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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, women in power fight stereotyping. Then, a female Saudi filmmaker makes history. And behind the headlines: fighting sexual assault with social media.

(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, can women in power avoid being judged as mean or overly harsh or by that terrible word that rhymes with witch?

The latest powerful woman at whom that word was volleyed for facing down her critics is "New York Times" executive editor Jill Abramson. She joins the ranks of Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, who recently suffered similar critiques.

Abramson was anonymously criticized by detractors in her newsroom for being brusque and ill tempered. Some women leaders have said Abramson is being judged unfairly because the focus is on her demeanor, not on her work. Had it been a man, they say, the response would have been different. While powerful women are described as having sharp elbows, powerful men are called aggressive, that as compliment.

So, Congresswoman Norton, are women destined to be judged harshly when they assume powerful positions?

DELEGATE ELEANOR NORTON (D-DC): Probably, Bonnie, at least until we get a critical mass of such powerful women who get the power, the ultimate power to control their own image.

MERCEDES VIANA SCHLAPP: I think "The Devil Wears Prada" will always have a tough time, especially when they're dealing with their demeanor. On top of that, you have to add that they're going to look at their – what they're wearing, and how they look, as well.

ERIN MATSON: Judgment is warranted when there are so few women at the top, but it's time to turn the tables and look at culture and not the few women there.

DARLENE KENNEDY: Yeah, we definitely – you know, constructive criticism is a wonderful thing, but when you're attacking, that's not healthy.

MS. ERBE: Well, talk about turning the tables on culture, because I did hear somebody respond this week to that same question, saying, it will only be bad while – it will only continue while women are still in oddity in terms of being in powerful positions. And when that changes, it will change. But, I mean, is it really – isn't it true

of Angela Merkel in Germany, where there are more women in power and women in government, et cetera, than here?

MS. MATSON: Well, I think it's time to turn the tables and name names and look at actually the number of men in power. And "Politico," which wasn't named, but ran that hatchet piece on Jill Abramson, actually has a man who's – you know, the executive editor, the managing editor, the editor in chief, and they're the ones who ran that sort of "Mean Girls," burn book style piece on her with all of those anonymous sources.

And so I think really the question is let's look at who is enabling this culture of tearing down women. Of course women are being attacked unfairly when they're in top positions. And it is something that's constant across cultures. But we really need to look at the men.

MS. KENNEDY: I was just going to say, you know, this – there's a feminist, Jo Freeman, from the '60s and '70s and she talks about trashing. And she's experienced it or had experienced a great deal of it in the fact that there is no purpose to it other than to be derogatory and to injure someone.

And what bothers me about the article and what's going on is that, you know, we really need to investigate who's making these comments. Is it men? Is it women? Is it both? I mean, whether – what sex it is, you know, it's wrong. But the fact is – you know, my concern is are we attacking each other? And why are we doing that? Why aren't we holding each other up and supporting one another? That's the problem.

DEL. NORTON: You know what? It may be both. But with men, for example, who are brusque, rough, I believe that those kinds of things would be said about men in the workplace, but I bet you this. It never would have made "Politico." It never would have made anyplace with anonymous sources. That is the problem. People criticize their male bosses all the time, often for the same reasons. But women come under not only criticism, but overt, terrible criticism that is then broadcast to the world.

MS. SCHLAPP: And in addition to that, it's not just a criticism. It's did they get Botox? What are they wearing today? I mean, it's like – what did Hillary Clinton do with her hair? I mean, this – these are the type of things that women, in addition to whether they're considered tough or rough or too bossy, these are the issues that we have to deal with. My daughter –

MS. ERBE: But wait a second. I do – in fairness, I agree with everybody here, but in fairness, you open up the "Wall Street Journal" any day and you're going to see how this CEO is doing a lousy job and that CEO is doing a lousy job, of course, not in personal terms but in terms of the bottom line.

MS. SCHLAPP: Right. But in this case, I think with Jill Abramson, I mean, she has been successful with the "New York Times" and getting Pulitzer Prize. I mean, it's

amazing. She's really done good work at the "New York Times." And they're really just basically, you know, have one media organization attacking another media organization and basically saying, well, she's being judged because she's being condescending.

