

Mum From Mumbai

Makes **\$7,597** USD a month

[Learn How...](#)



[HOME](#) | [NEWS & FEATURES](#) | [ASIA UNHEDGED](#) | [AT TOP COLUMNISTS](#) | [ABOUT US](#) | [VIDEO](#)

[China](#) | [Japan](#) | [Koreas](#) | [Southeast Asia](#) | [South Asia](#) | [Central Asia](#) | [Middle East](#)



[HOME](#) · [ASIA TIMES NEWS & FEATURES](#) · [OSCARS ARE WHITE, NOT BLACK OR BROWN](#)

Oscars are white, not black or brown

BY [GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN](#) on [JANUARY 23, 2016](#) in [ASIA TIMES NEWS & FEATURES, INDIA](#)

Man never seems to be getting rid of prejudices. While in India, people are divided over caste — with Dalits being brutalized by other Hindus — religion (Muslims vs Hindus) and so on, America appears to be struggling to come to terms with blacks. Yes, after all these decades when the US passed laws against such discrimination.

And the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — which awards Oscars — is now being seen as anti-black. In 2015, Oscar nominations were soundly criticised for their “lack of diversity”. This may be read as failure to recognize black talent.

This year, the picture is grimmer. *Creed* was written and helmed by a black man, Ryan Coogler, and the film had a black actor. But the only nod here went to a white man.



Straight Outta Compton got only a single nomination

Straight Outta Compton had an impressive black ensemble cast and was directed by F Gary Gray, also a black. But the movie got only a single nomination — for screenplay which was penned by two Caucasians.

Unlike last year, when blacks had pinned their hopes on just one title, *Selma*, which garnered two nods for best picture and song, 2016 presented more opportunities in movies such as *Creed*, *Straight Outta Compton*, *Chi-raq* and *Beasts of No Nation* (by Cary Fukunaga).

One was certainly shocked to see some great acting talent among blacks go unsung. What about Idris Elba in *Beasts of No Nation*, Michael Jordan in *Creed* and Will Smith in *Concussion*? Their performances were remarkable, but the Academy chose to ignore them.

For blacks, disregard for their ability is merely one more irritant in Hollywood, which has for years never made any serious attempt to write interesting parts for them. American cinema magazines and newspapers have been constantly questioning this. In 1982, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People made public a list which showed that blacks had been kept out of important roles, both behind the camera and in front of it.

Admittedly, the Academy has been making an effort in recent months to set right this issue. Last June, it inducted into its voting list 322 new members, and most of them with a supposedly broader outlook. But the Academy's current 6000 or so voting members are not only white but also above 50, and these men and women perhaps carry age-old biases. So the 322 members

America's march of folly in the Middle East with Sunni Islam



Asia Times columnist and former US national security official Angelo Codevilla details US blunders in a penetrating three-part series: "Romancing the Sunni: A US policy tragedy in three acts."

Read:

[Act I: Lifting the veil](#)

[Act II: A surge of confusion](#)

[Act: III: Reality vs. romance](#)

[Interview with Angel](#)



cannot really be expected to usher in any change worth the name.

However, the Academy has not given up. On Jan. 22, it moved to defuse the race row by announcing plans to double the number of minority members by 2020. On January 26, its board members will meet to try and see how best it can counter the criticism of racism and lack of diversity in nominations.

There is a feeling that the Academy might go back to raising the number of best picture nominees to 10 (as it was) from the present eight. *Straight Outta Compton*, for instance, could have made the cut if the number had been 10.

There is also a demand for the number in acting categories to be increased from the present five — which some feel might help black actors. Will Smith and Idris Elba are two examples of black artists having failed to be nominated this time because the number was five.

Also, the Academy may consider simplifying the voting process which may allow greater variety in the Oscar race.

But in the end, a complete re-haul of membership which will allow a whole lot of younger people to enter the Academy's voting citadel is what that can work as some sort of magic.

Another point of disapproval has been the neglect of India. In all these long years, since the mid-1950s when the Academy introduced a category for films in languages other than English, merely three Indian movies have been nominated — *Mother India*, *Salaam Bombay* and *Lagaan*. None could walk away with the statuette on the big night.

Imagine, a country like India, which produces 1300 or so films a year (which is almost twice as many as Hollywood makes), has not been able to clinch more nods — and not even a single win!

