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BONNIE ERBE: Hello. I’m Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to To the Contrary, a discussion of news and social trends from diverse perspectives. Up first, the latest from the gridiron.

The NFL’s domestic violence and child abuse scandals continue this week as media reports of more abusers and disappearing sponsors mount. Top corporate sponsors are standing by the NFL for now, even those run by women.

The female chief executive officers of PepsiCo, General Motors and Campbell Soup Company run companies that pay hundreds of millions of dollars annually for the right to attach their brands to the NFL. Female activists push those CEOs to speak out. And by week’s end, PepsiCo’s Indra Nooyi issued a statement decrying the abusive, violent behavior, but supporting NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell as a, quote, “man of integrity.”

So far, Nike and Castrol have dropped personal contracts with Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson, that over child abuse charges. And Radisson Hotels has suspended local support for the team. Peterson has been suspended with pay until he resolves his legal issues.

Ray Rice of the Baltimore Ravens was cut last week after an elevator video showed him punching his then fiancé. He’s been suspended indefinitely by the NFL.

So Congresswoman, will Indra Nooyi’s statement help prevent women and children from being beaten by professional football players?

DELEGATE ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC): Bonnie, good statement, glad she made it. But given PepsiCo’s close association with the NFL brand, my questions is: what is she really going to do about the league’s domestic violence epidemic?

GENEVIEVE WOOD: Well, I think this is just one part of it. All of society has to come out and say, we’re opposed to domestic abuse and there are consequences if you do it.

AVIS JONES-DEWEEVER: Exactly. I mean, wonderful statement, I agree, but it’s not enough. If we’re going to address domestic violence in the NFL and the larger society, there needs to be a comprehensive set of programs that we need to implement.

PATRICE LEE: And, you know, what, this to me, it just looks like she’s racking up brownie points for her company, and we don’t need more of that. We need actual substantive changes.
MS. ERBE: And toward the end of the week, I want to add, by the way, that Goodell had a kumbayah news conference and there were other developments – the federal government issued some statement about their support for the NFL. But you said wonderful statement saying he’s a man of integrity?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Well, that’s true.

MS. ERBE: I’m surprised.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: I would not endorse that. But she did very strongly come – really just sort of condemn the actions of the particular players involved in these instances. And she was right to do that. That’s more than a lot of other CEOs have done. And so she had a very strong anti-domestic violence statement towards the beginning of her specific statement that was released.

But that’s not enough. Really, show me the money, what this organization is going to really listen to is when they start seeing dollars trickle away. And until we find that happening, I don’t think we’re going to see very much change in the NFL or otherwise.

MS. ERBE: Do you – you’re a big fan.

MS. WOOD: Of football.


MS. WOOD: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. ERBE: But do you think there’s any palpable change going to come – I just look at everything as sort of stonewalling, and all these – all these cosmetic changes, like the appointment of the four white women to an advisory board when the NFL is 75 percent black.

MS. WOOD: But it’s more women. Well, look – I mean, I think we have to be careful that we don’t just take the NFL out and pretend that it’s not part of a larger American culture. I mean, as we know, as bad as these stories have been, the reality is, when you compare men in the NFL, same age range, to men of the same age range in the broad American culture, there’s actually less domestic violence abuse and less of a lot of other things. I’m not taking up for them, but the point being is domestic abuse isn’t just happening by NFL players. It’s a problem throughout the society, and I think we have to take it as that as opposed to just saying, we’re going to make professional players do better. That’s part of it, but it’s a larger society.

MS. ERBE: But it’s more than that, is it not? But you have – but you have a very different dynamic going on here. These guys have been worshipped since high school, the high schools and the colleges. And Adrian Peterson, for example, didn’t complete
college but he went to Oklahoma for three years. Why are they passing him? Why are they –

MS. WOOD: So clearly, just going to college and getting an education isn’t the answer here, right? Yeah.

MS. ERBE: Well, they’re not. But that’s the whole point. They’re not really getting an education. If he had an education, he might have known that beating a four year old with a whip is against the law.

