

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Monica Lucas, Writer and Inevitable Foundation Accelerate Fellow.

MONICA LUCAS:

Of the few PAs that I worked with on my most recent film, they did not say this to me upfront, but through the course of working with them, I recognized they have disabilities. They have chronic illness, they have chronic pain. They had things that were getting in the way of them doing their job that they wouldn't even talk about, but being in their presence for that long, I started to see. And there were simple things that could have helped. One of the women I worked with had been doing this job for so long that she had developed chronic back pain and needed to sit down regularly. And that was a big ask to be able, to just go take a five minute break and sit down. That was not really allowed. One of my other colleagues had chronic pain in the form of severe migraines that cause photo and audio sensitivities. When you're on a set with those big lights and all the noises in the walkie-talkies in your ear, that's very painful experience.

And she needed to be able to go to a dark room for five minutes and decompress and relax and do her stretches and exercises. And that was also... There was no room in the schedule for that. There was no room in the schedule to take a lunch break, to take a bathroom break. It was so intense. And these are just normal human things. These are not even things that folks with disabilities need. These are things that everybody needs. So it was really eye opening experience to see how ignored these things are. So first of all, like I said, people who have severe enough physical disabilities are not even welcome on set. The ones who can get there are not allowed to advocate for themselves. And then the ones who can suffer through it suffer long-term health and pain. I want to be careful how I talk about this because obviously that side of it's horrible. It's a fun environment, right? People want to do this work. They like working on sets.

They want to make film and TV. It's exciting. It's fun. But the cost of that is your long-term health and your wellbeing, and I don't think that that should be the trade-off. I think you should be able to make a movie and also get a full night's sleep. The way that we do this, I think, is we genuinely just have to reimagine what it means to have a film set and what it means to be a crew member and just come to accept that we're asking people to do things that are frankly, in my opinion, inappropriate. We should not be asking people to sacrifice their sleep and their physical wellbeing to make a movie. I don't think a movie is important enough for people to take years off of their life.

So my perspective is, as someone who's worked in these spaces and genuinely loves doing this work, I want it to be better so that I could do more of it. I want to do this work, but I can't. And that to me is the real tragedy here. There are a lot of people like me who would love to do this and are just not able to physically or for other reasons.

NARRATOR:

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