

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences plan for racial and gender criteria: A right-wing attack on artistic freedom

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The decision by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in Hollywood to demand, in effect, that films conform to racial and gender criteria to qualify for its Best Picture award is a vicious attack on artistic freedom and a step down a very sinister path.

The actions reveal that the affluent layer in charge in Hollywood, allied with the Democratic Party, is either indifferent or hostile to the process by which art is created and ruthlessly determined to pursue its selfish, grasping political and economic agenda. Far from resulting in greater “diversity” and “inclusion” in any meaningful sense, the rules mandated by the AMPAS thought police will further narrow studio filmmaking and implicitly set limits on what can and cannot be said.

What’s taking place, in effect, is an attempt to impose a second Production Code, the set of censorship regulations, enforced by an infamous political and quasi-religious apparatus, that from 1934 to the mid-1960s severely restricted American filmmakers.

The new policies are the outcome of several years of intense pressure by identity politics activists, Democratic Party-aligned figures in Hollywood and media outlets like the *New York Times*. The #OscarsSoWhite controversy, which erupted in 2016 when for the second year in a row all 20 performers nominated in the lead and supporting acting categories were white, provided a pretext for the launching of the new initiative.

The Academy set about “diversifying” itself, which has largely meant inviting several thousand individuals, a considerable proportion of whom are women and members of “underrepresented ethnic/racial communities,” to join its ranks. This year, for example, the organization, according to *Deadline*, touted that its invitees were “49 percent international, 45 percent women, and 36 percent underrepresented ethnic/racial.”

In June, AMPAS officials ominously announced that a task force was working on the next phase of its “equity and inclusion initiative,” known as “**Academy Aperture 2025**.” A September 8 press release announced the new “Representation and Inclusion Standards” for the Best Picture award proposed by the task force, chaired by Academy governors DeVon Franklin (producer, motivational speaker and preacher!) and Jim Gianopulos (multi-millionaire chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures).

The formulas this body has come up with are both foul and absurd. To be deemed eligible for the Best Picture award at the

2024 Academy Awards (in 2022 and 2023, producers will *only* have to submit “a confidential Academy Inclusion Standards form”), a movie will have to meet two out of four standards (A through D).

To achieve “Standard A,” a film must meet one of the following criteria:

- At least one of the lead actors or significant supporting actors is Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American/Alaskan Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander or from another “underrepresented race or ethnicity.”

- At least 30 percent of all actors in secondary and more minor roles are from at least two of the following underrepresented groups: “Women, racial or ethnic group, LGBTQ+ or people with cognitive or physical disabilities, or who are deaf or hard of hearing.”

- “The main storyline(s), theme or narrative of the film is centered on an underrepresented group(s).”

“Standard B” mandates that a certain number of “creative leadership positions and department heads” (“Casting Director, Cinematographer, Composer, Costume Designer, Director, Editor, Hairstylist, Makeup Artist, Producer,” etc.) come from the aforesaid “underrepresented groups.” It would require that at least 30 percent of the film’s crew is from the same underrepresented groups.

“Standard C” concerns “industry access and opportunities,” including the provision of paid apprenticeships or internships for women and members of racial or ethnic groups, and “Standard D” requires a given studio and/or film group to have “multiple in-house senior executives” from the various “underrepresented groups... on their marketing, publicity, and/or distribution teams.”

Where does one begin?

The underlying premise of this effort, as we argued in 2016 when the issue became a prominent one, is that “artwork should be categorized and presumably appreciated according to whether it represents a male or female, black or white perspective.” Whether they liked it or not, we warned, such forces were setting up this

basic standard: “women gain more from art produced by women, Jews from work created by Jews, African-Americans from ‘African-American art,’ etc.”

Assuming that artistic perspective is thoroughly framed by race or gender, the AMPAS bureaucrats and their advisers elevate such matters to the level of a worldview. In ideological terms, in their obsession with race in particular, such views have been identified historically with the far right.