MS. WOOD: Well, my guess is they do know certain things are right and wrong but they choose to do wrong anyway. That’s reality.

MS. ERBE: And then given a pass. And why – you know, the high schools and colleges, are they complicit in this by passing them, knowing they’re not getting grades?

DEL. NORTON: And I agree, you know, that we’re all complicit in this sense. This sport defines us and it defines our violence. And given the fact that we know how brutal the sport is, that it causes men to literally lose their minds so that many, many parents are decided not to let their children even play football, the disadvantage that comes to mental capacity. But I have to tell you why I’m bothered by her statement. It did not need the Goodell add-on.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Right.

DEL. NORTON: And why did she add that? Her brand – she regards that brand as so important that she pays $140 million a year just to use the NFL logo. And he apparently makes special trips to her company site to celebrate the NFL. If she had left it out, none of us would have thought that she wasn’t for Goodell, but, by doing her statement that way, it seems to me she really took away from what was otherwise a very good statement.

And given that very close association, apparently a personal association with Goodell, she should go to meet with Goodell and I would expect that to indicate that she really is trying to do something about it, otherwise, I agree. You know, this is just the kind of preemptive statement you’d better make if you are a female CEO.

MS. ERBE: There was some talk this week that holding female CEOs, even the CEOs of these huge companies, to a higher standard than the men isn’t fair.

MS. WOOD: I don’t think it’s fair. I think everybody ought to be opposed to domestic violence. I don’t think it should have to be just women who step out and say this.

But, look, I mean, I think the reason they’re so tied to, like all these other companies, it’s one of the few places you can still go and find a lot of people watching
TV all at the same time. This isn’t something you tape and watch later or you run through. Most people watch – you get about 17 million people watching this every week. It’s one place advertisers can still go.

My thinking is – as opposed to throwing the whole sport away, let’s make it better. Obviously, a lot of Americans like it for a lot of reasons and not just because it’s rough and tough but there’s a lot of – you know, there’s spirit in it. And people like being part of a team and being a part. You can do that – we can address health concerns. We can address things like this. And we should do that.

I think Goodell and others have been late to the game. And even though I think he’s been a great manager in many ways, I think – big fumble on this one, not just one time; big fumble on it.

MS. ERBE: Should he go?

MS. WOOD: That’s going to be up for the owners to decide. I would say –

MS. ERBE: But aren’t they too tainted to make that decision? I mean, they’re all indebted to him.

MS. WOOD: Yeah, but look, they have huge risk here. I mean, these teams – a lot of them exist – I think all of them – to make money, right? If the league goes bad, it goes bad for them.

MS. ERBE: We have a little bit of time. The audience’s reaction – you know, the NFL made this big deal about, you know, appealing to women, who are half – just about half their audiences, you know, the breast cancer – wearing pink sneakers on the field for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I mean, the whole thing. Some women think that women who continue to watch this sport are traitors to women. Are they or are they not?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Well, you know, it’s hard for me to make a blanket statement like that. It does bother me immensely when I do see women on TV wearing, for example, Ray Rice jerseys and saying how much they support him regardless of everything that happened.

But the reality is we need to put the pressure on the ownership, in my mind, and on Goodell specifically. His idea I think it’s a wrong decision to have four white women, specifically domestic violence experts, to be hired to advise him. There are black women who have been in this field for decades and could provide some very culturally competent advice that apparently he needs for an organization that is more than two-thirds African-American.

DEL. NORTON: But this just shows what a poor leader he is. He’s really a follower.
MS. ERBE: And just how – I mean, how many decades he is behind the world in terms of diversity, not just male, female but of color.

DEL. NORTON: Yeah. Yeah. See, the owners are in league with him. He’s protecting them. He’s making money for them. So he is not going anywhere. But he’s a poor leader. Witness the leader of the NBA, where you get out in front, take a risk and you find that people will be so impressed that they will follow you. You show me a risk that Goodell has taken and I will show you somebody who is –

MS. WOOD: He’s been tough with the player unions. That’s one reason they like him. I’m not defending him. I’m just –

DEL. NORTON: What is the risk there? That’s to make him money.

