November 13, 2024 / BROS

[HALF SECOND OF SILENCE]

[BILLBOARD]

SEAN RAMESWARAM (host): Did you see Trump’s victory speech?

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WI9fbbQ-aTo)*> FOX 9 MINNEAPOLIS*

*Donald Trump: I’ll never be doing a rally again. Can you believe it?*

SEAN: It was a big moment for the bros.

SCORING IN <Brutal Lizards synth jam>

SEAN: The 2024 Trump campaign was run by a woman …

*Trump: The Ice Maiden. We call her the Ice Maiden.*

SEAN: But it was targeted at bros. Older bros. Younger bros. Business bros. All the bros. And on election night, Trump’s new Vice-Bro J.D. Vance got to speak:

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WI9fbbQ-aTo)*> JD VANCE:* And I think that we just witnessed the greatest political comeback in the history of the United States of America.

SEAN: So did campaign bro Chris LaCivita:

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WI9fbbQ-aTo)*> LaCivita: And he's a hell of a candidate and he's going to be a hell of a great 47th president*

SEAN: And omega bro and UFC CEO Dana White –   
  
 *<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwXemp48VeY)*> TRUMP: He’s a tough guy!*SEAN: – who went on to shout out the all time reining champion of the bros:

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwXemp48VeY)*> DANA WHITE: The mighty and powerful Joe Rogan.*

SEAN: The Bro Brogan Experience, coming up on *Today, Explained*.

[THEME]

SEAN: Rebecca Jennings, senior correspondent here at Vox. You have a theory about this election, about a certain demographic that was important to a certain candidate. What is your theory?

REBECCA: <chortles> My theory is that this was like the bro election and the bros voted and won. <laughs>

SEAN: Which bros? There's all sorts of bros. I might be a bro. Which bros?

REBECCA: I mean yea you're bro-adjacent.

SEAN: <<laughs>>

REBECCA: Um, I'm specifically talking about like young men, I would say like 18 to mid thirties maybe…

<<BRUH meme>>

REBECCA: but yeah, when we talk about the bro vote, uh, what we're talking about is like the coalition of kind of Gen Z male voters who have been leaning to the right in ways that kind of deviate from what we would think of as, you know, the, the, the kind of straightforwardly liberal youth vote.

SEAN: Right! Because when I was in college, I remember everyone around me seemed super liberal, but something else is going on here?

REBECCA: Yeah, I mean, I think there's so many different, like, reasons for it. I mean, part of the reason, yeah, like, in the 2000s, like, being, like, ‘To the left’ was like what the cool kids did.

*<CLIP> AP: The truth is when we get Bush to step down, it’s going to be the biggest party that this world has ever seen!*

REBECCA: You know, it was like anti-Bush and anti-Iraq war.

*<CLIP> PROTESTORS <chanting>: BUSH MUST GO! DRIVE OUT THE BUSH REGIME! STEP DOWN STEP DOWN!*

REBECCA: Right now all we have are exit polls, we won't know like for sure things for another couple weeks, but It is showing that you know,18 to 29 year old men are fave like Trump 49, um and 18 to 29 year old women favored Harris by 24 points. So that's like a huge gap between what young men are voting for and what young women are voting for, and I think what we're seeing is a lot of young men reacting to, you know, the enormous strides that women have made in the last 50 years. You know like more women out earn men, uh, more women are getting college degrees. Um, you know, these men sometimes feel very left behind, that's what they say they feel, you know, MeToo was an overreach.

*<CLIP> Ben Shapiro: The reality is that women want men to act like men, that involves a certain amount of aggressive activity*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nE3EQEBzc0&t=390s)*> VICE Panel member: There’s a masculine crisis because men are not taking responsibilities for the God-given roles they have in society.*

*<CLIP> TikTok: The man of the house, the MAN of the house.. should provide for the house, I’m not gonna have a girl pay half my rent…*

REBECCA: They want to feel like they are in control of their lives. And, um, I think the Trump campaign really spoke to those grievances.

SEAN: And we talked about this a bit on the show a few months ago,

*<<tape recorder button>>*

*<CLIP> TODAY, EXPLAINED:*

*JONATHAN MARTIN: Trump is trying to go deeper, not wider. And what I mean by that is he's trying to find more people who are simpatico already to him or his worldview, who might not vote at all but would never vote for a Democrat.*

*<<tape recorder button>>*

SEAN: The Trump campaign in choosing J.D. Vance, certainly, but even in the types of media they were doing, were speaking to these grievances, right?

