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Settlement Money to Fund Women Journalists

by Suzanne Batchelor, WEnews correspondent

Two of the women victors in a record-breaking employment discrimination lawsuit are using their financial awards to fund grant programmes for women.

A US\$508 million settlement was awarded this year to 1,100 women in *Hartman vs. Albright* after the United States Information Agency (USIA) broadcast service Voice of America (VOA) was found to have discriminated against women in its employment practices from 1974 to 1984.

Susan Lavery Rodgers, executive producer of federally funded Radio Free Asia, set up the Fredrickson Fellowship to enable women journalists in countries without independent media to study at the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C. The fellowship honours Bruce Fredrickson, an attorney who led the *Hartman* case for 25 years.

"I came to realise and really appreciate how lucky we are here in this country, compared with so many journalists I met while working with the International Center," Rodgers said. While journalists in many countries experience hardship and danger, said Rodgers, "it's even worse for women journalists. But they can have such an impact on their societies, in terms of reporting."

Political scientist Nathalie Frenslay said she set up an award to promote research and "foster diverse perspectives on international commu-

nication, which were somewhat stymied by VOA and USIA's hiring decisions two decades ago."

The women also have gained congressional support for the federal Civil Rights Tax Relief Act, following their lobbying in Washington.

Fran Jacobowitz, the women's lobbying organiser, said a bipartisan group of 29 U.S. senators and 88 representatives are now co-sponsors of the bill, which would allow winners of discrimination awards to be taxed over the number of years for which the award compensates them.

"There's still a lot of work to do, but the women are still very charged and eager to do it," says Jacobowitz.

For more information: visit *International Studies Association* at <<http://www.isanet.org>> or *Radio Free Asia* at <<http://www.rfa.org>>.

Suzanne Batchelor has written also for the national science series *Earth and Sky*, *WebMD*, *Medscape Health* and the *Texas Medical Association's Healthline Texas*.

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