Of course, some may explain this away by contending that India is just not good enough when compared with the rest of the world that sends in non-English movies.

Come one, does this not sound a trifle far-fetched. It is not easy to digest that Indian cinema could have been so bad that it could net only three nominations — and no victories — in the nearly 60 years that the foreign language Oscar had been in existence.

Many Indians feel that the Academy's prejudices are at work here as well. For the Academy — as it is for the greater part of the Western world — Indian cinema is Bollywood, and nothing beyond. And Bollywood is mostly a silly romp of song and dance.

To begin with, Bollywood makes films that go beyond songs and dances. Such movies are meaningful, well crafted and wonderfully enacted.

And Bollywood's annual contribution is just about 250 films, with the rest coming from other regions of the country. And many of these are fascinating and capable of competing with the best of world cinema. This year's *Court* (in Marathi, the language of the western Indian state of Maharashtra), which did not get a nod, may be cited as a riveting work which failed to move the Academy.

Obviously, perceptions in the West need to change, most importantly the Academy's — which today stands at a crossroads — facing criticism and boycott by blacks. And, Indian hurt.

Gautaman Bhaskaran is an author, commentator and movie critic, who has worked with The Statesman in Kolkata and The Hindu in Chennai for 35 years. He now writes for the Hindustan Times, the Gulf Times and The Seoul Times.

(Copyright 2015 Asia Times Holdings Limited, a duly registered Hong Kong company. All rights reserved. Please contact us about sales, syndication and republishing.)

Share this:



Related

The Oscar eludes India, yet again
December 26, 2015
In "Asia Times News & Features"

Lifestyle: Ghibli's 'When Marnie Was There' anime nominated for Oscar
January 15, 2016
In "Japan"

'The Martian' slammed over 'white-washing' Asian-American roles
October 9, 2015
In "Asia Times News & Features"

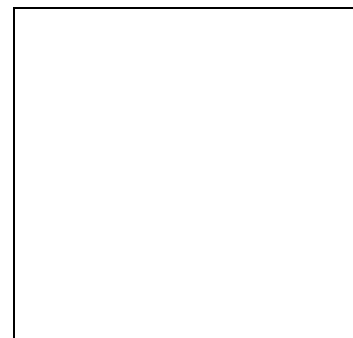


Latest Headlines

AT Video



Check out AT's new video section for compelling visual takes on the people, places and things animating the Asia-Pacific region - [AT Video](#)



Subscribe to our Newsletter

Email *

Recent Posts

[Laos' ruling Communist Party chooses new leader](#)

[Oscars are white, not black or brown](#)

[Teacher among 4 dead in Canada school shooting; suspect held](#)

[US eyes strategic benefits of Australia buying Japanese subs](#)

[Xi signs Egypt deals as China looks to boost Mideast clout](#)

< [Teacher among 4 dead in Canada school shooting; suspect held](#)

[Laos' ruling Communist Party chooses new leader](#) >

Categories: [Asia Times News & Features](#) , [India](#) Tags: [Academy's board ignores Will Smith and Idris Elb](#) , [Black talent ignored at Oscar nominations](#) , [Marathi film Court failed to move Academy](#) , [Oscar panel neglects India entries too](#) , [Straight Outta Compton deserved Oscar nomination](#)

RELATED ARTICLES



[Laos' ruling Communist Party chooses new leader](#)



[US eyes strategic benefits of Australia buying Japanese subs](#)



[Xi signs Egypt deals as China looks to boost Mideast clout](#)



[Russia vs. America: The race for underwater spy drones](#)



[Corrupt Chinese officials made off with \\$1 billion; Lavish weddings probed](#)



[US may put anti-ballistic missiles in Hawaii to counter North Korea](#)

0 Comments

Asia Times

Login

Recommend

Share

Sort by Best



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON ASIA TIMES

[China backs Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital](#)

37 comments • a day ago

J Y — Luckily, the world does not operates on your opinion. You are very much prejudiced person. Wars are started with too many ...

[Suspect says MI6 tried to hire him before Litvinenko's death](#)

13 comments • a day ago

Dan Kuhn — Don't expect any of this to come to light on the BBC or CNN nothing can be allowed to interfere with the ongoing smear ...

