



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 5, 2014

“Alone Yet Not Alone” Song Snubbed by Academy

“Alone Yet Not Alone,” the title song from the film of the same name, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song on January 15. The song was sung by Christian broadcaster and charity organizer Joni Eareckson Tada.

But two weeks later, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced that the song had been disqualified. Why? Songwriter Bruce Broughton allegedly violated rules by emailing Academy members to make them aware of the song, since the movie had a very limited release and few had heard of either the song or the movie. (To hear the song, go to the YouTube video at the end of this article.)



It was the first time the Academy took such action on the grounds of its “integrity” being undermined.

[The Academy issued a statement](#) explaining its reasoning on February 1, which stated, in part:

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The Board of Governors’ decision to rescind the Original Song nomination for “Alone Yet Not Alone,” music by Bruce Broughton, was made thoughtfully and after careful consideration. The Academy takes very seriously anything that undermines the integrity of the Oscars® voting process. The Board regrettably concluded that Mr. Broughton’s actions did precisely that.

Mr. Broughton sent an email to at least 70 of his fellow Music Branch members — nearly one-third of the branch’s 240 members. When he identified the song as track #57 as one he had composed, and asked voting branch members to listen to it, he took advantage of information that few other potential nominees are privy to. As a former Academy Governor and current member of the Music Branch’s executive committee, Mr. Broughton should have been more cautious about acting in a way that made it appear as if he were taking advantage of his position to exert undue influence.

Broughton shared his reaction to the Academy’s decision with [The Hollywood Reporter](#): “I’m devastated. I indulged in the simplest grassroots campaign and it went against me when the song started getting attention. I got taken down by competition that had months of promotion and advertising behind them. I simply asked people to find the song and consider it.”

John Debney, an Academy member who wrote the score for *The Passion of the Christ*, was critical of the Academy’s decision: “As a member of the Academy, I’m ashamed by this act. The nominations for work in film are meant to be merit based. Finally, a song from a small film barely seen, was deemed worthy of nomination. That is the way it should work. But alas, the winds of PC and cronyism seem to be at work here.”



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The Hollywood Reporter learned that a petition written by an Academy member was being circulated privately among other members charging that the rescinding of the nomination is “an usurpation of our rights as voters, and we demand that this nomination be reinstated.” The petition also stated, in part:

“Alone Yet Not Alone” was eligible by all of AMPAS applicable rules and regulations. Any personal correspondence some of us may have received from the artists involved was miniscule in comparison to the deluge of email, print and recorded promotion that we received from every studio production for every possible nomination.

Tada, who sang the song for the score, is an evangelical Christian author, radio host, and founder of Joni and Friends, an organization “accelerating Christian ministry in the disability community.”

Back in 1967, when she was a teenager, Tada fractured her neck vertebrae after diving into Chesapeake Bay in shallow water and became paralyzed from the shoulders down. She wrote of her experiences in her 1976 best-selling autobiography, *Joni: The unforgettable story of a young woman’s struggle against quadriplegia & depression*, which became an international bestseller. The book was made into a 1979 feature film of the same name, in which she starred as herself.

In 1979, Tada founded Joni and Friends (JAF), an organization engaged in Christian ministry among the world’s disabled communities. Her ministry produces *Joni and Friends*, a daily five-minute radio program heard in over 1,000 outlets.

Tada was given the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003 by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. She was also named “Churchwoman of the Year” in 1993 by the Religious Heritage Foundation and was the first woman to be honored by the National Association of Evangelicals as their “Layperson of the Year.”

Tada was surprised and honored when she was asked last year by the film’s producers to record the film’s title song, “Alone Yet Not Alone.”

“Last year when I spoke at the closing session of the National Religious Broadcasters’ Convention, I sang several hymns as part of my message,” Tada said in a news release.

She continued, “In the audience were some people connected with Enthuse Entertainment, the producer of *Alone Yet Not Alone*, who later asked if I would be interested in recording the theme song for the movie.”

Tada added, “When I heard the simple, melodic ballad, I wanted to record it. I really resonated with the words — after all, I sit down in a stand-up world and often feel ‘alone,’ but of course with my faith in God, I’m never really alone. The Bible is filled with stories of God picking ill-equipped, unskilled people for places of great influence, which is how I feel, as a quadriplegic, singing an Academy Award-nominated song.”

Set amidst the French and Indian War, *Alone Yet Not Alone* is based on Tracy Leininger Craven’s novel of the same name and is the true story of Barbara and Regina Leininger, German immigrant sisters who were carried away by a band of Allegheny warriors in 1750s Pennsylvania. The film reflects the Christian faith of the sisters and their belief that God will never abandon them. The title song is the girls’ family’s favorite hymn and its words sustain their faith through the difficult years of their capture.

Among those who do not easily accept the Academy’s decision to kill the nomination is Gerald Molen, an Oscar-winning producer of the much-acclaimed movie *Schindler’s List*. In a letter to Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences President Cheryl Boone Isaacs, a copy of which was obtained by *The*



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Hollywood Reporter, Molen wrote, “Every film director, writer, cinematographer, actor, art director, costume designer and efx [special effects] house finds a way to pitch or promote their work. Many will see this decision as faith-based bigotry pure and simple.”

The Academy Awards may have snubbed “Alone Yet Not Alone,” but the song will be honored at another awards event, the Movieguide annual Faith & Values Awards Gala to be held in Universal City on February 7. On January 30, Movieguide announced that it had booked Joni Eareckson Tada to sing “Alone Yet Not Alone” at this year’s awards gala, which should be attended by 500 executives from major entertainment companies. Last year, executives from Universal Studios, Warner Bros., and Walt Disney Studios attended. The gala will be broadcast March 1 on the Reelz channel.

The Faith & Values Awards Gala (by Movieguide’s own description) “rewards the best family-friendly movies and TV shows of the previous year.”

Though not nearly so well-known as the Academy Awards, this year will be Movieguide’s 22nd annual awards ceremony, and will feature such celebrities as Mark Burnett, Roma Downey, John Ratzenberger, Andy Garcia, Kevin Sorbo, Sharif Atkins, Corbin Bernsen, James Denton, and A.J. Mikchalka.

Was the Academy’s decision to reject the nomination of “Alone Yet Not Alone” a legitimate reaction to something that “undermines the integrity of the Oscars” or, as John Debney asserted, a case of “PC and cronyism”?

From what this writer learned about the prevailing values of members of the Hollywood entertainment industry during a brief career working at the influential Los Angeles show-business newspaper *Daily Variety* in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, Debney’s explanation carries considerably more credibility.



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