MS. WOOD: He’s been a very good negotiator for the NFL with them and so that’s where owners and teams have come out very well. But, look, I think it won’t just stop here. The NBA has a lot of folks playing in it that are not, you know, roll models that we want everybody to follow; the same thing in baseball but same thing in outside the sports world. Look, as I stated earlier, the NFL, while you’ve got these scenes going on, on average, there are still fewer players committing those crimes than you see of men of the same age nationally doing the same thing.

MS. ERBE: Your thoughts on the women’s audience.

MS. LEE: Well, I mean, I think – well, there’s an opportunity, number one, I see. I mean, on every coaching – every coaching staff has some sort of character development coach. These are people who are working very closely with these players who should be able to take a stronger role in saying, hey, what’s going on in your life, and being able to instill certain values.

From a women’s perspective, just watching this, I mean, I don’t think that there needs to be – every female CEO needs to come out and say something, because, at the end of the day, as she mentioned, they’re there for the bottom line. And if their consumers are driving what the response should be, then that’s how they’re going to judge and how they’re going to respond.

MS. ERBE: All right. Thank you. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe. From violence to work.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says, if women want to see changes in workplace policies, they should start a movement and vote.

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON: When we can turn an issue into a political movement that demands people be responsive during the election
season, it carries over. So these issues have to be in the lifeblood of this election and any election.

MS. ERBE: Clinton joined a panel of Democratic women senators and House members this week to highlight how women are key to a strong economy.

MS. CLINTON: If we had been able to close the gap between men and women participating in the workforce, our gross domestic product would be 10 percent higher. Now, when people are talking about how important it is to get growth going again, get jobs that are good jobs, being creative again, why are we leaving 10 percent on the table?

MS. ERBE: The panel agreed that a flexible workplace, paycheck fairness and paid leave are no longer issues on the margins. They’re in the center of public debates.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So she’s coming out harder this time on women’s issues than she did in ’08. Would it have helped her in ’08?

MS. WOOD: Maybe, but I think this is – you know, I think she’s trying to find who’s the base that I need to make sure is out there, especially early on in the primaries.

But I think – you know, the Democratic Party nationally is trying to raise this issue of women are not paid the same as men alike. And I will just say I think women should make the same as men too if they’re doing the same jobs, have the same background and so forth. But, as we well know, when you do make those comparisons and you actually use those kinds of things to get your statistics, women are right behind most men.

DEL. NORTON: Look, Bonnie, in ’08, she had the same problem that Barack Obama had. He had to show that he was not running as a black. She had to show, as the first woman to get traction, she was not running as a woman. Then she saw what happened. The women came out in such huge numbers that she now understands she’d better team up with them early.

MS. ERBE: And do you think she’ll get their vote?

DEL. NORTON: Oh, at the moment, absolutely.

MS. LEE: Wait a minute. I mean, she’s raising reproductive issues as women’s issues, but there are a lot of women’s issues, things that women care about more like the economy, finding jobs, and employment. And a lot of the policies that she’s going to suggest as being the solution to some of these women’s issues are going to be things that are going to bring back and hold back our generation, especially young women.

DEL. NORTON: Like what?
MS. LEE: Raising the minimum wage.

DEL. NORTON: Hold back young women raising the minimum wage. Well, my heavens.

MS. WOOD: Putting more regulations on employers – (inaudible) – regulation.

DEL. NORTON: No, no. Raising the minimum wage. Most of those who in fact are on the minimum wage are young women.

MS. LEE: But they’re meant to be there temporarily. The minimum wage is not something you’re meant to raise your children and raise a family on.

DEL. NORTON (?): A lot of people do.

MS. JONES-DWEEVER: You know, the reality is that the stereotype that we have is that some pimply faced teenager at McDonalds that’s the typical minimum wage worker. And that’s just not true.

MS. ERBE: She also mentioned at this event – she said – I didn’t realize this. I can’t substantiate it, but 75 percent of people who make their living on tips are female.