REBECCA: The Trump campaign really, um, kind of, threw out the playbook that a typical presidential campaign would do, which is like, you know, do every, like, cable news interview and, and do interviews with newspapers and things. He went straight to where people are paying attention. He did interviews that weren't even political at all, you know, like we have influencers who are just really popular with young men often because, you know, they cover gaming or sports or whatever, and those people interviewed him in this way that can reach the sort of non-political bro vote.

SEAN: I saw clips of a number of these interviews where like someone gave him like a MAGA cyber truck, he was talking to Theo Vonn about cocaine, he was rambling about nonsense with Joe Rogan.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/DailyCaller/status/1850011276094677499)*> DAILY CALLER:*

*Joe Rogan: What is happening with the whales? I’ve read about this*

*Donald Trump: Well they say that the wind drives them crazy, you know it’s a vibration*

*Rogan: Right.*

*Trump: You know those things are 50 story buildings, some of them, 50!*

*Rogan: Right, and they’re super sensitive to vibrations and sounds.*

*Trump: You know the wind is rushing, the things are blowing.. Vibration, and it makes noise.. You know what it is.. I want to be a whale psychiatrist. It drives… the whales… frickin’ crazy.*

SEAN: Was there really a strategy here or was it just like, ‘Trump, go on these shows and we might win some votes.’

REBECCA: I mean, isn't that kind of his strategy even at his, like, rallies? <<chortles>> Like, he just kind of gets up there and rambles. And I think like, you know, that's, that's really quality entertainment according to a lot of people.

SCORING IN <World 4>

REBECCA: So we had Trump on Theo Von…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC5cHjcgt5g&t=253s)*> THIS PAST WEEKEND:*

*Theo Von: Somebody said she’s a good roller skater that’s what I heard, which is crazy.*

*Donald Trump: That’s about it*

*Von: <<laughs>>*

REBECCA: Theo Von is a comedian, he was on an MTV reality show and now he just kind of, like, does this podcast and is really big on TikTok. Again, not a particularly political guy, just kind of talks about comedy. Uh, we have Adin Ross who is a live streamer and influencer.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pu5ik5ltM2s)*> Adin Ross: Bro… it feels like I brah have stage fright brah like talking to you bro, like it’s really really crazy.*

REBECCA: 23, one of his biggest hits is that, uh, He famously looked up the word fascism and could not literally read a single line of it because he can't read.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNIYvOpTsh8)*> Adin Ross: “A far right… authorization… on <<incoherant stumbles>> OH MY GOD.. ultra… ana lattist… anylist… Bentino Mizzuli and… Divieante… Jennitile…*

REBECCA: He did appearances with Jake and Logan Paul …

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xVrB9pJgdM)*> JAKE PAUL: And I got news for you: Most of your favorite athletes and celebrities and all of that are secretly conservative.*

REBECCA: … prankster, boxer, kind of fighter influencers. And the Nelk Boys, who are kind of of the same ilk, both of them, uh, have been accused of, of crypto scams. So, it's a real school of Athens when it comes to these, these people. And, and, and when Trump won, they shouted a lot of them out.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHPX1gkQcjY)*> FOX NEWS:*

*Dana White: I wanna thank some people real quick, I wanna thank the Nelk Boys, Adin Ross, Bussin with the Boys and last but not least, the mighty and powerful Joe Rogan!*

REBECCA: So, you know, it was, it was pretty explicitly, like, this was a strategy to reach young male voters who typically wouldn't really care about politics, but they're listening to these shows.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sozmnOjN97c)*> JRE CLIPS:*

*Donald Trump: I get that question as much as any question.. do you think we have aliens coming.. you know flying around or whatever…*

*Rogan: What do you think*

*Trump: There’s no reason not to.. I mean there’s no reason not to think that Mars and all these planets don’t have life?*

*Rogan: Well Mars we’ve had probes there and rovers, and I don’t think there’s any life there.*

*Trump: Well maybe it’s life we don’t know about*

*Rogan: Well maybe there was life there at one point in time…. But we’ve had no evidence of even bacterial life that exists on Mars.*

SCORING OUT

*<CLIP> Bruhh*

SEAN: Do we think this is going to continue to work in future elections or was this like a 2024 thing?