WHAT'S THIS?

[China military conducts landing drills days after Taiwan election](#)

2 comments • 2 days ago

Jack Temujin — Especially when D-Day, the invasion of Japan unfolds.

[Questions about Pakistan's 'war on terror' following the Taliban's university attack](#)

8 comments • 2 days ago

Skalla — Do you meant Hogwarts ?

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your site Add Disqus Add

Privacy

AT Opinion

[Korea-Japan agreement here to stay](#)

21 January 2016 - AT Editor

(From the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs) By Karl Friedhoff When Korea and Japan announced that [...]



Asia Times Forum

[Alex, what do you know of this?](#)
views: 22, replies: , 23 Jan 2016

[Another school massacre](#)
views: 238, replies: , 23 Jan 2016

[The consequences of the big 21st century migration](#)
views: 5611, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

[The Future of Europe](#)
views: 941, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

[Oil, Petrodollars and Other related things...](#)
views: 502, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

[Progress of progressiveism, documented](#)
views: 6719, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

[Regress of regressivism, documented](#)
views: 3708, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

[Laos](#)
views: 1710, replies: , 22 Jan 2016

Facebook

Asia Times Online
3 hours ago

Asia Times Online shared a link.

[Japan to deport star of Oscar-winning film on dolphin hunting practices](#)
atimes.com

(From Japan Today) Japan has ordered the deportation of Ric O'Barry, the star of the Oscar-winning documentary "The Cove," about a Japanese village that hunts dolphins. But he has refused to lea...

View on Facebook · Share

Asia Times

Asia Times Online
shared a link.

US may put anti-ballistic missiles in Hawaii to counter North Korea
atimes.com

(From Reuters) The U.S. military has stepped up discussions on converting its Aegis missile defense test site in Hawaii into a combat-ready facility that would bolster American defenses against bal...

View on Facebook · Share

AT Asia Times Onl...
13,041 likes

Like Page

Share

REPUBLIC DAY SALE
Get Rs. 750 Cashback Across TRENDIN.com!
on minimum purchase of 1699/-
SHOP NOW

FOLLOW AT ON TWITTER

Tweets Follow

AT Asia Times @asiatimesonline 2h
Japan to deport star of Oscar-winning film on dolphin hunting practices
fb.me/81O543a2t
Show Summary

AT Asia Times @asiatimesonline 2h
US may put anti-ballistic missiles in Hawaii to counter North Korea
fb.me/6SVIXmKz9
Show Summary

AT Asia Times @asiatimesonline 2h
Corrupt Chinese officials made off with \$1 billion; Lavish weddings probed
fb.me/4Z1JEuzVZ
Show Summary

Tweet to @asiatimesonline

TAG CLOUD

Afghanistan AIB **China** China
economy Chinese economy
Chinese stock market Chinese
stocks economy fashion trends
Hong Kong IMF **India** Iran ISIS
Islamic State Israel Japan
Malaysia Myanmar Narendra Modi
North Korea Obama Pakistan
PBOC Philippines Putin
Russia Saudi Arabia security
Shinzo Abe South China Sea
South China Sea
dispute South Korea Spratlys
Syria Syrian civil war Taiwan Taiwan
presidential election Thailand Tsai Ing-
wen Turkey Uyghurs Xi
Jinping yuan

ASIA TIMES NEWS RSS

Laos' ruling Communist Party
chooses new leader
Oscars are white, not black or brown
US eyes strategic benefits of
Australia buying Japanese subs

ASIA UNHEDGED RSS

Nearly \$8 trillion wiped off world
stocks in January, US recession
chances rising: BAML
China pegs 2015 forex turnover at
\$16.7 trillion
Oil, stimulus hopes nudge Shanghai
Index to end week higher

CHATHAM HOUSE RULES
RSS

Norman Bailey: Putin is a Russian
nationalist operating in a power
vacuum
Michael Ledeen: Islamists may
defeat Russia in Syria

ARCHIVES

January 2016 (406)
December 2015 (589)
November 2015 (463)
October 2015 (473)
September 2015 (420)
August 2015 (452)
July 2015 (376)
June 2015 (309)
May 2015 (227)
April 2015 (310)
March 2015 (149)
February 2015 (18)

Angelo Codevilla responds:
“Russian national interest” is the
wrong question
