



HOST:

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GUESTS:

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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, men may be no more biologically prone to violence than women. Then, the Cheney sisters spar over gay marriage. Behind the headlines: how to stop young girls from becoming child brides.

(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, international law to end violence against women worldwide.

This week marked International Men's Day. It just happened to coincide with the reintroduction in Congress of the International Violence against Women Act. Its chances of becoming law are slim and none. But if it did, IVAWA, as it's known, would make preventing gender-based violence a permanent part of U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. Institute for Peace recently released new research about men, women, and violence. It shows biology may not be a precursor to violence. The study finds while testosterone is linked to aggression, aggressive impulses or feelings don't necessarily translate to violent actions.

Many brain researchers believe men's progression from aggression to violence is due to the way biology interacts with the environment and culture. So the good news is that if violence is a learned response, it can be unlearned.

So, Representative Edwards, do you agree that violence and men are more predetermined by culture than biology?

REPRESENTATIVE DONNA EDWARDS (D-MD): Absolutely I do. I mean, I think that violence is a learned behavior and it's a taught behavior. And when – we see already when young people are raised in violent homes, they can become violent, not everyone but some. And we also know that it can be unlearned.

DARLENE KENNEDY: Although, you know, I believe the hunter/gatherer is part of men, the makeup of a man, the DNA so to speak, there's no question. It's environment that makes him violent or not violent.

KIM GANDY: Well, you know, testosterone is an element. It may make a person more inclined to aggression, but the decision is made by the individual, who is affected by the society and by the culture they live in, and to a part, in some ways, the way they grew up.

RINA SHAH: I couldn't agree more with this finding because it's really shown – in the past 100 years that entertainment, sports, these kinds of things have shown as the

aggressors, have promoted violence almost with young men and women are sort of shown to be more weaker, the less dominant sex.

MS. ERBE: But everybody here on this panel is agreeing that it's culturally induced, not native. There's a whole international movement growing up now around men as victims of – you run a national organization about domestic violence that focuses on women. But men are as victimized by this culture of violence being taken in, in the Congo, as child soldiers and trained at eight years old to become killing machines. What do we do with this information, because it really turns everything we know about violence on its head?

MS. GANDY: Well, there's no question that men are significantly victims of violence as they are more likely to be perpetrators of violence against other men. One of the differences with domestic violence is that it starts as power and control. It's the determination by one person that he is going to exercise control over the life of another person using physical violence but also using emotional and economic violence.

MS. ERBE: So how do we – what do we do with this information? I mean, most efforts around the world and in the United States to prevent violence are aimed at preventing it against women. Should we be rethinking this whole thing?

MS. KENNEDY: Certainly. Education – yeah, we can all agree. Education is so important, and whether it's here, in the United States, or across the world. And I think that we need to in some instances deprogram our young men who become men into thinking that being violent, aggressive is a good thing. You know, it's not. And that's part of our society that we really need to reevaluate in how we raise our boys.

REP. EDWARDS: But I also think it's about perpetrator and community accountability. And so, for example, if you're violent and nobody ever calls you to task for that, nobody ever opens the curtain on that violence, what you're doing is you're receiving these, you know, incentives for permission to continue to be violent. We have to stop those incentives. And so as much as we provide services stopping the perpetrators by not providing incentives to violence I think is as important.

And, you know, like it or not, this stuff requires money. It requires resources and a real investment of, you know, of time because if violence is learned over a period of time, you know, with a young man into adulthood, we're not going to undo it in a year. And that requires a real investment of resources.

MS. GANDY: And, right now, the country is not investing resources in this.

MS. ERBE: Well, I mean, over time, does that need to change? And what are the public policy implications? I mean, what programs need to be diverted towards ending – you know, changing men's – putting men maybe through programs – men who have grown up in particularly violent subcultures in this country, putting them through programs to show them, this is not normal, this is not natural, this is not right.

REP. EDWARDS: Well, there are things that we actually know. For example, we know that by incorporating these education issues at a lower grade level and elementary and through high school of how you resolve conflicts actually does change behavior.

You know, when you look in our prison and jail population, and particularly with our young people, you ask, and almost to a one, men and women in prison, they've ever experienced violence themselves or they're perpetrated it. And so that really should be a signal to us that we can't afford the system that we have now because all of those resources are being used in a lot of instances to incarcerate but they're not being used so that we can stop the violence.

And, you know, Kim knows this better than anyone else that we – when we make those investments as public policy choices – but even this Congress. We're under a budget sequester. You know, what? Shelters and services closing down; programs laying off employees because of the public policy decisions, bad ones that we're actually making at the federal level that are having a deep impact in communities.

MS. ERBE: Yeah. Tell me about that.

