

FALL 2023

Farmworker Justice

Honoring the people who
harvest the fields



Hispanic Heritage Month Recap

Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to highlight the Hispanic community's countless contributions to our nation. Hispanic men and women work tirelessly in every part of the country to harvest the fields that put food on our tables.

Despite the nation's reliance on farmworkers, they are still excluded from federal labor laws meant to protect working people from wage theft, unsafe conditions and other labor abuses.

As a result, **farmworkers remain among the lowest paid workers, and they are 35 times more likely to die from extreme heat than other workers.** They are forced to harvest in soaring temperatures for long hours without water or shade breaks.

Farmworker Justice (FJ) commemorated Hispanic Heritage Month with a policy briefing. The organization discussed the challenges facing farmworkers and explored possible solutions. In attendance were regulatory leaders and advocates including civil rights icon Dolores Huerta, U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small, Food Research and Action Center CEO Luis Guardia, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Chief Alejandro Roark, Semillero de Ideas Director of Operations Alexia Estrada, Farmworker advocate Flor Martinez, and more.

A note from our CEO, Ron Estrada



The holiday season is a time to reflect and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives. If you are reading this newsletter, you are aware of the important role farmworkers have in our daily lives. Unfortunately, most Americans are unaware of all that farmworkers do to put food on our tables, or the challenges that impact farmworkers' lives, such as low wages, working long hours in extreme heat and living in unsanitary conditions.

With your help, we can raise critical awareness and support for farmworkers this holiday season. **Please help us in this effort with a contribution to Farmworker Justice.** Any amount goes a long way.



Legacy Awards

The Legacy Awards Luncheon honored those who have championed causes on behalf of farmworkers. The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Marco Cesar Lizarraga, the Executive Director of La Cooperativa Campesina de California. The Shelley Davis Memorial Award was presented to Adrienne DerVartanian, the Senior Counsel of the National Women's Law Center. The Community Leader Award was given to Nezahualcoyotl Xiuhtecutli, the former General Coordinator with the Farmworker Association of Florida.



Programs News

Sembrando Respeto y Cosechando Dignidad is a Farmworker Justice project funded by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Labor Department. This project partners with community-based and legal organizations to help oppose workplace sexual harassment and violence.

Working with Lideres Campesinas de California and Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), FJ created Promotora Encuentra, a storytelling collection and training workshop for outreach workers. **We have reached more than 2,500 female farmworkers to date and have referred over 500 women to community services** (including legal, health and childcare). In addition, our social media pages have received nearly 9,000 views. The project was highlighted at the Labor Department's kickoff event for Labor Rights Week on August 28.

“[W]e have a lot more challenges, but at the same time, we have a lot more power to do the work that needs to be done for our Latino family.”

-- Dolores Huerta





Development Updates

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded Farmworker Justice a Cooperative Agreement under its Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving program. FJ will work with organizations in Washington State to improve wildfire preparedness and resiliency. The three-year project aims to reach 15,000 farmworkers using a toolkit of resources as well as SMS/text messaging. We aim to scale the project to the national level in year three.



The Heat Illness Prevention and Safety Training project under the OSHA Susan Harwood Training program awarded Farmworker Justice another year of funding. In partnership with Campesinos Sin Fronteras and Farmworker Association of Florida, we will provide heat illness safety information to workers in Arizona and Florida. The trainings will be conducted in Spanish and Haitian Creole. Project materials, including a trainer guide and fact sheets, are available on the Farmworker Justice website.

Farmworker Justice presented the Shelley Davis Award this year to recognize individuals who have dedicated their career to championing the rights of farmworkers. The award is named after Shelley Davis, a nationally recognized lawyer whose work on behalf of farmworkers included immigration, environmental, health and safety, agriculture and housing.

As a tribute to her work, FJ received \$15,000 in matching funds from the Davis family. The funds will support our policy efforts on pesticide safety in agriculture and help stop exposure to harmful pesticides associated with birth defects and other disabilities.





Policy Updates

The **U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)** recently released a proposed rule to improve worker protections in the H-2A program. For more than two years, Farmworker Justice and other advocacy organizations worked directly with policymakers to strengthen basic protections for farmworkers and their families. FJ worked to enhance DOL's capabilities to monitor program compliance and take necessary enforcement actions.

The proposed rule is a vital step towards ensuring all workers have adequate protections against abuse, theft and more. FJ provided comprehensive comments to the proposed rule and will encourage other organizations to sign-on. The comments are due November 14, 2023.



The **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** released proposed rules to modernize H-2A and H-2B program requirements, including program oversight and worker protections.

The proposed rules will also enhance penalties for employers who charge prohibited recruitment fees, create new whistleblower protections, extend grace periods for workers, and provide visa portability. Farmworker Justice in collaboration with Centro de los Derechos del Migrante will provide comments to the DHS proposed rule. The comments are due November 20, 2023.





Our Team is Growing!

We are excited to welcome **Madeline Flynn** as **legal fellow** and **Sierra Brown** as **Project Coordinator**.

Sierra Brown joined Farmworker Justice in June 2023 as Occupational Safety and Health Project Coordinator. She holds a B.A. in political science from Boston University.

Before coming to FJ, Sierra worked with the Milk with Dignity Standards Council upholding New England dairy workers' rights related to workplace safety, wages, and housing conditions. She also spent several years as a Peace Corps Volunteer working with farmers in central Panama.

Madeline Flynn joined Farmworker Justice in August 2023 as a Legal Fellow. Prior to her work at FJ, Madeline worked on environmental justice issues at the Environmental Law Center and the Environmental Defense Center. She also previously clerked for Earthjustice's Sustainable Food and Farming Program where she assisted with strategic litigation and policy reform efforts concerning industrial agriculture.

Madeline received her Juris Doctorate from Vanderbilt University Law School where she focused on environmental law and social justice. Madeline was a successful candidate for the July 2023 DC Bar Exam, and her admission is currently pending. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of California Berkeley.

Sierra Brown



Madeline Flynn

