



## Large firms sued for sexual discrimination

**THIRTY-THREE** women from three people's organizations filed sexual discrimination suits against Korea's giant corporations—the first such suit filed against the country's conglomerates.

Members of the National Teachers' Labor Union, the Korea Women's Association for Democracy and Sisterhood, and the Citizens' Group for Genuine Education lodged discrimination charges against 44 representatives of major industries last May 25. They complained against the conglomerates' hiring practice of requiring physical attributes such as a certain range for the heights as well as weights of prospective female staff.

The complainants argued that the industries seriously violated the Equal Employment Opportunity

Act in specifying qualifications such as 'over 160cm, under 60kg and good appearance' in their advertisements for

## Lesbian celebration—an art spree

**M**ore than a hundred women came to take part in 'Women-Loving-Women Celebration', which turned out to be a major cultural and literary event, complete with music, story-telling, poetry reading, improvised theater and dancing.

The huge turn-out of friends and supporters at the affair proves "once again that women-loving-women do support and reach out to help each other grow," the lesbian publication *Switchboard* raved.

The occasion was held last February 13 in the New Age-style Dreams Cafe, located in the heart of Manila.

Women artists who performed included the popular singer Susan Fernandez-Magno. Writer Tezza Parel read an excerpt of 'Every Full Moon' (by Nice Rodriguez) from *Throw it to the River*. Former spokesperson of the National Democratic Front Bobbie Malay read an obit-poem while Pia Arboleda silenced the crowd with a reading from Jeanette Winterson's erotic collection *Sexing the Cherry*. Activist-writer Aida F. Santos gave the opening remarks and read a number of her poems in the anthology *Woman to Woman*, the first lesbian anthology to be published in the country.

Lesbond gave a mime performance which essayed the travails of a modern-day lesbian heroine. Ome Quijano was inimitable in her coming-out. The complex comic-advised portion done by Cris Brigoli as a counselor gone wrong was likewise hilarious.

Giney Villar and university professor Joy Barrios also read a piece each from the *Woman to Woman*, while Kathleen Maltzahn read a poem published in a previous issue of *Women in Action*.

More songs were rendered by Tess Raposas, PaMaSa and activist singer-song writer Aster Delgado.

Dancing lasted until the wee hours of the morning after the program ended at about midnight.

from *Switchboard*, February 1995



## News and Notes

female employees. Some of the establishments involved even stipulate these recruitment guidelines to high schools that recommend their graduates, the complainants added.

(*Korean Women Today*, Summer 1994)

### Women sidelined by economic liberalization

IN SOUTH Asia, where half of nearly one billion people live below the poverty line, governments have yet to take steps that will help millions of women workers in the informal economy.

The worst hit by such neglect is the textile and garments industry, which employs the second largest number of women in the region, after farming. Yet, the industry, however, is the region's top export earner and fastest growing sector.

Instead of improving livelihood, the strategy of economic liberalization has worsened the conditions of women in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. 'Global Trading Practices and Poverty Alleviation in South Asia—A Gender Perspective' revealed.

The growth of exports in the textile sector has pushed up local yarn prices, forcing handloom cooperatives, where the bulk of women are employed, to reduce their workforce. Women are fast losing jobs and incomes as a result.

A field study by India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which is based in the western state of Gujarat, found that women workers were often turned away because of a shortage of yarn in factories run by the Gujarat Handloom Corporation.

### New US program to keep girls in school

THE CLINTON administration has created a program to help keep girls in school in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The first year of the 10-year-program will cost about US\$11.7 million, the US Agency for International

*Writer-columnist Ellen Goodman finds something amiss in current Congress discussions on the US welfare program which, when approved, will deny minor mothers any cash welfare benefits. Why are the fathers, who are usually much older, left out in this debate? By mistake, by design, or by instinct?*

# Jailbait

by Ellen Goodman

Do you ever get the feeling that someone is missing from the debate about US welfare reform?

The other parent? The father? The sperm donor? Men?

As the US Congress writes ever more punitive scenarios for mothers and children, the male of the species barely gets a cameo role. The only part he plays is as deadbeat dad. The only interest the lawmakers have shown is in establishing his DNA. The only policy they are talking about is getting a better grip on his wallet.

I have no problem with these proposals. But much of the welfare debate is focused on the never-married poor mothers—the women who get on welfare the earliest and stay the longest. The men in their lives don't exactly have deep pockets.

The favorite proposal of the moment, to deny cash benefits to any minor mother, comes with a prayer that it will prevent other pregnancies. The theory is that if the government gives girls an economic reason to say no, they'll control male sexual behavior.

But in real life, as opposed to think tanks and hearing rooms, the picture is a little different.

In real life, three quarters of the girls who have sex before they are 14 say they were coerced. In real life, two of every three teenage mothers are impregnated by a man over 20. In real life, 30 percent of the 15-year-old mothers have partners who are at least six years older.

We are not talking about powerful girls in equal relationships. In the inner-city culture that sociologist Elijah Anderson describes with terrible poignancy, a sexual 'game' goes on.

"The girls have a dream," he says, "the boys have a desire. The girls dream of being carried off by a Prince Charming who will love them, provide for them and give them a family. The boys often desire sex without commitment or babies without responsibility for them."