MS. ERBE: I mean, what about cab drivers?

DEL. NORTON: So she was emphasizing – she wasn’t emphasizing – she was emphasizing dollar and cent issues. She wasn’t emphasizing the social issues that we know there’s some difference. She’s doing it just the right way.

MS. WOOD: And I think it’s worked quite a bit. I mean, look – and, again, I think the larger Democratic Party will do this, not just Hillary. I mean, they think that turns women out. And, unfortunately, I just think they use a lot of rhetoric that, frankly, doesn’t get backed up.

I think conservatives would like to say, we don’t want you to stay in the minimum wage job. We don’t want you to stay and have to raise your family just in a job that makes tips. We want you to get up the ladder and talk about opportunity, not just how we can make it better for those of you who are down here and are always going to be down there. We want to say, how do we get you from down there to up here?

MS. JONES-DWEEVER: Well, one way you can get there is making sure that people are paid fairly. And when Republicans continue to vote against Paycheck Fairness Act, it is no way that those arguments actually line up with the reality of women’s lives. One of the key ways in which we know that we can combat the wage gap
is to make sure that people know what their neighbor, what their coworker is making for the very same job. And if we continue to make it a secretive affair, then women are going to continue to be discriminated against.

MS. ERBE: But the Equal Pay Act – Paycheck Fairness Act failed in the House on a party line vote this week, it looks for all the world, if you believe most of the pollsters – not all of them but most of them – that the Senate will be lost to the Republicans in November. You know, how do you move this forward in a time when the voters seem to be going in the opposite direction?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Yeah. I mean, basically, it’s on the Democratic Party’s back to really be able to make the argument to the voter about why this is a dollars and cents issue for you and why you need to make sure that the worst does not in fact happen.

MS. ERBE: All right. Behind the headlines: freed slaves after the Civil War. A stunning photograph of four freed female slaves taken in the 1900s, has gone viral twice online. We wanted to learn more about these women’s lives and who they were. We bring you these interviews with two experts.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: The year was 1916, more than a half century after the end of the civil war. It was a cold October day. This impactful shot of four women, all listed as being more than 100 years old, was taken outside a church in Washington, D.C., site of an annual convention of freed slaves.

A’LELIA BUNDLES [Author and Journalist]: They were born around 1816, just 40 years after the United States became a country. They were born when James Madison was president, shortly after the end of the war of 1812. Slavery was the law of the land. And the value of the exports for the United States – 43 percent of those exports came from cotton. So these were women who probably had been enslaved on plantations in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, perhaps in Virginia.

MS. ERBE: Their names are listed as Annie Parrum, Anna Angales, Elizabeth Berkley, and Sadie Thompson; their ages, from 105 to 125.

MS. BUNDLES: You know, there’s no way to really know exactly how old the women were. The photographs were taken on an October day by Harris and Ewing. Harris and Ewing was really the official White House photographer and it was very rare for them to take photographs of African-Americans. They did photographs of landscapes around the city of Washington. They did famous people. So for them to take a photograph of these women who were 100 years old plus was something quite unusual.

MS. ERBE: So were the lives of these incredible women born into slavery and then freed with very little by way of means to earn a living or feed themselves or their
families. The south was as chaotic and lawless after the civil war as the Wild West, except the slavery based economy was destroyed and racism still reigned supreme.

MARCIA CHATELAIN [Assistant Professor, Georgetown University]: Some moved into urban centers of the South. And they started negotiating their own labor terms with employment contracts. And this is a really powerful moment for someone who understood themselves as a slave and now they have free rein over their ability to determine labor. And so some women became washer women, laundry workers; some pooled their resources and were able to rent apartments together and everyone worked.

But the idea of autonomy of oneself as a laborer was very important for women like this. So some of those women stayed in the urban south; others looked to the north for better opportunities. And so these women, over the span of their lifetime, saw African-Americans as property to African-Americans as free, and then a horrible retrenchment of African-American rights.

MS. ERBE: These conventions of former slaves were a way for African-Americans to keep up with each other and with news in the community.