I mean, I think we can all agree that you want to make sure that, as a boss, whether you're a man or a woman, that you're respecting your employees and you have to build a good relationship.

So the question becomes, are these disgruntled employees, which it sounds like it is, or – you know, or she's being an effective leader? And it sounds like she's being an effective leader.

MS. ERBE: OK. So how should she respond?

DEL. NORTON: Well, you know, I think she should respond. One of the things

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MS. ERBE: And what would be – with humor, would that be a good way to deflect it?

DEL. NORTON: I would start – I would start with that. Always start with that. That's the best put down of your opponents. But I don't think you can let this kind of quote – I'm calling it criticism, to be polite – go unanswered. Women who are in power have an obligation to step up and find a way to hit back.

MS. ERBE: Right. Well, you strategize for companies. I mean, strategize for Jill Abramson.

MS. SCHLAPP: I thought about – you know, I agree with the delegate. I believe that she should respond and –

MS. ERBE: Could you say something like – could she say something like, you know, I'm sure a lot of – you know, the guy who wrote that story –

MS. SCHLAPP: But can I tell you, the most effective –

MS. ERBE: – would much rather have my job than the job he has?

MS. SCHLAPP: No. But I think the most effective strategy is to get your third-party voices, the folks who work with her, who support her, to go out there and defend her, and really say, you know what? Yeah, she might tough as nails, but guess what? She produces; she's a leader; she's turned this paper around. And I think that's where you get almost a more effective response of having the third-party voices come out and speak on her behalf.

MS. MATSON: Her style is irrelevant. I mean, really, that same hatchet piece also described the actions of a man on staff who punched the wall. And it was really framed as something that was kind of sweetly and softly –

MS. KENNEDY: He slapped the wall.

MS. MATSON: Yeah. Just now big deal you know. So it really wasn't about workplace behavior. So, I mean, I think the response I'd most like to see from her is more Pulitzer Prizes.

MS. SCHLAPP: Yes. That's right.

MS. ERBE: So you're saying – but you would ignore the actual – you know, the slam piece.

MS. MATSON: I'd say kill them with success. You know, just keep charging forward. And –

MS. ERBE: But that's a – that's a recipe for political disaster really. I mean, that's why they have war rooms and rapid responses. The whole thing nowadays is you've got to get out there and fight back.

MS. SCHLAPP: Which is fine. And, you know, a "60 Minutes" interview would be – where she positions herself or someone who can go and speak to the press and say – and they're going to ask her the questions. The first question, you know, they're going to ask her, and she has an opportunity to respond.

MS. ERBE: What is it: are you a rhymes with witch?

MS. KENNEDY: You know, you look at Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric; you look at Rudy Giuliani, former mayor. They were successful in what they did. No one asked, well, were they nice to you? Did they scream at you? It's like what were your steps to be successful? And that's really how she should approach it, in my opinion, is to say, this is what I did to become successful. And all these other naysayers, you know, go away.

DEL. NORTON: No, that's – well, yeah. They might grant her that and still continue. I agree that if there were women within the "New York Times" who could do this wouldn't that be great? But I really don't think the burden should be on them either.

MS. ERBE: Well, what about the op-ed – what about Nick Kristof, who has made a name for himself defending developing world women, you know, what about him coming out?

MS. SCHLAPP: You know, Bonnie, she should come on your show. She should come on your show. That's what she needs to do.

DEL. NORTON: Yeah. She should.

MS. SCHLAPP: That's it.

DEL. NORTON: But I think we need women, period. There ought to be other women – you would find a common ground between the women on both sides of this table to step up and defend her. That's what we need – open defense of such women. Don't leave it to them. They'll say that the women at the "New York Times" are ingratiating themselves to her. Let us do it.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe or #tothecontrary. From power to sexism.

Saudi Arabia is making women's history with "Wajda," the first movie shot entirely in Saudi Arabia. Director Haifaa Al Mansour is the first Saudi woman to direct a film.

The film features a 10-year-old girl as its lead who can't understand why she's not allowed to own or ride a bicycle. The film is about her journey to not only own a bike but race it against a neighbor boy. The girl and her mother explore why Saudi society is so segregated by gender and such hot button issues as sexism, polygamy and Islam, where women and girls just recently gained the right to ride bicycles, but only in limited areas. Women there still cannot work, travel, marry, or even enter a hospital without a man's permission.

