian and gay communities, what research there is tends to indicate there is more smoking among gay people than among straight people. To The Contrary continues its series of special reports on tobacco control with this look at smoking and American gays.

It's a different spin on relaxation techniques, part of a comprehensive program to help these women stop smoking called Gurlz Kick Ash. It's offered at the Bronx Lesbian and Gay Health Resource Center.

MS. MAY: We did a study in which we found out that 59 percent of Bronx lesbians smoke cigarettes, and 75 percent of those have children in their home.

MS. ERBE: Research, scant though it is, projects that lesbians and gays smoke at much higher rates than other groups. The number range from as high as 60 percent, which would be more than double the national average. In one poll, 36 percent of respondents self-identifying as gay said their smoke, compared with 25 percent of all adults. A study of cancer related risk factors in women found higher rates of smoking among lesbians than among women in general.

SCOUT: It has been conjectured that tobacco deaths in the queer community has killed more people than AIDS, homicide, suicide, fire, accidents, gay bashing and cancer combined. But we don't have that data, that hard research yet to be able to tell us exactly what the numbers are.

MS. ERBE: Smoking rates among lesbian and gay youth are estimated to be considerably higher, 38 to 59 percent, than among heterosexual youth at 28 to 35 percent.

SCOUT: There are hypotheses out there that the fact that we are often coming out in our teen years, when many people start to smoke, creates an added set of stressers and pressures, and negative self-image, things that are more likely to drive you to smoke.

MS. ERBE: Experts say high levels of social stress, frequent patronage of bars and clubs, higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse may cause these higher rates of tobacco use. Other factors include direct marketing to gays, and tobacco industry support of HIV/AIDS research. Gay men and women add the tobacco industry is very accepting of them, and offers attractive employment opportunities. In turn, the gay community rewards the industry by consuming its products.

MS. TOSSEY: It's also real difficult from a healthcare standpoint because our priority hasn't been on cigarettes and cancer, tobacco. Our priorities have been breast cancer and medical access in general, and HIV/AIDS.

MS. ERBE: Experts say 70 percent of smokers have tried to quit, but only 2.5 percent succeed each year. The gay community faces some of its own challenges. Many gays also believe so-called culturally sensitive programs designed to help them kick the
habit work better. One of the first started in San Francisco was named The Last Drag. In Boston, young gay men and women produce performance art pieces on the street to educate peers. Still another runs ads in gay magazines and specially created cards distributed at restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and community centers.

MS. KECK: Our idea is to inform people that the community is smoking more than other people, and then also that we can survive this. That's kind of the message behind the ads, is that you can survive gay bashing, and you can survive rape, and you can survive all these different things because you're a survivor, and you can't let lung cancer take your life.

MS. ERBE: Barbara Warren, a pioneer smoking cessation crusader in New York's gay community created a humorous anti-smoking video.

MS. WARREN: What we really wanted to do was create something that was funny, that was amusing, that reminded people of what some of the issues were, but also made them laugh, made them self-reflect, and make they realize that they're part of a community.

MS. ERBE: It also addresses ambivalence and fear.

MS. STONE: Giving up your best friend, that's what this is like, it's my companion.

MS. ERBE: Sandra Stone will face that fear head-on at Gurlz Kick Ash. Sharing and bonding is an important element of the program, something these women say they don't get everywhere.

MS. GADSTEN: I noticed a lot of gays and lesbians that was in all the groups, they have to cover up saying, my partner, you know, we couldn't say -- they didn't want to say their girlfriend or their boyfriend.

SCOUT: They're used to being discriminated against. Would you want to go into a cessation program that's offered to everybody else at your work, or something like that, if you don't know whether they're going to be accepting of the fact that you are a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender? Would you want to start to discuss in-depth what your triggers are, what your stressers are, what your emotional state is? You have to potentially hide so much of who you are and your personal details?

MS. MAY: We have in many ways our own culture, our own ideas. The women feel very comfortable here, we speak the same language, we don't have to be the subject of other people's ridicule or curiosity. We're just here to deal with our cigarettes, thank you.
MS. ERBE: And they do that, in part, by learning other ways to occupy their time, such as finger painting, playing with Slinkies, dancing, and making banks for saving the money that they used to spend on cigarettes.

MS. MAY: Our newest member just realized last week, it was her first meeting, that she was spending at least $2,700 a year on cigarettes by how much she was smoking, and that with that she could buy a car.

MS. ERBE: Gurlz Kick Ash also offers free nicotine replacement gum, or patches, and many of the women are afraid to use them considering them a weakness or a crutch.

MS. MAY: I try to help them to see, it's not about being strong, it's not about willpower. This is a nasty addiction, it's really powerful. You need all the help you can get.

MS. GADSTEN: I realized that I wasn't alone, I didn't have to be alone. And whenever I had any type of feelings about wanting to pick up a cigarette, there was always someone I could call, someone that had went through this already.

MS. ERBE: Kathleen DeBold, thank you for joining the panel, Director of the -- help me out here.

MS. DeBOLD: The Mautner Project.

MS. ERBE: -- the Mautner Project. Which is what?