MS. GANDY: Well, we just did a survey of over 1,700 local shelters around the country, and they have – as many people as there are shelters have been laid off in the past year along, nearly 1,700 layoffs, 62 percent of them in very core services, direct shelter staff and case managers. And, at a time – because of the economic situation in the country, the need for services is even greater. There's increased demand and yet fewer services.

MS. ERBE: Well, presumably, as the economy picks up, this will turn around or what do you do to try to prevent that now?

MS. GANDY: Well, obviously, we're working with members of Congress who are supporters, like Congresswoman Edwards, to try to get services related to violence exempted from the sequester. But even that is not enough. These programs are terribly, terribly underfunded. Literally they're closing right and left.

REP. EDWARDS: Well, and it goes deeper than that because even things like looking at what the Centers for Disease Control does or the Department of Justice in terms of doing research about violence, that's cut too. And so it's the combination of that plus understanding other things that we need to do and understanding the nature of violence. And, you know, at some point or other, all of us in our communities and our societies, we're going to pay for this. And women are paying with their lives.

MS. KENNEDY: Yeah. I just want to say quickly, from an international perspective, training men in other countries is a lot more difficult than it is here, not to say it's easy, but there's a different – you know, we're looking at a different set of

circumstances, a lot of cultural – this is the way that their society believes it's supposed to be. So, you know, to focus on the international side, you know, it's probably a million times worse than what we're dealing with here, even though one is no better than the other.

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

The Cheney sisters, Liz and Mary, had a rather public dispute this week. Liz is running for the Republican Senate nomination from Wyoming. Mary is a rarity: a long-time out lesbian Republican. The two are fighting over Liz's reiteration on Fox News she opposed same-sex marriage. Mary is married to Heather Poe, who took to Facebook to call Liz's remarks offensive, that after Liz spent time in the Cheney-Poe household and telling the couple how happy she was for them. Mary also told her sister on Facebook she was on, quote, "the wrong side of history." Former Vice President Dick Cheney and his wife, Lynne, issued a statement defending Liz.

So what do you think of all this? Was it unprofessional of them to go public like this?

MS. KENNEDY: Oh, Bonnie, I have to say, for the first time, I'm happy to be an only child, because this is – you know, siblings can be a problem. But, you know, look, I guess I analogize this – and it's two different issues, but I analogize it this way. I happen to be pro-life and I have very, very close friends, dear friends who are pro-choice. I don't love them any less because we disagree on that issue.

And I think – you know, I think because society – you know, instant media and people saying things off the cuff and reading and misinterpreting, I just believe that, you know, Liz's – Liz Cheney's comments – I mean, she can love her sister and not agree with the situation. And I believe that's really the interpretation we should have about it.

REP. EDWARDS: You know, I look at that – and I have sisters. And, at a human level, there's a lot of hurt that you can hear and feel and sense in all of these social media communications.

On a political level, I think the problem for – you know, for the Cheneys is that you really can't sort of say one thing and do another. You really do have to be consistent. And I think that she's going to have to define that – Liz is going to have to define that to the constituents of Wyoming. But on a very –

MS. ERBE: Well, she was – she was already running second, way behind the incumbent whom she's trying to challenge for the Republican nomination, but what politically is this going to do to her – to her run?

REP. EDWARDS: Well, I think authenticity is actually really important to voters whether or not they agree with you and what you believe. And so I think if she is in a

position where she's conveying that she's not authentic about who she is and what she believes, that actually hurts more than the belief itself.

MS. ERBE: But why is – why is it – why do you see it that she's not authentic? Maybe she – on principle, she opposes gay marriage; in her real life, she loves her sister and is happy that her sister is happy. What's inconsistent about that?

REP. EDWARDS: You know, I don't – you know what? I don't even know. I'm just saying that the from the way that it looks from the outside, number one, that we're all observing this really sort of personal family thing, and in all of our other families it might get resolved at a family reunion, and, instead, it's getting resolved on television.

MS. ERBE: Right. It's kind of like Jerry – an episode of Jerry Springer or something. You expect somebody to come out with a chair.

REP. EDWARDS: It is.

MS. ERBE: And clobber the other side.

REP. EDWARDS: And then, you know, you bring the parents in there having to, you know, support one child over the other, or, you know, or both. And so it's very sad. But I think on the political level, it just appears that she's inconsistent. She's going to have to have to resolve that so that she convinces the voters of Wyoming that she's not. Again, voters don't have to agree with you on every single thing, but if they think that you're trying to slice and dice and nuance, they don't like it at all.

MS. SHAH: The bigger issue is how long has she been a resident of the state of Wyoming. That is the big issue here. Sibling rivalry is nothing new. Thanksgiving is coming up; politics divides people. My own siblings and I don't agree. And I can just tell you that the voters are going to have a bigger issue with that, is that can she properly represent us? And her sister is gay, that's one thing. But is her sister the one voting for them in Congress on her behalf? No.