REBECCA: I mean, I think in the future like, candidates will have to go straight to the source, and by that I mean, like, professional influencers rather than going to mainstream media, because, you know, influencers now wield so much attention, there are so many of them, and so many, so many of us are getting our news in these very, kind of, nichified spaces like not everybody is, you know, pulling up a copy of the *New York Times* in the morning. We all have, you know, our Substacks that we read, our influencers that we watch, our algorithms are all personalized to us. And so in order to reach a lot of people, you have to kind of go to all these different places where people are getting their news. Um, and that landscape has shifted so much since 2016. And I think any politician that wants to reach a large number of people should learn from that.

SEAN: You know when we opened the show we were talking about Trump's acceptance speech when he won the election Tuesday night. A whole lot of dudes spoke. He asked his, you know, chief political strategist, a woman, to speak and she refused.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrnraEVaWTM&list=RDNSCrnraEVaWTM&start_radio=1)*> FOX NEWS:*

*Donald Trump: Susie likes to stay in the background…she’s not in the background <<applause>>*

And then, you know, the campaign was just so masculine. It was just a lot of dude energy. It was misogynistic. He never even pronounced his opponent's name correctly. What does this shift towards just appealing to men say for women right now?

REBECCA: Yeah, I think, I think the kind of gender war thing that we're seeing in this election and also increasingly online is just, it says so much about where we're at right now. And, and the fact that so many women voted for Trump, too, should also say a lot. Because I report on internet culture and what I've seen, um, from content targeting young women is a similar shift to the right and it looks very different from these kind of bro influencers that we were talking about, but it kind of leads you to the same place where, you know, you have these trad wife influencers who are just making domesticity look very beautiful and ideal.

*<CLIP> BALLERINA FARM:  
Hanna Neeleman: For Daniel and I, our priority in life is God and family. Everything else comes second.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@naraazizasmith?lang=en)*> Nara Smith: We just landed after a ten hour flight and the first thing my husband requests is a hot dog. So instead of running to the store I just decided to make it myself.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@esteecwilliams?lang=en)*> Estee Williams: And the truth is, there is no higher calling than being a wife and a mother, for a woman.*

REBECCA: And it's sort of like an escape from, you know, the horrible economy and everything else that's bad about life right now. You have dating content that's like, you know, just use men for their money and all you are is are your looks. And that's how you can bag a rich man and be set for life. And, you know, all of these things, you know, imply that. We should just lean more heavily into our gender roles, like men should be the head of the household and women are there to look pretty and take care of the home. Um, and that's exactly what men are also getting. And so when you have a lot of, you know, people both seeking out this content and being served it, you get a shift to the right.   
  
 SCORING IN <Uncle Jeff>

SEAN: And what about all the women who are, like, left out of that rightward shift?

REBECCA: Exactly. <<laughs>> Yeah, there's a lot of them. Um, and It's an attempt to, you know, kind of put women back in their place in this, to this imagined past where, you know, women weren't out here saying we want, you know, the right to our bodies and the right to divorce and the right to speak up against assault.

SEAN: Hmm. Yeah, it feels like a bit of a step back from what we saw in, say, 2016, 2017.

REBECCA: Yeah, and I think the Harris campaign kind of sort of implicitly acknowledged that in the sense that, like, there was really no emphasis on her being, you know, what could have been the first female president because, you know, this is what the Clinton campaign did and that failed. They were also seeing the same shifts that are playing out online where people are being turned off a bit by identity politics and over association with gender. And instead being, you know, driven to this content that just reinforces these kind of regressive gender stereotypes.

SCORING BUMP  
  
SEAN: Rebecca Jennings. Vox dot com.   
   
This Trump campaign was very online. So we’re gonna be very online when we return on *Today, Explained*. We’re gonna hear about a group of women on TikTok who are responding to feeling left out of this rightward lurch in the United States and they’ve come up with a solution: They are swearing off men.

[BREAK]

[BUMPER]

SEAN: Rebecca Jennings from Vox is gone. But Constance Grady, her colleague from Vox, is here. She's a senior correspondent on our culture team. Constance, we heard earlier in the show from Rebecca all about how Donald Trump's campaign was geared toward and even fired up young men in America. We heard from Rebecca that some even young women were into it. But surely not all of them? What are what's the gamut of reaction you're seeing online?