MS. CHATELAIN: Some parts of the celebration was merely a chance to look and see the type of progress that was around, whether it was the growth of black businesses, black schools, and black community centers. There was also a reflection on what this new period would mean for people and so there would be speeches, there would be conversations that were had among different groups about redefining African-American identity in this period of change. And then there would be calls for action, how to resist a growing culture of violence and intimidation in the south.

MS. ERBE: The Jim Crow era had arrived with a vengeance. Blacks were beaten up and lynched in the south with impunity. Jim Crow laws made it legal to segregate restaurants, stores, jobs and schools by race.

MS. CHATELAIN: And so what you start to see is a real conscientious effort to understand everyday citizens as political actors. So there’s encouragement to write letters to the president of the United States, to try to pass some type of anti-lynching legislation. There are directives to raise money within communities and using mutual aid societies and charities to build institutions.

MS. ERBE: The picture belongs to the national archives. It originally went viral in 2012, then again this year.

MS. BUNDLES: Believe it or not, there were more than 90,000 likes and 40,000 shares. I mean, this photograph is so powerful. It says something to people about the resilience, about the faith and the hope and the dreams of people; what happens in a life where 50 percent, half of your life is spent as an enslaved person and half of your life is spent as a free person.
MS. ERBE: You know, I saw this picture, and I said we had to do a segment about it because most Americans – and including myself, I have to say, even though I took history in high school and college, American history – don’t understand that the end of the civil war did not mean freedom or equality or anything close to it.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Not by a long shot.

MS. ERBE: Until more than – or 100 years later with Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Yeah.

MS. ERBE: What were these women’s lives like and how did they survive? Because they had no access to real education.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: That picture, frankly, gives me chills, and it does make me wonder, what in the world have those women seen in their lifetime; what have they experienced; how many years they probably spent looking for children that may have been dispersed all around?

MS. ERBE: Or lynched.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Or lynched. I mean, the terror of that period was incredible. But also what was incredible really was the fortitude of community to come together, you know, the fact that they would come back annually and have still this pride in themselves and the ability to just continue to persevere.

Personally, it makes me feel as if what we – the struggles that we still encounter today, while they are magnificent in our lives, it really pales in comparison to what these women really saw in their lives, and it makes me feel if they can still persevere through that, then certainly we can persevere through the challenges we face today.

MS. LEE: And, as a young person, it just is an example to me, to remind me that I can do so much. And I’ve already – I’m stepping on the shoulders of women who have overcome so much already, and there’s so much more for us to do and to accomplish.

MS. ERBE: Do you think your generation understands what happened to African-Americans after – you know, through reconstruction and really up until the civil rights movement of the '60s?

MS. LEE: I don’t think they do. And, especially when you look at reconstruction, I don’t think we understand just how many successes there were post the civil war for blacks in this country and then how that was kind of retrenched. But there’s
an opportunity for us once again to be able to reclaim a lot of that, you know, as a young
generation and as a diverse generation.

DEL. NORTON: You know, there wasn’t even the opportunity to get into the
wage economy for most of these women.

MS. ERBE: How many black women had there been at Yale Law School when
you went?

DEL. NORTON: Maybe two or three. What these women did, most of them did,
was to remain on plantations as share croppers. And that means you do whatever he says
you do. There was no – she talked about into the economy.

MS. ERBE: I mean, the plantation owners still raped the black women as if they
still belonged to them, right?

DEL. NORTON: And he could give you whatever – the point is they had no
bargaining ability whatsoever. There wasn’t any minimum wage and you just took what
he gave you. And the wage economy didn’t much matter for them, just having a job to
do something.

Now, these women got together in that convention for the very reason you said,
for solidarity, because, frankly, the whole country was against them, north and south.
Nobody wanted to treat them fairly. So the point was to gather the solidarity and strength
to do what it did to finally be where we are today.

MS. ERBE: That’s it for this edition. Please follow me on Twitter and visit our
website, pbs.org/tothecontrary. And whether you agree or think to the contrary, see you
next week.

(END)