MS. ERBE: So you think she shouldn't have – in the first place, she had no right to move to Wyoming and pretend that she was a resident because she –

MS. SHAH: I will agree with that actually. I will, because I think, again, that's part of being authentic is how well can you represent the people of this area? Sure, you may have had an address there, but that's not enough. You've got to go farther than that.

And, of course, we all know gay marriage is extremely divisive. You know, it splits people apart, people in my own party. We believe in freedom, in liberty but a great many people in the Republican Party don't believe in the freedom to marry. And so it's nothing new. There is a side of us that is like, well, I'm for the freedom to marry. But

the bigger issue here is her residency and how well she can represent those people, so let's put this aside.

REP. EDWARDS: But the fact is the public has actually moved far along – the American public has when it comes to these issues. And I think, you know, part of what's going on with the Cheney sisters is they're reflecting that push and pull of the way the public has – you know, has moved.

And, you know, I tell you, this was a big fight in the state of Maryland over this last year. Once we pass our referendum, pretty much nobody's talking about it anymore.

MS. ERBE: And there's no challenge to it.

REP. EDWARDS: No.

MS. ERBE: Interesting. One last thing. I heard that there was a rumor that they had concocted this whole thing to try to give Liz Cheney's campaign a boost. Anybody –

MS. GANDY: I was actually going to say that. I hadn't heard the rumor, but I was going to say – can I just say that the Cheneys are a really political family and maybe Mary was trying to give Liz a leg up by making it look like she was more solidly conservative than perhaps was being said by others.

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: I did hear the rumor but I can't believe that they would have tried to concoct this because it doesn't really put Liz in a very favorable light, but who knows.

Behind the headlines: child brides. Every year, 14 million girls under the age of 18 are forced into arranged marriages around the world. *To the Contrary* spoke with one young woman who convinced her family not to force her into an arranged marriage.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: Sarita lives in a small town in India nearly 300 miles from Mumbai. She remembers being 14 when she first realized her friends were getting married. Even at that young age, she knew it was not the life she wanted. Sarita found the courage to speak up.

SARITA PROVALKAVAT [Student]: (Translated.) I explained to my father what I learned in life skill education class, that getting married early has several risks. And then I also told him about one example, one of my friends who got married early, she was pregnant when she was young, and she died in childbirth and her baby.

MS. ERBE: Sarita credits her teacher and a program aimed at ending the dangerous practice of child marriage.

MANISHA KHELE [Life Skills Teacher]: She was able to convince her father, and he could tell others in the village that, as long as my daughter is studying, I don't want to talk about her marrying. As long as the girl is studying, parents find it easier to respond to social pressure.

LAKSHMI SUNDARAM [Girls Not Brides]: For a lot of girls, it's incredibly scary. And I have to say I'm speechless at the courage of some of these girls because there's so much pressure in many of these communities. And it takes a huge amount of courage to actually be able to say, you know what? I don't think this is right for me.

MS. ERBE: Sarita is one of millions of girls around the world, on every continent, where becoming a child bride is the only life they know. In the developing world, one in seven girls is married before her 15th birthday. Some child brides are as young as eight or nine.

MS. SUNDARAM: The reasons why people marry off their daughters, it's something that they've always done, but then there's also factors such as poverty, lack of education, and, you know, there's a lack of other opportunities.

MS. ERBE: Lakshmi Sundaram runs Girls Not Brides. She says marriage is supposed to be a wonderful time for a young lady. It's anything but for these girls.

MS. SUNDARAM: Their first sexual experience is forced so how can you expect to thrive when you're constantly being subjected to basically rape within a marriage? There's a real social pressure to prove your fertility. And so they do get pregnant very quickly. And they're children; their bodies are not made to be having children.

MS. ERBE: Girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth and the children born to girls are more likely to die or be very sick.

Manisha Khele decided something had to be done to protect these innocent children. But she knew any program designed to educate young girls would require the support of the community.

MS. KHELE: They're getting married at a young age and then they're widow or abandoned for the rest of their life. I ask them, what happens to these girls when they come back?

MS. ERBE: Sarita's mother, who was wed at 16, supported her daughter's decision so did many of her friends.

MS. PROVALKAVAT: (Translated.) My friends who got married, they realized that once you get married, you are just tied down to the house and you are denied your education and several of those opportunities.

MS. KHELE: When I started in those villages, about 82 percent of the girls were getting married at less than 18 years of age. I was able to bring it down to 62 percent and median age of marriage went up by one year.

MS. ERBE: Now, there are a number of adolescent girls similar to Sarita who are free to pursue the life they choose.

MS. PROVALKAVAT: (Translated.) I dreamt of becoming a teacher because I felt if I become a teacher, I will be able to reach out to many children, especially girls, and then I can speak to these girls about not to get married early.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So, your thoughts, Rina.