CONSTANCE: Yes! So certainly there are some women who are very into the Trump thing, but there are also a lot of young American women online who are just feeling really, really despondent …

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTttz5EXp9I&list=RDNSPTttz5EXp9I&start_radio=1)*> CNN:*

*Sarah Thomas: I’m just sad, I’m worried. Yea I just woke up feeling kind of disgusted and ashamed.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZecgkOId7bM&list=RDNSZecgkOId7bM&start_radio=1)*> AP:*

*Woman: A lot of crying, I haven’t slept much, a lot of thoughts going through my mind.*

CONSTANCE: … which, you know, is pretty understandable, right? So these are women who saw a lot of their peers, both male and female, becoming more and more drawn to the right, embracing this kind of hyper macho, anti-woman attitude. They saw the overturning of Roe V Wade, meaning they lost a right they were born with. And then they saw the reelection of the guy who got it overturned in the first place. So in response to all this, a lot of younger women on social media, especially on TikTok, are getting really into the idea of this movement that comes out of South Korea. It is called 4B, and it calls for women to boycott men.

SEAN: Boycott men?!

CONSTANCE: No heterosexual marriage, no heterosexual dating, no heterosexual sex, and no childbearing under any circumstances.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@jada__nicohl/video/7434348909360631083?q=4b&t=1731466359874)*> Stop talking to the men.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@artangelalexa/video/7434356198431903019?q=4b%20movement%20in%20usa&t=1731465775770)*> I haven’t been intimate with any men at all, I haven’t been on any dates with any men.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@thesovereignwoman/video/7371074512697281834?q=4b&t=1731466359874)*> We’re living life booboo, right? Especially those of us in the 4B who are child free?! Pshh.*

SEAN: Oh no! It's J.D. Vance's worst nightmare.   
  
CONSTANCE: <laughs>  
  
SEAN: Where does this movement come from? South Korea?

CONSTANCE: Yes. This is a movement that developed among South Korean feminists around the late 2010s. It's part of what the MeToo movement looked like in that country.

SEAN: Huh!

CONSTANCE: Developed mostly on feminist Twitter. It stems out of this other movement called ‘Escape the Corset’, which calls for you to cut your hair short, maybe shave your head, give up makeup, and abandon overtly feminine clothes. So that's why you'll sometimes see in the ‘4B’ Tiktoks right now, women might shave their heads or talk about doing that.

SEAN: And what exactly was this a reaction to in South Korea in the in the 20 teens?

CONSTANCE: So ‘Escape the Corset’ and ‘4B’ are both responding to really, really specific things in South Korea. The gender wars there have looked very intense over the past decade.

SCORING IN <Do your job>

CONSTANCE: ‘Escape the Corset’ is emerging as a response to the intensity of beauty standards in South Korea. A lot of listeners may be familiar with K-beauty as a concept like Korean skincare and makeup. It's a huge market. It's really, really fashionable. In the US. Korea is actually the third largest exporter of cosmetics in the world. They have the most plastic surgeons per capita. Plastic surgery is a really common graduation gift there, most job applications require you to submit a headshot. There's just there's a lot of pressure on people in general, but especially on women, to have this really specific, really high maintenance look. Um and Escape the Corset is about saying, okay, we're going to choose not to participate in those expectations. Right? And it's also a country with a really low birth rate. So the government there has tried a lot of different things to try to get people to have more kids. And there's one really infamous initiative that happens in 2016. That's when the South Korean government releases a birth map that has different cities colored in different shades of pink, depending on how many fertile women live there.

SEAN: Ooooh!

CONSTANCE: Yes, so to a ton of women. This is really dehumanizing. They're like, okay, the government is treating us like cattle, like we're livestock. And ‘4B’ is a way of saying, you know what, we are opting out of being breeding animals for you. No, thank you.

