EMMY'S “POSE” DIVISIVE DILEMMA

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"On the 28th of July, 2020, the Television Academy released the latest list of Emmy nominations for the award ceremony that will be conducted on the 20th of September. A key difference in the system this year was the upheaval of the ceremony calendar due to the coronavirus pandemic, leaving the voting members of the Academy with mere weeks to sort through the hundreds of potential television shows, cast and crew candidates and decide on the final list of nominees. However, the haste exhibited in making these decisions may have had its toll: with major shows like “Game of Thrones” no longer in the running for an Emmy like in the past eight years, spots were expected to be opened up to newer, fresher shows, and viewers hoped to see greater representation and diversity within the nomination lists. The verdict announced at the end of July left much to be desired with regards to this aspect."

“Watchmen” took the lead for the greatest number of Emmy nominations, at a whopping 11, followed by “Succession” with 10, and “Ozark” with 9. Notable contenders include “The Good Place”, “Schitt’s Creek”, and “Marvellous Mrs Maisel” in the Outstanding Comedy Show category, while “The Crown” and “Killing Eve” stand out in the Outstanding Drama Show list. “Mrs America”, the American historical mini-series that has recently gone viral is one of the front-runners for the Outstanding Limited Series Award. While women have been well-represented within the nomination categories this year, a quick glance through the lists would reveal one fundamental truth about the Emmy Awards: there is a conspicuous absence of transgender performers and people of colour among those felicitated. The greatest victims of this oversight are two wildly popular drama shows “Pose” and “Euphoria”, with the former famously depicting the ballroom culture of 1980s New York, and bringing the life and struggles of trans and other LGBTQ+ individuals to the small screen for mainstream viewing. MJ Rodriguez and Indya Moore were fan-favourites to be nominated for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series, and so was Hunter Schafer of Euphoria: all 3 are largely vocal about their trans identities. Rodriguez’s snub also caters to the narrative of overlooking POC within the television industry, along with other Latinx women being almost completely ignored from shows like “One Day At A Time”. “Pose” and “Euphoria” are also notably missing from the Outstanding Drama Series category.

The only nomination secured by “Pose”, which was in the running for Drama Series the previous year, is for Billy Porter in the Lead Actor category. While Porter’s nomination is well deserved and his talent cannot be denied in any way at all, nominating only a cis-gender person from a show mainly about trans folx seems to be a half-heartedly negotiated peace offering to subdue the masses about the obvious snubs. Inkoo Kang of the Hollywood Reporter criticised these oversights, writing: “it wasn't just a missed opportunity to recognize great performances; it was a failure to honour some genre-blurring, boundary-pushing television". Kang makes an important point regarding the nature of movements about representation: it is not demanded in order to fill some arbitrary diversity quota, but to ensure that all talent is paid its dues, no matter the gender, race, or sexuality of the individual. The criticism inflicted on the Television Academy is not merely borne out of dissent by the fans that their favourites were not nominated, but it is a call to arms for the television industry to ensure that no performance will be snubbed in the future on any grounds other than talent and quality,