



Chris Rock: Crying Racism and Casting Stones

While serving as master of ceremonies at this year's Academy Awards on Sunday, Chris Rock (shown) used his opening monologue to spend ten and a half minutes denouncing Hollywood as racist. In his typically offensive style, Rock poked and prodded around the edges of the accusation for several minutes before stating, "You're damn right Hollywood is racist."



Rock's vulgar diatribe can only be understood when viewed against the backdrop of the recent brouhaha that erupted after the academy nominations were announced and it was noticed that there were no black nominees. The immediate reaction was for black actors and actresses, black singers and songwriters, and black producers and directors to offer up the lack of dark pigmentation as proof that Hollywood is racist. Will Smith and his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, announced they would not attend, saying they would boycott instead. Spike Lee did the same. Others followed. Chris Rock even joked during his monologue that he considered boycotting, but figured the event would go on without him. If you can't beat them, attend their event and insult them.

So, insult them Rock did. And somehow — in the midst of it all — he managed to insult many blacks as well. While making his point that the awards have always been racist — "this whole no black nominees thing has happened at least 71 other times. O.K.?" — he said that blacks in the 1960s didn't protest because they had "real things to protest at the time." He said:

Now the thing is, Why are we protesting? The big question: Why this Oscars? Why this Oscars, you know?

It's the 88th Academy Awards. It's the 88th Academy Awards, which means this whole no black nominees thing has happened at least 71 other times. O.K.?

You gotta figure that it happened in the 50s, in the 60s — you know, in the 60s, one of those years Sidney didn't put out a movie. I'm sure there were no black nominees some of those years. Say '62 or '63, and black people did not protest.

Why? Because we had real things to protest at the time, you know? We had real things to protest; you know, we were too busy being raped and lynched to care about who won best



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cinematographer.

You know, when your grandmother's swinging from a tree, it's really hard to care about best documentary foreign short.

Set aside for the moment that there is something amiss in joking about blacks being lynched, particularly when your audience is the white people whom you are accusing of being fundamentally racist. The issue at hand here is Rock's assertion that black actors and actresses are systematically overlooked for good roles and then denied their due when it comes time to hand out awards at what he called "the White People's Choice Awards." He said that at a fund-raiser for President Obama, he spoke to the president about this issue. He said, "Mr. President, you see all these writers and producers and actors? They don't hire black people, and they're the *niciest* white people on earth! They're liberals!"

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Granted, Rock is a comedian (I am referring to his job title, not his ability) and perhaps much of his monologue was simply intended to provoke laughter, but it has been said that many a true word is spoken in jest. So, his accusation deserves examination. *Is Hollywood really racist?*

The answer to that question requires looking past the emotional rhetoric of Smith, Jones, Rock, and others and instead just looking at the data. Numbers really don't lie. As *The New American* [noted](#) last month as this whole issue was approaching a fevered pitch:

Yet there's an even more basic point here: The notion of inordinately white Oscars — like the idea that police are more likely to shoot black suspects — is apparently as fictional as the award-winning movies themselves. After pointing out that blacks constitute 13.2 percent of the United States' population, the *Horn News* reports:

According to a University of Southern California study, out of the top 100 films from 2007–2014, 12.5% of the actors were black. The difference between 12.5% and 13.2% is considered statistically insignificant.

... But what about the Academy Awards?

Since the 77th Academy Awards — held in February of 2005 — there have been a total of 192 different Oscar nominations for actors and actresses.

During that time period, Hollywood has seen 23 black actors and actresses nominated for these Academy Awards, or 12% of possible awards.

That means black actors and actresses have been outrageously cheated out of 1.2% of the Oscar bids, or less than two nominations.

But that 1.2% doesn't mean much. In such a limited selection, large variations are expected. A 1.2% off from the average isn't very significant at all.

... So what about award winners?

... Since 2000, there have been nine black actors and actresses who have won the Academy Award for best lead or supporting actor.

That's nine Oscar wins out of 68 total awards since the 72nd Academy Awards, a perfect 13.2% rate of Oscar wins for black Americans.

And since 2005, black actors and actresses have won seven Oscars, out of 48 total winners; a



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14.6% rate.

So, while Hollywood has its problems (elitism, liberalism, a moral compass that points due south), racism, at least in the form of failure to nominate blacks for Academy Awards, does not appear to be one of them. While it is true that many a true word is spoken in jest, in this case it appears that lies and half-truths are sometimes delivered with a punchline, too.

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