SCORING OUT

CONSTANCE: So that's sort of the intellectual background for these two movements. But we start to see them pick up steam as a response to a string of gender motivated crimes. So in 2016, there's the infamous Gangnam murder, which is when a man stabs a random woman to death in the Gangnam neighborhood in Seoul.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA_qVfZ18r4&t=1s)*> ARIRANG TV: Thousands of messages coated over the walls of exit 10 in Gangnam station. From words of condolences, to messages condemning hate crimes against women and calling for a safer society.*

*Woman: It breaks my heart. She died because she’s a woman.*

CONSTANCE: He said that he did it because women had always ignored him. This sparked this huge response from women across the country. They all start posting the hashtag “I survived.” The idea being, you know, I could have been killed, too. I survived, only out of luck. There's also this phenomenon in South Korea known as ‘Molka’, which is the online distribution of non-consensual images of women for sexual purposes. It's a giant, extremely lucrative industry and is getting supplied basically by men with pinhole cameras just kind of lurking in creepy public places like subway stations, public bathrooms, even motel rooms to get these images. But what's really surprising about Molka is that only 9% of the perpetrators who are caught actually see jail time. They're mostly fined. So in 2018, this woman's taking a life drawing class with a nude model. During a break, he stays nude. She asks him to cover up. He says no. She kind of irritably snaps a picture of him and posts it online. Sort of the same way that a woman here might photograph like a manspreader or something, kind of to shame him. But in this image, he is nude. She is arrested and charged and sentenced to ten months in jail under Molka laws. So to a lot of women, this seems like a huge double standard. And they start protesting and they get more and more involved in these feminist protest movements, including Escape the Corset and 4B. So this is a lot a way of saying for a lot of women, okay, our only value in this society is our value as objectified sexual objects and as childbearing vessels. And we are not going to do either of those things for you any longer.

SEAN: Okay, so our senior researcher, Laura Bullard, couldn’t land on an exact number, but it looks like anywhere from 5 to 50,000 Korean women are part of this 4B movement. How’s it landing on American TikTok – that women are expressing interest in no dating, no sex, no marriage, no kids – something akin to political lesbianism?

CONSTANCE: Yes. So I'm seeing quite a few different responses. A lot of posters are getting into the idea of 4B, kind of in the same spirit that you might just be like, Well, I'm going to move to Canada. You know, it's not necessarily a serious commitment. It's just kind of something you say is an expression of how mad you are. There are also people who are taking it really seriously. They're like, This is what I'm going to do now. Or they're like, I'm researching it. I'm considering it. But on the other hand, there's also a lot of pretty loud right wing responses. So those are usually along the lines of like…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@proud_to_be_an_american3/video/7435704695353625887?q=4b%20movement&t=1731445369759)*> proud\_to\_be\_an\_american3:*

*proud\_to\_be\_an\_american3: To all the women who are shaving their head for this 4B movement… STOP IT.*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.tiktok.com/@dookthoughtsv3)*> dookthoughtsv3: Guys I’m terrified of this 4B movement.. Loads of liberal women aren’t gonna produce. That means generations of art majors, journalists, baristas, slam poets, they’re all dying out. We won't have any left. I don't know what we’re gonna do.*

CONSTANCE: And there are also a fair amount of rape threats in response. There are a lot of comments in response to the 4B videos saying things like Your body, my choice. There's some tweets that are like, you know, women are threatening sex strikes like they have a choice in it. That's kind of the edge lord response to this.

SEAN: Is this all just like a discourse on social media, or are there actually people in the United States doing this?

CONSTANCE: I think there are certainly people in the United States practicing celibacy, some of them for political reasons. I am not seeing an organized movement around it here like there is in South Korea. I think it's a way of expressing frustrations and a way of toying with the idea of what your life might look like should you decide to opt out of what our culture tends to ask women's lives to look like?

SCORING IN <<Getting dressed for your funeral>>

CONSTANCE: A lot of the popular feminist movements in America over the past decade or so have been kind of widespread expressions of rage. Things like the Women's March and the MeToo movement have been more about expressing. We are very angry about the things that have been done than necessarily about campaigning and making concrete demands. So I think one thing that American feminists might be able to take from 4B is the idea of being very specific about what we want from our country and the action points that we are going to take to try to get there.

SCORING BUMP  
  
SEAN: Constance Grady! Read her at Vox dot com. She’s also got a newsletter called *Next Page* where she drops book recommendations every month.

I’m Sean Rameswaram. Victoria Chamberlin made our show today. She was mixed by Patrick Boyd and Andrea Kristinsdottir, edited by Amina-Al Sadi, and fact checked by Laura Bullard.

This is *Today, Explained*.

*<<BRUH meme>>*

[10 SECONDS OF SILENCE]