



Voices from the Land

A Documentary Portrait Project for Women Migrant Farmworkers in the Champlain Valley

1. The Story Vermont Hasn't Told

Vermont's agricultural economy depends on an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 migrant farmworkers. Most Vermonters never encounter them as neighbors, even as they buy the dairy and produce they make possible every day. Among the least visible within this already-invisible population are women: Spanish-speaking dairy workers from Mexico and Guatemala, and Jamaican seasonal orchard workers, who contribute essential labor to Vermont's food system while navigating barriers of gender, immigration status, language, and geographic isolation.

These women are the foundation of Vermont's food story. Yet they have no voice in how that story is told.

In collaboration with the migrant farmworker founded and led organization; Migrant Justice, *Voices from the Land* is a documentary portrait project that will partner professional photographers with women migrant farmworkers in the Champlain Valley to co-create a dignified, participant-led photographic portfolio documenting their labor, their lives, and their relationship to the food system they sustain. The result will be a bilingual exhibition, a digital portfolio, and a community storytelling resource that asks Vermont to see the women who feed it, fully, on their own terms.

2. Why This Project, Why Now, and Why It Cannot Wait

Vermont's farmworker community is living through a crisis that is not abstract and is not slowing down. According to the immigrant farmworker rights organization Migrant Justice, Vermont saw a tenfold increase in ICE detentions and deportations in 2025, with over one hundred members of the farmworker community detained through workplace raids, home arrests, and racial profiling at traffic stops. As of early 2026, fears of a new ICE surge are galvanizing communities across the state. Women on dairy farms, already isolated by geography, language, and documentation status, are among the most exposed and the least visible when enforcement escalates.

This is precisely the moment when their stories need to be told. Not despite the current climate, but because of it. Visibility is not a luxury when a community is under threat. A Vermont public that can see and name these women as specific people with specific lives and specific contributions creates a meaningfully safer environment than one that cannot. Documentary work that centers these women as full human beings with named lives and visible dignity serves a protective function: it counters the dehumanizing framing their community faces daily and builds the kind of public recognition that makes organizing safer.

3. How It Works

The PhotoBridge Project's methodology is built on narrative sovereignty: people being photographed are co-authors of how they are represented, not passive subjects. Participants guide what is photographed, review images throughout the process, and provide their own words and reflections in Spanish and English. The finished work is returned to the communities that made it.

This project will be conducted in genuine partnership with Migrant Justice, whose deep, trust-based relationships with farmworker families across the Champlain Valley are the ethical foundation on which genuine co-creation is possible. Burlington City Arts is a committed partner in bringing this work to Vermont's broader public, and we are working together to determine the exhibition format and location that feels most genuinely inviting to the women at the center of this project and to the communities around them. That might mean a farm. It might mean a park or

community space in a town where farmworkers actually live and work. Or elsewhere that Migrant Justice identifies as most meaningful for their organizing. We believe the *where* of this exhibition is itself a statement about *who* this work is for, and we are committed to letting that question be answered by the community, not the institution.

The photographers bringing this work to life are among the most respected documentary practitioners working today, with images published in TIME, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and Newsweek, and recognized with World Press Photo, Emmy, and Pictures of the Year International awards. Their involvement ensures that *Voices from the Land* produces work of a quality and moral seriousness to earn this story the attention it deserves, in Vermont and beyond.

4. What This Project Delivers

By late 2026, *Voices from the Land* will have produced a documentary photography portfolio of 40 to 60 images; a bilingual community exhibition reaching an estimated 500 to 1,000 viewers in a locations chosen with and for the community; a publicly accessible digital portfolio available for educational, advocacy, and policy use statewide; and durable visual advocacy assets for Migrant Justice and legal aid partners to use in policy education and community organizing.

We envision community gathering events that create structured dialogue between farmworker women and Vermont's broader food system community, farmers, consumers, policymakers, and food system advocates sitting together with the women whose labor sustains them. These gatherings are an essential dimension of the project's long-term impact, and we are actively seeking collaborative partners and funding to make them possible e. We welcome conversations with funders who share that vision.

The longer-term outcomes will be a shift in Vermont's public narrative around migrant farmworker women, from invisible labor to visible contributors, from voiceless to authors, and stronger public conditions for the labor protections, healthcare access, and the living wages these women deserve.

5. Why The PhotoBridge Project

The PhotoBridge Project is a Vermont-based nonprofit founded and led by Karen Lambert of Colchester, whose eight years in Vermont include active volunteer work with USCRI Vermont and a deep commitment to the state's tradition of social justice and community-led action. PBP's most directly relevant prior work is our USA portfolio documenting immigrant families navigating the US system, currently showing in PBP's inaugural exhibition SANCTUARY at Fridman Gallery in New York City. That project established PBP's methodology for ethical, trust-based storytelling with migrant communities, and it is the direct precedent for this Vermont project.

