



COVID, CLIMATE AND RACE

OVERLAPPING CRISES CALL FOR MORE CONSCIOUS APPROACHES TO PRODUCTION

WRITTEN BY KATIE CARPENTER AND MARI JO WINKLER

COVID-19 has swept through our nation, our communities, workplaces and homes, touching each one of us and changing the way we live. It shares with climate change a shameful attribute—it harms people of color disproportionately. As we plan our return to work, reopening our film and TV productions and launching new ones, it's imperative to acknowledge the connections between the pandemic, climate change and racism—crises that share both causes and consequences.

To combat climate change and COVID-19, we must prioritize safety and sustainability. The health of all our communities relies on the health of our planet and its biodiversity.

It has now been widely reported that this pandemic, like most recently emerged viruses, was caused by human disruption of the natural world. Land-use changes, especially deforestation, puts communities in close proximity with wild animals we otherwise rarely contact. Zoonotic illnesses jump from those animals to humans. In the case of the novel coronavirus, the source was likely a bat or a pangolin. In the past we've also had bird flu, swine flu and others. The animal is not to blame.

Another human disruption of nature is causing our climate to change. The release of carbon emissions and other pollutants has upset the natural balance of our atmosphere, and sent the temperature of both air and water increasing to lethal levels.

The devastating impacts include increased floods, wildfires, storms, droughts and degradation of human and wildlife health. Often, due to institutional racism, the toxic impacts of carbon emissions and other air pollutants have an outsized impact on Black, Indigenous and people of color.

With all these crises, our economy suffers. Areas we have loved become uninhabitable, and lives are forever changed. Fortunately, a vaccine for the coronavirus is on the horizon, and we believe we will eventually find our way to a post-pandemic existence. The fight against climate change, however, has no such silver bullet, so we must continue to work hard to avoid returning to the destructive old “normal.”

There is some good news in the common ground between the pandemic, inequality and climate change. The global reaction to this disease and the surge of support for the Black Lives Matter movement has proven that people are willing and capable of pivoting from the status quo. If we can make the abrupt transformations in lifestyle that are being called for now in 2020, then we can make changes again, and shift systems in order to confront the climate crisis.

As we emerge from this pandemic and reopen our film and TV productions, we can take heart in the fact that return-to-work guidelines are being written and tested, and the supply chain for the tools we need is nearly ready. In many places, sustainable production practices are already in place, proving that we are capable of transforming our

business without diminishing our outcomes—and often, in fact, improving them. Now that we’ve had a taste of clearer skies, cleaner water and easier breathing, we can appreciate and advocate added incentives to reduce our carbon pollution.

By implementing environmentally responsible practices throughout the production process, we are contributing to the health and safety of all. Now more than ever, there are critical sustainable practices to uphold, protecting our air, our water and our health. We can choose to serve more organic, plant-based foods and cut red meat, as pesticides make our water poisonous and beef production leads to deforestation. We can consciously create sets using only certified hardwoods, reusing what exists and donating what we build. We can waste less water, eliminate single-use plastic, use cleaner sources of energy and make sustainable travel choices to decrease our carbon emissions.

It is often said that moments of crisis can be moments of opportunity. We can combat the virus and the climate crisis while we protect the health of our families, coworkers and communities of color. If we act together, we will make film and TV production safer, healthier, greener and more equitable, all at the same time. ■

Visit greenproductionguide.com to learn more about climate initiatives and COVID return-to-work resources.



Katie Carpenter and Mari Jo Winkler aim to make film and TV production safer, healthier, greener and more equitable.