MS. SHAH: This story hits very close to home. My parents emigrated from India. And I can tell you I'm intimately familiar with what's going on over there, and this continues today.

India has nearly 2,000 tribes still in existence, and the Supreme Court ruled that these tribes can govern themselves the way that they would need to and prefer to. And they prefer to let child marriages go on because fathers often feel their daughters, before they are wedded, if they're wedded before maturity, then they'll be protected from abuse and other such things. That is a really common reason that's not talked about, that, let me get this girl off my hands before she becomes a liability, before the cost of protecting her becomes too much. And that's why they're still going into child marriages.

MS. ERBE: Well, and is there a dowry of some sort given to the bride's parents? I mean, there's a financial –

MS. SHAH: Brides give a dowry. Yes.

MS. ERBE: Yeah.

MS. SHAH: Oftentimes to the man that the daughter is being married off to, the bride's family owes a significant amount, whether it be in the form of livestock, actual money. Whatever it may be, their dowry still exists.

But this is happening within the tribes of India all over India. The good news is that in urban areas and in semi-urban areas, where women are becoming more educated, this is really dwindling. Again, it's a shame. India is the world's largest democracy and still 40 percent of child marriages happen in India.

MS. ERBE: And it's not just India. I just talked to somebody who works for a large global non-profit. They're starting a movement because it's going on in northern Brazil. So what do we do? What can Congress do?

REP. EDWARDS: Well, it is. And I think the power of the story is that it actually speaks to what we need to do around education and girls' education. I really do believe that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was onto something when she went around from country to country really talking about the power of investing in girls' education, because we can see even from this story the difference that that makes.

And it isn't just about educating the young girl but it's the courage that she and her family and the community then display that enables them not to be in this circumstance. And we know that education in the long run improves women's lives and prospects and could save them from the prospect of being a child bride.

MS. KENNEDY: I was just going to say, you know, this story is just horrendous, but the bright light out of that was the teacher and that young lady and that young lady's family who are willing to take a stand and say, no, I don't want this. I mean, I think the teachers are a trailblazer, you know, to educate these young women, and say, you don't have to do this. And the fact that the young lady who's decided that she's not going to be married, you know, I'm grateful that her parents have supported her. And I'm sure not too many parents will support their children because they, as she said, they want to get rid of the liability, so to speak.

MS. SHAH: Yeah. For her father to promote that in the community, look, I'm not going to marry my daughter off – but also, Indians have the reason that, look, my daughter is still studying; she's busy; she's moving along; she's doing her own thing so we can't marry her off just yet. And I think that's a sort of crummy excuse, if you ask me, but at least it's something and it's preventing these things from happening in the tribes as often as it used to happen.

MS. ERBE: And why is – you know, we're in an era now, just for the last five years or so, and it's exploding, where there's more media coverage of all these horrendous things that are happening to people, and it starts in developing nations. And, India, of course, is a huge contrast. I mean, it's one of the richest nations in of the world, but, at the same time, you have these tribes where you go to those areas – and I've been there myself – and people are living like they were living in the 1600s.

MS. SHAH: There's so much gender bias; there's so much injustice because this gender bias is engrained into their society. Look what happened exactly a year ago with the gang rape in New Delhi, really, it's just terrible because men have the culture –

MS. ERBE: And that was in a big city.

MS. SHAH: Yes, in a big city. But it's engrained in their society that men are superior. India is a country where the male baby is still more valued than the female baby. They're more useful. They can bring more to the family. And that's a shame. And it's going to take education and community partnerships, the private-public partnerships for their government to really make some moves on this.

MS. GANDY: But the education of girls really is paramount here because not only does it educate her to her own rights and what will be different about her life if she's not married off at a young age, but it also makes her more valuable to her family because a girl who has an education may be able to get a job and bring money into the family, therefore, making her not a liability that they need to marry off. So it has multiple benefits.

MS. SHAH: Making her more valuable than a male son – I mean, a male child rather. Yes.

MS. ERBE: Yeah. And I hate to say this but I saw a documentary about something called gendercide in India and China, where women will bear female infants, and they didn't have access to abortion or birth control, so they kill them and bury them when they're born. And –

MS. SHAH: In upper-class families it's happening; in low-class families it's happening. It's happening across the spectrum. I know personally in my own family someone who did not want their female child and other relatives had to come in and care for her.

REP. EDWARDS: Although, just in this last week and a half, China actually did revoke that one-child rule and so, I mean, I think that actually sends a huge signal to the women of China but also women around the world. And, again, it really is about investing in women's education because we can see it over and over again, whether it's in the United States or it's in India or around the world, when you do that, women invest in communities; they invest in their families; and they thrive.

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. Whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

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