Burlington, like New York, is a Sanctuary City. This project is, in that sense, a continuation of the same exhibition: the same questions about dignity, visibility, and belonging, brought home to the community where we live and work.

This project has already secured foundational support: City Market Onion River Co-op has confirmed 2026 Rally for Change funding through their Global Ends initiative, which supports organizations strengthening the local food system and the communities that sustain it, a direct reflection of what Voices from the Land is designed to do. The PhotoBridge Project is now seeking anchor funding partners to bring Voices from the Land to its full realization. We are committed to building a collaborative funding base that reflects the breadth of Vermont's investment in its communities, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss how this project aligns with your priorities.

***For more information contact Karen Lambert, Co-Founder and Executive Director:
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March 5, 2026

Vermont Women's Fund
Vermont Community Foundation
58 East State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Members of the Vermont Women's Fund Grants Committee,

It is my privilege to write in strong support of *Voices from the Land: A Vermont Portfolio Advancing Economic Security for Women Farmworkers*, a proposal submitted by The PhotoBridge Project in partnership with Migrant Justice. This project represents a thoughtfully designed collaborative effort, and I write to you with full confidence in both the methodology and the people behind it.

Migrant Justice was founded in 2009 by immigrant farmworkers who decided to organize for their own rights and dignity. For more than fifteen years, we have worked alongside the community of dairy workers who sustain Vermont's agricultural economy while facing wages below the state minimum, six- and seven-day work weeks, unsafe housing, and the persistent threat of detention and deportation. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Vermonters do not know the faces or stories of these women.

Invisibility is not a passive condition. It is a structural barrier that enables every other harm. When legislators cannot see who is affected, protections stall. When funders cannot see the human dimension of the work, organizations like ours face challenges that can limit our ability to accomplish our mission. When the broader public cannot connect the carton of milk in their hands to the woman who produced it, the political will to act remains dormant. *Voices from the Land* is designed to disrupt that invisibility. It will not speak on behalf of farmworker women, but it will equip them to share their own stories, on their own terms.

The PhotoBridge Project is committed to shared authorship. This is not a project where an amateur photographer arrives, takes pictures, and leaves with images that serve someone else's narrative. Co-Founders Karen Lambert and Guillaume Binet work through a relational process in which our community members will determine what is documented, what remains private, and how the farmers are represented. Nothing is released without explicit Migrant Justice approval. The finished portfolio will belong permanently to Migrant Justice to be deployed in our Milk with Dignity campaigns, legislative briefings, legal advocacy, and foundation engagement as *we* determine is most useful.

Our trust relationships with the farmworker community make this project possible. Migrant Justice will guide participant outreach, consent, and exhibition context. All engagement will be conducted in

Spanish. Photography will take place at farm locations to eliminate transportation barriers which is a meaningful accommodation for workers who often lack driver's licenses and live in geographic isolation. The current immigration enforcement climate makes participant safety and confidentiality non-negotiable, and The PhotoBridge Project's methodology is designed with exactly that care.

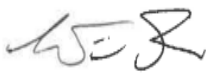
I want to be direct about the moment we are in. Since January 2025, Migrant Justice has documented a tenfold increase in detentions in Vermont. More than one hundred community members have been detained through workplace raids, home arrests, and traffic stops. This climate makes the work harder, and more necessary. The women who agree to participate in *Voices from the Land* will do so as an act of courage and self-determination. The portfolio of captioned images will have lasting value for the movement that supports them, and for Vermont's capacity to reckon honestly with the labor conditions behind its food system.

The Vermont Women's Fund's commitment to advancing economic security for women and addressing systemic barriers rooted in racism and sexism is precisely the frame this project inhabits. The women engaged by *Voices from the Land* are among the most economically vulnerable in Vermont: earning below minimum wage, excluded from standard labor protections, navigating compounding barriers of gender, immigration status, language, and isolation. A grant to this project is an investment in their agency, in the advocacy infrastructure that serves them, and in Vermont's capacity to hold itself accountable to the people its economy depends upon.

Migrant Justice offers its full partnership to The PhotoBridge Project and to this initiative. We will provide trusted community access, guidance on participant safety, and long-term stewardship of the portfolio in the campaigns and advocacy work where it matters most. We are confident that *Voices from the Land* will produce something durable; a visual record that strengthens our work for years to come.

We respectfully and enthusiastically urge the Vermont Women's Fund to fund this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Will Lambek', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Will Lambek

Development and Strategy Coordinator

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