We pointed out in 2016 that the “Nazis asserted the existence of distinct ‘Aryan’ and ‘Jewish [Bolshevik, liberal, degenerate]’ cultures, separated out ‘Aryan music’ from ‘Jewish music,’ and so forth. They classified human beings collectively as ‘races,’ with inherited characteristics, as one commentator notes, ‘related not only to outward appearance and physical structure, but also shaped internal mental life, ways of thinking, creative and organizational abilities, intelligence, taste and appreciation of culture, physical strength, and military prowess.’”

We added that “those who view art and culture in racial (or gender) terms and make race (or gender) the basis for a theory of aesthetics give credence to and encourage this type of filth.” Our warnings at the time that the Academy was heading in the direction of racial or gender quotas have been confirmed in spades.

According to the outlook of the Academy brain trust, “art” is a mere means to an end, little more than the spelling or fleshing out, through the use of actors, sets, décor, of one’s racial or gender essence. Again, how far is that from the Hitler view that art’s exterior form should embody “an inner racial ideal” (Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists*)?

Astonishingly, the Academy, in its press release, has the temerity to assert that its goals “will not compromise the creative freedom filmmakers must have.”

To the extent that the task force members and Academy governors actually believe this, it only underscores the extent to which identity politics has saturated their entire beings. “Creative freedom,” in their minds, is reduced to expressing one’s ethnic or gender identity.

In fact, film artists are being pushed in a definite direction. There is nothing neutral or “innocent” about the new standards.

By their very existence and insistence, they inevitably draw the artist’s and the public’s attention *toward* questions of ethnicity, nationality and gender and *away* from the problems of class, inequality, poverty and the danger of war and dictatorship. It is an only slightly veiled mandating of themes and storylines. Hollywood’s officialdom is telling producers, writers and directors: this is what should concern you, these are the officially sponsored and endorsed issues we want you to bring before the public.

The question of genuine artistic truth never arises for such people. That a filmmaker should dedicate him or herself wholeheartedly, self-sacrificingly, to the pursuit of portraying *what is*, regardless of the consequences, is unimaginable to them.

They begin with various cynical calculations as to what sort of movie might be acceptable to middle class public opinion or profitable to investors, and assume the artists have the same starting point. No serious work was ever created with a recipe book in hand from which the artist simply selects the proper

ingredients.

“Diversity” and “inclusiveness,” when raised by identity politics operators in Hollywood, are empty, fraudulent slogans. What’s involved from an economic point of view is the attempt by an already privileged layer of African Americans and females to lay hands on a bigger share of the entertainment industry profit bonanza for themselves.

There’s no added “diversity” in one affluent petty-bourgeois layer replacing another, the only difference being the color of their skin or their gender. All the considerable efforts at “inclusiveness” to this point have not improved the generally miserable output in Hollywood one iota. White or black, male or female, the not very inspiring thoughts and feelings of the top five or seven percent of the population are what we see represented on movie screens.

The selfishness of these layers knows no bounds. Their hostility in recent years to such films as *Lincoln*, *Free State of Jones*, *Green Book* and others has revealed their deep hostility to work that pointed to more general, broader concerns, the healthier concerns of the mass of the population.

As we wrote on another occasion four years ago: “Of course, there is a massive ‘lack of diversity’ problem in Hollywood, but it is not a racial one. The United States is an immensely complex society with a population of some 320 million people, the vast majority of whom work for a wage—or would like to. How well represented is the working class in American filmmaking, including the overwhelmingly proletarian African American and Latino population? In general, how thoroughly are the complexities of US society and its people depicted by Hollywood?”

“With a few honorable exceptions, contemporary American and global filmmaking solely investigates the lives and feelings of a small fraction of the population, the affluent, self-absorbed upper-middle class, residing in their various pockets of affluence.”

Every serious artist must experience a feeling of revulsion on being told what and how to create a work, especially by an alliance of racist snake-oil salesmen and CEOs. The formula, complete freedom for art, takes on an ever greater and more concrete, and revolutionary, significance.



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