The film made its U.S. premier at the Tribeca Film Festival this week, although it won't be on movie screens here until the fall. Al Mansour was joined on stage by noted feminist Gloria Steinem. Steinem linked the religious oppression of Saudi women to the reproductive rights battle on American soil.

So, Mercy, in your mind, was that a fair link? She was very – she downplayed it.

MS. SCHLAPP: Right. Well, she talked about the state legislatures and other – how she believes they're restricting. You know, I think it's a bit misdirected. I think it's a little far reached. I mean, I think we can all come together as conservatives and liberals and say, this Saudi director is amazing. She should be celebrated, commended for this incredible work that she's done.

I think when you look at Saudi Arabia, when it ranks 130th out of 134 countries in terms of global gender gaps, I mean, it's incredibly serious what those young women have to deal with to even just go and ride a bike.

So, you know, there's some – very little progress that's been made. I mean, King Abdullah just appointed 30 women to the Shura council. And, I mean, it's little, tiny, baby steps but it's surely not enough for women to speak and disagree in public or, you

know, have a show like yours over in Saudi Arabia. I mean, that's just not an option for these women.

MS. MATSON: Well, I think disrespect for women's fundamental human rights is disrespect, period, no matter what it is. And so it's not about playing – you know – (inaudible) – of sort, saying, it's so bad here, that, therefore, what we do over here is OK. And so I think it was a fair analogy that Gloria Steinem drew.

I think what's really interesting about what's happening in Saudi Arabia – I'm glad you brought up the king allowing women into the parliament – the funny thing about the proportion – it has a 20 percent quota. That's actually the same percentage of women that we have in the Senate, here in the United States.

MS. ERBE: And Congress.

MS. MATSON: Yeah. And so, you know, Congress itself overall is worse. So it's amazing if you think about – there's a lot of commonality in the struggle for women's human rights, even though the specifics are different.

DEL. NORTON: You know, what Gloria did, Gloria Steinem did, she knows how to make analogies and how far they go, is essentially what women all over the world are doing. They are taking specific criticisms that are levied in other countries and adapting them to their own circumstances and seeing what in my society perhaps different should I be – should I also be careful about.

And I must say, having gone through in the Congress, the notion that women should not even have health care plans, include something that for many women is life and death, contraception, I think it's a well-placed analogy in this –

MS. ERBE: It wasn't so recent – it wasn't so long ago they didn't have bathrooms.

DEL. NORTON: Last year.

MS. ERBE: Right? About 10 years ago.

DEL. NORTON: In the Capitol. So we will adapt. But I must say, this is the sweetest and most persuasive way I have ever seen of making people understand that girls ought to be equal. Once any woman, however hard her notion, however satisfied she is with where she is, leave aside the men, sees that little girls, I don't see how that can't have some kind of persuasive effect on the society.

MS. KENNEDY: I'm glad you said that, Eleanor, because I was going to say, I know Ayaan Ali, who you have interviewed on this show, did –

MS. ERBE: She's incredible.

MS. KENNEDY: Yeah. She's absolutely incredible. And she did a movie that was a little bit more hard-hitting in terms of the graphics. This is another story and it brings – it softens it so that, you know, you see this innocent little girl, same – similar issues, because you're talking about women who are being held down, how are not allowed to ride bikes, to – you know, to walk, to work, to go to school.

MS. ERBE: And her mom, through this picture, her mom is fighting with the husband about – you know, he wants another wife.

MS. KENNEDY: Right. Right. Right.

MS. ERBE: And she's –

MS. KENNEDY: Polygamy.

MS. ERBE: Right.

MS. KENNEDY: All the issues that are – you know, are very prevalent in those countries being addressed. So the fact that we're being educated – I don't think we need to be educated, because we know, but the world is global, is understanding really the atrocities of – and what these young women are experiencing. I mean, I can just not imagine growing up and not being able to go to school or to ride a bike or to have a crush on another – a little boy.

MS. SCHLAPP: Or your job options are you work in a supermarket or a cosmetic – now they can work in cosmetics, you know, stores. I mean, their options are so limited. And so we do have such a blessing in this country that our girls can get – go get a good education, go to college, you know, work – if they want to dream to become, you know, president of the United States, they can do that in this country. That's not an option for these little girls over there.