MS. DeBOLD: The National Lesbian Health Organization.

MS. ERBE: Why is it that there's so little research? I mean, we know about smoking in the African-American, among women, among Latinos, Latinas, why so little research on smoking in the gay communities?

MS. DeBOLD: The easiest answer is that there isn't a little box you can check that says I'm a lesbian, I'm gay, I'm bisexual or transgender.

MS. ERBE: But should there be?

MS. DeBOLD: Of course.

MS. ERBE: There should be?

MS. DeBOLD: Yes.

MS. ERBE: Wouldn't some people be offended if you asked that question, I'm talking gay people be offended if they were asked, are you gay?
MS. DeBOLD: No, I don't think so. And certainly not in a research survey.

MS. ERBE: Would they be honest about it? I'm asking because of the pressure of the --

MS. DeBOLD: If you're going to a research protocol, you're being honest about your cancer, or whatever else. And I think people need to be given the opportunity to say who they are. The thing that makes you not want to come out is if you don't see yourself there, then it's like, oh, this is not cool. If you're there, it's like, wow, yes, this is me.

MS. CONLIN: The real story here to me is just the masterful job the tobacco industry does at seducing populations who are ostracized. I mean, they did it among the African-American community, and they've targeted gays, and they've also used a lot of their dollars to support gay charities, and they've sort of come off as the friend. Remember the Montclair cigarette, the dandy with the pinky ring and the captain hat, I mean, to provide this image and marketing that's very seductive. And they have targeted this community, and I think that's one of the reasons that you see rates of smoking that are so much higher.

MS. SOSA: And the fact, Bonnie, is because the figures are not there. People don't know there is a problem. The gay community has a history of being activist in public health issues. They've done it on HIV/AIDS, and they created the public health movement. But they're not doing it on tobacco because they don't see the problem. They need the numbers to see the problem.

MS. WHITE: I just want to know sort of what are the points that, different from the rest of the community, young people's figures, just young teenagers, how many more gays are smoking, what's impacting that?

MS. ERBE: The point is, those figures don't exist because the research hasn't been done properly.

MS. WHITE: Well, there were some numbers that gay youth were more likely to smoke than straight youth. And I'm interested, more than the marketing, is what -- there is camaraderie in smoking.

MS. CONLIN: You're coming out in a culture that is still so rabidly prejudice against gay people, it's a boldly courageous act. It's people who are doing it when they're in their teens, and, yes, it's an immense psychological stresser, and people turn to cigarettes.

MS. ERBE: I want to get back to Michelle's point about marketing to gays. Tell me, what is the subculture urban marketing, which is referred to by some people, the acronym is.
MS. DeBOLD: The tobacco companies, they need to keep replacing the people they've killed. So they look for newer markets. And they decided to market to the gay and lesbian community, and also to poor people, homeless people. And so, one of their projects was Sub-Culture Urban Marketing, which is SCUM, and they called it Project SCUM. And it was to sell cigarettes to homeless people, and LGBT people.

MS. ERBE: Has it been effective?

MS. DeBOLD: Yes, it's been very effective. Gay smoking rates are going up.

MS. CONLIN: You know the Benson and Hedges ad, don't be straight, and these really attractive pictures of two women, and they're brilliant at this. And it's very effective at infiltrating the communities.

MS. DeBOLD: One of the worst I saw was a Lucky Strike ad that said, when you hear Dude that's so gay, we'll be there. And actually they will be there, because if you're a gay kid and someone calls you a faggot, you might want to relieve some of that stress with smoking.

MS. CONLIN: With so many companies afraid to associate their brand with anything gay, you know, subliminally it's kind of attractive when you see your world and your life portrayed in a marketing campaign, and it can get you to buy into that consumer culture.

MS. ERBE: Let's talk about counter-efforts, what needs to be done, what is being done and what needs to be done to counter this?

MS. DeBOLD: Well, what needs to be done is gay-specific programs, and that's because, you know, marketing, if I say why you should stop smoking, you go, oh, yeah, whatever. If I say why brunette female broadcasters should stop smoking, you might say, oh, well, maybe that has something to do with me. And so, you need to target the message, have the right message. Melissa Etheridge, for example, saying don't smoke is a lot better than Dick Cheney telling people not to smoke, who you relate to. And then, also, the media, if you put gay people shouldn't smoke in Popular Mechanics, it will get the few gay readers who might read that. If you put it in a gay magazine, or in a magazine that's a lifestyle magazine, like Women's Golf, or a sports magazine, you would get more people.

MS. SOSA: Let me tell you this, Kathy and her organization, the Mautner Project, have been true leaders in terms of tobacco among women, and particularly among lesbian women. I think another thing we need to do is unfortunately the tobacco industry has been incredibly effective in targeting the gay community, and neutralizing them as activists.

MS. ERBE: Hold that thought for just one second until while we go to credits and then come back.
That's it for this edition of To The Contrary. Next week, how sending both mom and dad to work may be hurting more than helping families and their finances. Whether your views are in agreement or to the contrary, please join us next time, and visit our PBS Online Web site at pbs.org.

(End of program.)