



## **First of its Kind, New Mental Health Initiative for Farmworkers ‘Healing Voices’ Launches During Mental Health Awareness Month This May**

*The program from Justice for Migrant Women, National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program, Latinx Therapy, and the Eva Longoria Foundation, with funding from The Workers Lab Innovation Fund and Collective Future Fund, will pilot the use of technology to engage farmworkers and bring them together in virtual support groups to support healing, teach workers their rights, build community connections, and inspire change.*

*Fremont, Ohio - May 11, 2021* - Supported by funding from The Workers Lab Innovation Fund and Collective Future Fund, Justice for Migrant Women (J4MW) is partnering with the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program (NMSHA), Latinx Therapy, and the Eva Longoria Foundation (ELF) to pilot the first-of-its-kind mental health initiative for farmworkers, “Healing Voices.” The work will support the holistic healing of some of the 2.5 to 3 million US farmworkers who have experienced decades of traumatizing working conditions, economic insecurity and vulnerability, all of which were exacerbated by COVID-19.

Farmworkers were deemed essential workers, but have not been treated as such. Support must be provided to help farmworkers address the trauma, stress and violence they have experienced in their personal and professional lives. These invisible crises continue to affect our community members who have risked their physical and mental health to keep food on the nation’s tables during a global pandemic.

“Healing Voices” will bring together farmworkers in virtual support groups to heal, build agency, and mobilize workers, while ensuring ease of access and their physical safety.

“Mental health is a health and wellness issue, but it is also a critical workers’ issue that we all must address,” said **Mónica Ramírez, Founder and President of Justice for Migrant Women**. “This program does just that in addressing a critical gap in the farmworker organizing ecosystem – focusing on healing personal and community trauma as a needed step in increasing power for farmworkers to be advocates and activists. Over and over we have witnessed the power of storytelling to support healing, to teach workers their rights, and to inspire change. I am hopeful that the space we are creating digitally can channel that power that comes from embracing mental health and the stories of our community.”

“The pandemic has created or worsened mental health challenges for people across the country. That includes our farmworkers, who have gone to work in the fields every day - often in unsafe conditions - to ensure the rest of us have food on the table,” said activist **Eva Longoria**

**Bastón.** “Our work to prioritize their mental and emotional well-being is just one step in addressing the ongoing lack of health and social services available to farmworkers.”

As most migrant workers and their families live and work outside the availability of mainstream treatment and support services, a flexible new healing model is needed. With support from Latinx Therapy and their network of wellness experts, the “Healing Voices” support groups will be conducted via Zoom for both safety and ease of access for farmworkers. Combining technology and tradition, this communication method creates a cultural comfort zone by combining the latest in digital and video communication with the tradition of talk circles that still exist in farmworker communities. The program aims to ensure that farmworkers and migrant women, especially, feel empowered, safe and supported to seek ways to work through their trauma and lead healthier lives.

“Gender based violence is pervasive across many workplaces, and farm workers in particular are made even more vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence because they are denied basic labor protections. Healing Voices is a critical initiative that will have an immense impact on the lives of these essential workers. This union between labor rights and gender justice is an example of the power of working at intersections to address violence in its many forms,” said **Aleyamma Mathew, Director of the Collective Future Fund.**

“As an organization that has worked closely alongside farmworker families, we have seen the toll on their mental health as they have navigated this year. As a part of our mission, we make it a priority to provide resources to our families to continue to grow as individuals and with their communities. It is this commitment that has helped us form partnerships creating Healing Voices that will be launched to provide a space where our families can share their experiences with other farmworkers as well as mental health experts through the support groups” said **Cleo Rodriguez, Executive Director of National Migrant Seasonal Head Start Association.**

Healing Voices will maximize the power of storytelling with the goal of nurturing a trajectory of healing to agency and action. In the support groups, farmworkers will share their stories and create video diaries in order to mobilize, build power, and influence policy in their own communities and beyond.

“We join forces with passionate organizations working with the farmworker community to provide support groups, and recruit Spanish-speaking Latinx Therapists as a way to bring community, understanding and cultural humility to the Healing Voices project through our training and lived experiences as children of immigrants and our priority is to equip the farmworkers with strategies and tools that can be useful for long-term mental health care” said **Adriana Alejandre, LMFT and Founder and Host of Latinx Therapy.**

Just in time for Mental Health Awareness Month, the program will officially launch recruitment for the programs in May 2021. In June, the first support group sessions will begin to take place

in the pilot states of California and Florida to test the model, with the goal of scaling to reach farmworker communities and other essential workers nationwide.

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#### **ABOUT Justice for Migrant Women (J4MW)**

[Justice for Migrant Women](#) uses education, public awareness and advocacy in order to ensure that all migrant women are guaranteed human and civil rights, including the freedom of mobility, the ability to live and work with dignity, and the right to be free of threats of violence against them and their families, whether they are migrating across borders, around regions or within states.

Justice for Migrant Women was created in 2014 by leading activist, Mónica Ramírez, to further scale the project she created in 2003 as the first legal project in the US focused on sexual harassment and other forms of gender discrimination against farmworker and other migrant women workers.

#### **ABOUT National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA)**

The National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA) is a mission-driven association who works in unison with farmworker families to advocate for comprehensive, high-quality Head Start services with diverse stakeholders, paving the path for stronger communities and lifelong success of children and families. We do this through our advocacy efforts, our comprehensive professional development services, our programming and our collaborative research/study efforts. In 2019, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start served 29,000 children across 26 grantees in 34 states. Find out more about NMSHSA online at [nmshsa.org](http://nmshsa.org).

#### **ABOUT The Eva Longoria Foundation (ELF)**

Latinas in the U.S. are a rapidly growing group with extraordinary potential, yet they disproportionately lack educational opportunities and face economic challenges. Founded by activist and actor Eva Longoria Bastón in 2012, the Eva Longoria Foundation's mission is to help Latinas build better futures for themselves and their families through education and entrepreneurship. Through programs in STEM education, mentorship, parent engagement, college scholarships and entrepreneurship, the Eva Longoria Foundation has directly impacted more than 30,000 lives in the United States and Mexico. Visit the Eva Longoria Foundation online at [evalongoriafoundation.org](http://evalongoriafoundation.org) or on social media [@EvaLongoriaFoundation](https://www.instagram.com/EvaLongoriaFoundation).

#### **ABOUT Latinx Therapy**

Latinx Therapy is a multimedia community that destigmatizes mental health myths, provides education to eliminate taboos of therapy, and advocates to combat mental health stigmas on the ground, and in digital spaces. Through values rooted in cultural humility and accessibility, Latinx Therapy provides a national directory of Latinx Therapists, a bilingual podcast, global support

groups, and a club for mental health professionals of color to receive support. Founded in 2018 by Adriana Alejandre, trauma therapist & activist, to create more spaces for Latinx Therapists and resources for communities of color. Find more about our work on [www.latinxtherapy.com](http://www.latinxtherapy.com) and through our channels @latinxtherapy.

### **ABOUT The Workers Lab**

At [The Workers Lab](#), our purpose is to give new ideas that increase worker power a chance to succeed and flourish. We do this by investing flexible dollars in a national network of leaders (we call them innovators) to test their new ideas, to learn from them, and to share those learnings with other leaders who are making choices that impact work and workers. The Workers Lab envisions a society where workers are the primary drivers of economic, political, and cultural transformation.

### **ABOUT Collective Future Fund**

The [Collective Future Fund](#) works with philanthropy and visionary changemakers to build a collective future where all women, girls, trans, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary people and survivors of color are not only safe from state, workplace and interpersonal violence, but live in shared abundance, joy, and power.