And so, I mean, I think that is where you have the greatness of America, the fact that we do have the opportunity and the freedom to speak and the freedom to be educated here. And I think that just represents what the U.S. is about.

MS. MATSON: The movie is magical because it does kind of just ask that simple question, why. Why can't I ride a bike? And I think the same question, you know, applies here in the United States to struggles. When I was 20 weeks pregnant, living in the District of Columbia, and actually physically embodying the National Right to Life Committee's top legislative priority, the question is simply why? I'm a good person. I can handle this.

MS. ERBE: You're referring to being pregnant?

MS. MATSON: Referring to being – they wanted to put through a ban on abortions, just on D.C. women, and specific at 20 week. And I remember being a D.C. resident right there and thinking, why me?

MS. SCHLAPP: Because a baby at 20 weeks can be born alive and so that's why

MS. ERBE: Well, let's not – let's not get –

MS. SCHLAPP: But that's where she's going. I need to just weigh in there.

DEL. NORTON: If that's so important, then why wasn't that bill for all women in the United States? They picked on the district because they could and you should never defend that.

MS. ERBE: All right. And we are out of time on this topic.

Behind the headlines: sexual assault awareness goes millennial. More colleges are raising awareness about sexual violence on campus. And they're teaming up on social media to reach out to today's students.

(Begin video segment.)

EMILY RASOWSKY [Founder and President GW Students against Sexual Assault]: It's a really big problem on college campuses. And so we saw that as a need. Now, whether or not this was something that was really, well, advertised that sexual violence actually occurs, it's something that I think was part of the reason why we didn't have a group that was rallied behind it.

MS. ERBE: When Emily Rasowsky came to George Washington University four years ago, the school did not have a sexual assault awareness organization. So she decided to form one: Students against Sexual Assault, or SASA, for short.

MS. RASOWSKY: I was in a women's studies class, honestly, by happenstance, and learned about it and was just kind of forward that this wasn't something that we had on campus. And as I told that to other people, as I let them know, it seems that they just get that same fire in them that this is something that needs to be discussed. It needs to be well known.

MS. ERBE: As the organization grew, Rasowsky found other schools reaching out to GW through a different medium.

MS. RASOWSKY: Our online presence. So I think that's the most key thing in how we've been able to seamlessly connect with other universities, because they see what we're doing through a friend of a friend who goes to GW, and they're a Facebook friend and they see, oh, what's this thing about sexual assault? Like why is this all on my

Facebook page and all my friends who go to GW? And then, through that, they kind of network I guess amongst themselves and end up contacting us. So it seems, oh, like a step-by-step process but really it's very fluid I think.

MS. ERBE: One SASA campaign around sexual violence statistics drew the attention of other students.

MS. RASOWSKY: We did something called a 3,000 campaign, which basically was a tabulated statistics of the projected individuals at GW who would be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. So because, like I was saying, there was so much social outreach, we were contacted by a few different student groups from other universities wanting to do the same exact program that we were doing.

MS. ERBE: Today, there's even more collaboration among colleges.

MS. RASOWSKY: We've been able to really kind of work off each other, feed off each other and see what other groups are – what are they doing, how are they being innovative around sexual violence, and how can we take what they're doing in a shell and kind of elevate it to work for our campus.

So, for instance, we were doing our Take Back the Night event of – I was 100 percent focusing on other schools we're doing first, seeing what has worked for them, and what we think works for GW. And I think it's a similar process with how other schools interact with us.

MS. ERBE: And these students are meeting on social media. Student groups, like SASA, are raising awareness about sexual assault on the platforms that students check most often.

MS. RASOWSKY: Every group of students that's coming in is more and more affluent in technology, on their computer, on – all the time, on their phones, because it's so accessible to us. It's because it's a way of our communication. And it's so engrained in our generation.

And so I think, on the one hand you can say, well, we should fight against it and people should be focusing on like coming out and actually physically being there. But the truth is that even – especially at GW, so many students are so busy. And sometimes their way to relax and de-stress is by like going on Facebook, going on Twitter and just checking out what their friends are doing, interacting.

MS. ERBE: Rasowsky hopes SASA always stays up to date with the latest technology, which might not always be social media. But for now, she says it's the best way to generate conversation about this important topic.

