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WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION



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New initiative launched to reach farmworkers who experience sexual harassment and assault on the job

Seattle, WA – The “me too” movement has focused national attention on sexual harassment and assault in the workplace. However, some of the most vulnerable victims remain at the highest risk. Studies have shown that 70-80 percent of female and 10 percent of male agricultural workers will experience some type of sexual harassment within the industry in their lifetime. Immigrant farmworkers face even greater barriers to protect themselves against sexual harassment and assault in the workplace due, in part, to language barriers, isolation, and immigration status.

“No me quedaré callada” or “I will not be silent” is a public awareness initiative that supports farmworkers in Washington. It provides a legal resource hotline via telephone for victims to seek legal help, and to give bystanders who witness sexual harassment and assault, a safe place to report it. Callers are directed to the Northwest Justice Project’s farmworker unit, which is located in both Yakima and Wenatchee. The initiative includes outreach and marketing resources: three different fotonovelas and three pre-recorded radionovelas. The colorful fotonovelas are available in both Spanish and English.

The initiative was a community service project created by the Washington Leadership Institute 2018 Fellows. The Washington Leadership Institute selects a group of 12 attorneys annually who come from historically marginalized backgrounds, and who represent different areas of the legal profession. The Fellows go through a year-long program to enhance their leadership skills enabling them to better serve their communities.

“We are very proud of this year’s class of WLI Fellows and the project they selected,” said Washington State Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu, who co-chairs the Washington Leadership Institute. “It is a timely topic and it also recognizes a large group in

Washington State that often gets overlooked, yet the barriers that these farmworker communities face in seeking legal help is significant.”

“These new resources provide the Northwest Justice Project with culturally relevant tools to reach out to victims,” said Michele Besso, a senior attorney in the Northwest Justice Project’s Farmworker Unit. “Sexual harassment is shockingly prevalent in agricultural workplaces. The vulnerability that farmworkers face on a daily basis cannot be overstated.”

The fotonovelas and radionovelas can be accessed through the “No Me Quedaré Callada” Facebook page at <https://goo.gl/nD6dXa>.

The Washington Leadership Institute is a leadership development program. Its mission is to recruit, train, and develop traditionally underrepresented attorneys for future leadership. It is a collaborative leadership program between the Washington State Bar Association and the University of Washington School of Law. The program strives to recruit fellows for each class who reflect the full diversity of our state, which includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and geographic location.

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