



OPINION



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**The Decade's First Climate Change Disaster Brought To You By The Golden Globes**

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Yes, there was profanity at the 77th Annual Golden Globes, in Los Angeles, last weekend, but with the irredeemably irrepressible "I don't care what you think; I'm just telling the truth," British comedian Rickie Gervais hosting, only a brassbound fool could have expected anything less.

Not that you could actually hear what was said, as the 7-second broadcast transmission delay, with attendant 'bleeps', was working overtime. But even with the most cursory of lip-reading skills you could all too easily make out the censored word being uttered. It's the fricative that gives it away; the smacking together of lips and teeth that produces the infamous unvoiced expulsion of air. And, yes, dear Alice, I am indeed referring to the "F-word" as your dear American cousins would have it; arguably one of the English language's more significant donations to world culture.

Of course, it occasioned an immediate eruption of outrage, not only at “the bad taste atrocious manners of the no-longer funny, excessively boorish British host”, but also, and equally disturbing, the similar lapses of linguistic good taste displayed by a number of the night’s Golden Globe winners. The seemingly unending succession of movie star mouthed fricatives; variously employed as verb, adverb, or adjective; enough to have viewers racing to upload their complaints on social media.

A pity. For while all the self-appointed guardians of good taste were busy blogging or Tweeting their displeasure, the real winner of the 77th Golden Globes was being revealed: Climate Change. The simple fact that impassioned mention of it was seen and heard multiple times by millions, worldwide, during the evening’s proceedings, all to the better, and all to the good. As it’s so vital now that people be reminded there are other more important things to worry about than winning an award.

And so it was very good that a goodly number of actors and screenwriters used their few brief moments upon the stage to call for action on Climate Change and to voice their full support for all those in Australia facing the devastating bushfires.

One of the night’s first Golden Globe honourees, Australian actor Russell Crowe, chose not to attend the glittering ceremony, because he was back home, down-under, helping to fight fires. But he did send a statement to be read out if he won, (which he did): “Make no mistake,” he said; his urgent words, read out, on stage, by presenter, Jennifer Aniston; “The tragedy unfolding in Australia is climate change based. We need to act based on science, move our global workforce to renewable energy and respect our planet for the unique and amazing place it is.”

Later, in the show, fellow Australian actors, Cate Blanchett and Nicole Kidman, also spoke passionately about the need to address Climate Change and its direct impact, not just in Australia, but the whole planet. Blanchett, perhaps, the most memorable when she said: “When one country faces a climate disaster, we all face a climate disaster, so we’re in it together.”

American, Patricia Arquette, who won for 'best supporting actress in a TV series', used her acceptance speech to deal with the unspoken elephant in the room (no names), when she begged US viewers to vote, mindfully, in 2020, so as to avoid disasters such as the one unfolding in Australia.

Last up, but not at all least, was Joaquin Phoenix, who took home one of the final Golden Globes of the night; 'best drama actor' for his performance in 'Joker'; and who used his acceptance speech to urge his fellow celebrities to hold themselves accountable for every action they take in their personal lives that affects climate change. "We don't have to take private jets to Palm Springs, and back again, for awards," he said. "We need to make sacrifices when and where we can."

Phoenix even praised the Hollywood Foreign Press Association; the people who serve up the Golden Globes; for choosing only to serve all-vegan meals to the assembled galaxy of stars. "I'd like to thank the HFPA for recognising and acknowledging the link between animal agriculture and climate change," he said. "It was a very bold move making tonight plant-based, and it really sends a powerful message." No joke. But then it wasn't intended to get a laugh, just acknowledgement that every action counts and that no one is too small or too big to make a difference. (Word is, even the ceremony's fabled 'red carpet' was destined to be to "up-cycled": i.e. reused.)

True, Phoenix's somewhat expletive-laced speech; all but entirely bleeped out for the viewing public; may not have been clearly heard by all, but I'm sure all the ones there, with him in the Beverly Hilton ballroom, got the gist of it. All the rich and famous people who will, hopefully, use their own fame and fortune, and whatever nearby podium they have access to, to spread the message of the truth concerning Climate Change, even further.

And, all of it, all too necessary, as even Australia has its army of Climate Change doubters and deniers; the unfortunate part being, many of them currently happen to make up the country's government.

And all to the bad, as wildfires have now ravaged nearly 20 million acres of land, all across Australia, since the bushfire season began in September. Destroying thousands of homes and buildings, and killing 25 people at last

count. Devastating whole swathes of habitat, where the latest estimates of the number of kangaroos, koalas, and other animals feared dead, due to the relentless firestorm, is a billion. A billion. And that number, according to one environmental scientist, at the World Wildlife Fund Australia, but “a modest guess.”

“The thing that really terrifies me,” he added, “is that weather conditions considered extreme by today’s standards will seem sedate in the future.”

The magnitude of the expected loss of life utterly staggering, absolutely terrifying, which, of course, immediately put me in mind of the last three years of devastating fires that have occurred, here, in California. And the woeful memories of people and animals and livestock lost, houses and businesses burned to the ground, and nothing left but blackened ashes. My sense of distress deepening all the more with each new report of the scale and intensity of the Australia bushfires: and the growing recognition that they, too, are truly without precedent; just as was the case in California.

As the noted Guardian Australia columnist, Brigid Delaney, reported, this past weekend; the unforgettable scenes of devastation she describes; the horrific intensity of which no 2-hour film or television series could or should ever be expected to match or convey:

“It’s trying to forget the footage you saw of the woman who ripped off her shirt and ran into the bush to save a burning koala. Of the photo you saw of the people standing in the sea in the middle of the night, in the dark, as the fire tore down to the shore. Of the exhausted volunteer firefighter who had seen seven houses lost that day, who collapsed on the ground; but not before he told the prime minister to...[expletive removed]. Of the tornadoes made of fire lifting up fire trucks weighing tonnes; of nightmarish dash-cam footage of flames coursing through a fire truck with people in it; of vast fire fronts meeting up that are too big too fight. Of the man who died of a heart attack after helping defend his friend’s home.”

Ms Delaney’s reporting made all the more weighty, given her plea, not only to her fellow Australians, but also to the world at large: “This is our moment. We have to seize it and change our thinking: our priorities, and our politics. In doing so change we can our country, our future and

transform ourselves into global leaders on climate change. These fires without precedent have the potential to profoundly shift the national consciousness. This summer could shake us awake; if we let it.”

The actual end of the 77th Golden Globe fest, perhaps a little more suited to the newly emerged mood at the event, as without a single fricative within sight or sound, a hesitant, all but bashful, Ricky Gervais looked into the television camera and asked people to go ahead and “donate to Australia.”

Of course, his unscripted appeal for help elicited yet more outrage on ‘social media’: “How dare bloody Gervais and all those other rich and famous, obscenely privileged sods, with their posh cars and private jets, tell us how to live, and then ask us to put our hands in our pockets to help etc”.

Once again, all missing the point: that what happened in California, yesterday, and is happening in Australia, today, in a perilously warming world, will most assuredly affect more and more people and places, tomorrow.

For this isn’t just an Australian or a Californian issue: it’s one that will soon encompass the entire world. It’s a global threat and needs to be addressed globally. And so: ‘All hands to the pump, if not the purse.’ To help ensure the Earth remains a golden globe of wonder, and doesn’t all too soon become a burning globe of despair.

CODA: If you’re at all moved to help: World Wildlife Fund Australia - [LINK HERE](#)

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