MS. RASOWSKY: Why not tap into that? Why not work with what's already happening within our – you know, subset of generational culture, and actually improve

on that? So it's also, in my opinion, one of the easiest ways to get organizations to come onboard and support us.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So is social media the answer to date rape, to sexual assault on campus, because if you think about it, you could probably set up a system where you could just hit some button on your cell phone, if you think you're being raped, and use the technology to – you know, GPS to find out where exactly where you are, send it out to a network of people and you could be rescued.

MS. MATSON: Well, no question that technology is an incredible tool in the kit to fight campus sexual assault. You know, you've got one in four college women experience some kind of sexual assault at some point before they graduate.

And now, what we're seeing with the Internet is that campus groups across the country are able to link up and to share, you know, how they're changing campus wide policies. It's much more serious than just online awareness raising.

In fact, (Pew ?) came out with a poll that shows that about one in five social media users actually have taken an offline action in response to what they have seen about a political or social issue that they learned about online.

And so this is an incredible tool. And I think, you know, you've got the entire women's movement changing and shifting overtime right now that these sort – this sort of style of top-down organizations is really giving way to a more organic bottom-up Internet focused style of activism.

MS. KENNEDY: But while no one – obviously, no one condones sexual assault or rape or any of those types of crimes, my concern is that with the media, sometimes, it can be dangerous because what if someone alleges someone else did something but it wasn't true? It's all over the Internet. How do you – how do you get that cleaned off and swiped off? Another concern I have is while, again, sexual assault –

MS. ERBE: Well, don't you think they're liable and slander laws out there that if somebody –

MS. SCHLAPP: Yeah, but these are college students.

MS. KENNEDY: Right. These are college students. And sometimes, you know, I'm not belittling crime, but sometimes people get upset, whether it's female or male, put something on the Internet that's inappropriate or misleading. And it could lead to other problems. And the other concern I have is that –

MS. ERBE: But are you more concerned about that or more concerned about stopping sexual assault on campus, which seems to be so prevalent?

MS. KENNEDY: Well, I'm definitely concerned about that, but we'll also need to look at the other side of that. Those who are accused of it, are they being treated fairly, because –

DEL. NORTON: Oh, my goodness.

MS. KENNEDY: Well, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights says that you only have to have a standard of preponderance of the evidence. So the point being that if a young man is wrongly accused of assaulting someone, the road that he has to go down to defend himself is a lot – more difficult than someone who's in a regular system.

DEL. NORTON: Well, let me tell you what has happened. These so-called young men have almost always gotten off. And the women, the girls, have sometimes been expelled from college. They have been the ones who have been punished. This is very important to do. Remember the recent case of the two young football players? And it has gotten so brazen that they were taking each other's pictures of this. Now, the women are –

MS. ERBE: Of them raping. Right.

DEL. NORTON: Exactly. And they were finally convicted. The girls, young women who have taken this now, this has been an open problem for the last 20 years. Finally, they are saying, wait a minute. If we go to authorities, we're going to get nowhere because of the preponderance of the evidence. So let's empower ourselves to do something about this. The more they get on social media, the better.

MS. ERBE: But, Darlene, before we get to the point where we're – I wasn't even suggesting that she text out a message, mass text a message, saying, Joe Blow is raping me. I'm saying I'm about to be raped. Please come to my room and help me. You don't have to mention his name.

MS. KENNEDY: Oh, sure. Oh, no. That's – no, that's – I don't have a problem with that. And I certainly support educating, because a lot of young women today still don't understand that when you say no and the guy is persistent, you know, and afterwards says, well, you agreed to it, you know, education is certainly important. But my concern is the victimization of the wrong person.

MS. MATSON: Rape is a crime that is a – that victimizes the rape victim. And to suggest that rape allegations are, you know, somehow the real crime of rape is just I think really mis-focused.

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: Briefly, Mercy.

MS. SCHLAPP: I mean, there's one quick factor here – I mean, alcohol. Alcohol plays a role in over 50 percent of these sexual assault cases. So, again, it's – and the schools aren't doing enough. So it wonderful to see these young women, like Emily, coming out, using the tools that she has to really, you know, bring together and try to link this problem and deal with it.

MS. ERBE: All right. 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.

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