



This year's Best Picture nominees, from left to right: "Bridge of Spies," "Mad Max: Fury Road," "The Revenant," "Room," "Spotlight," "The Big Short," "Brooklyn" and "The Martian."

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Historically, film has brought the human experience to life in brilliant color. But this year's Best Picture nominees are as colorless as it gets. Hollywood's biggest night is once again plagued by the industry's furthest-reaching epidemic:

whitewashing.

Last year, the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite was created in response to a lack of black nominees in the 2015 Oscar race.

Back then, despite scattered protests, it was widely regarded as a punchline. Host Neil Patrick Harris quipped, “Tonight we honor Hollywood’s best and whitest — sorry, brightest.”

This year, no one is laughing.

The nominations were announced in January without a person of color in any of the major categories. Major snubs included "Creed" and "Straight Out of Compton" for Best Picture, Ryan Coogler for Best Director and Michael B. Jordan and Idris Elba in the acting categories.

While outrage over the nominations quickly spread, many critics and pundits weren't surprised.

The Oscars, not to mention Hollywood itself, has a long history of excluding minorities, whether they are women, people of color or members of the LGBT community.

Since the first Academy Awards in 1929, only 35 Oscar winners have been black. There has never been a black Best Director winner, and in 2014 Steve McQueen was the first black filmmaker to win the Oscar for Best Picture, according to Variety magazine.

How has it taken this long? How are things still this bad? In order to answer those questions, an in-depth look at the Academy is in order.

While Academy President Cheryl Boone Isaacs is a black woman, the rest of The Academy leaves much to be desired in terms of diversity. According to a study published in 2012 by the LA Times, 93 percent of The Academy is white and 77 percent of members are male, with an average age of 63.

Looking at these statistics, it's no wonder that less than five percent of all Oscar nominations since 1929 have gone to people of color. Can we really expect all these old, white, likely-straight men to vote for "Straight Out of Compton" over something like "Bridge of Spies"?

After the extreme backlash sparked by this year's list of nominations, Boone Isaacs is making some changes, including revoking lifetime voting status.

She has pledged to add new members specifically targeted towards increasing diversity, according to a statement on the Academy's website.

These changes, while much needed, have created quite the controversy of their own. Various white actors, including Best Actress nominee Charlotte Rampling, have spoken out against the changes.

In an interview with a French radio network, Rampling didn't mince words, saying, "It is racist to whites."

She continued, "One can never really know, but perhaps the black actors did not deserve to make the final list ... someone will always be saying 'You are too' (this or that) ... But do we have to take from this that there should be lots of minorities everywhere?"

Despite similar complaints from other old, white celebrities, the changes have been widely regarded as a positive first step in solving the Oscars' diversity problem. But while it's easy to blame one group for this issue, the fault is also with the industry itself.

In order to get more nominees of color, Hollywood needs to provide more roles for people of color. This year's Best Actress race has been widely regarded as one of the strongest in recent years, but only for white actresses.

Sure, Teyonah Parris was great in Spike Lee's "Chi-Raq," but even given a more diverse pool of Academy voters, she still wouldn't have been nominated.

Although it falls on the industry, don't get me wrong — the Academy needs to do better.

Despite having ten slots to fill for Best Picture, they only nominated

**Our Oscar predictions,
page 8**

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eight. While "Carol" would almost certainly have taken the ninth slot, the last could have very well included "Straight Out of Compton" or "Creed." So why not fill them all?

The Oscars telecast has also proven problematic. While the producers have made sure to include a diverse variety of presenters, they've nixed two very important minorities from the program.

Despite the tradition of having all Best Original Song nominees perform their song during the show, the two least-known nominees were cut from the telecast: an Asian woman and a transgender woman.

I'm all for fixing the many diversity problems within the Oscars, but I'm still under the impression that very little will change unless the industry fixes itself first.

And while I expect this year that host Chris Rock will crack quite a few jokes at the controversy's expense, I hope he'll also use the opportunity to speak to the larger issue at hand.

Kate Halliwell
@Kate_Halliwell

