

# In the Wake of #OscarsSoWhite, the Tonys Just Proved Themselves So Diverse

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By [Kevin O'Keeffe](#)



Mere months after [#OscarsSoWhite the Sequel](#) struck Hollywood, the Broadway community has put itself back in the conversation with a Tony nominee slate worth celebrating.

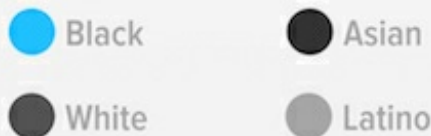
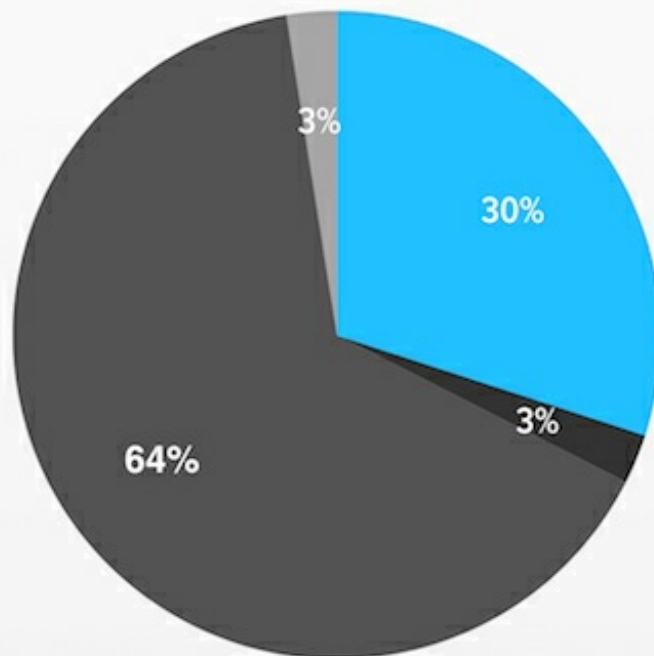
Of the [40 acting nominees](#) for the 2016 Tony Awards, 14 are nonwhite — making up over 30% of the nominee pool. Twelve of those nominees are black, thanks to an assortment of shows with predominantly black casts this year including the revival of *The Color Purple* and the Audra McDonald-starring *Shuffle Along*.

**Read more: [To Avoid #OscarsSoWhite 3.0, Academy Voters Should Pay Attention to These SXSW Films](#)**

Additionally, the Tonys' nominating committee also remembered one Asian and one Latino nominee, both from [cultural sensation](#) *Hamilton*: creator Lin-Manuel Miranda and leading actress Phillipa Soo.

## 2016 Tony Nominees by Race

As represented in the eight acting categories.



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Source: 2016 Tony Awards

Source: [Mic/2016 Tony Awards](#)

Only two acting categories failed to produce a single actor of color as a nominee: best actor in a play and best featured actor in a play. Best featured actress in a musical was the least white category, with black women earning three of the five nominations.

While it's true that in the past, the Tonys have been as [monochrome](#) as the Oscars, this year was a surprisingly diverse one for the Great White Way. *Hamilton* set the tone when it opened in August, presenting a story in which people historically portrayed as white were played by nonwhite actors.

Unsurprisingly, *Hamilton* also earned a best musical nomination — one it will almost certainly win come [June 12](#). *Hamilton* also [broke the record](#) for most number of nominations for a single show with 16.

Of the four categories that correlate to the Oscars' best picture award (best play, musical, revival of a play and revival of a musical), four included predominantly nonwhite casts: *Hamilton*, *The Color Purple*, *Shuffle Along* and the Lupita Nyong'o-starring play *Eclipsed*. Additionally, one nominee from the best revival of a musical category — the revival of [Spring Awakening](#) — featured multiple deaf cast members among its ensemble.

Before the nominations, the [New York Times](#) noted the probability the Tony nominees would be a remarkably diverse set. There were actually even more shows and performers that could have earned recognition, including the Gloria Estefan musical *On Your Feet!* and *Allegiance*, a musical about Japanese internment camps.

Indeed, the lack of representation of Asian and Hispanic actors beyond *Hamilton's* Miranda and Soo affirms what Asian American Performers Action Coalition spokesman Pun Bandhu said in the *New York Times* piece: These actors and stories are still being undervalued, even in a banner year for theater diversity.

"We still have a lot of work to do in terms of the diversity of our creative teams, and I'd like to see more diversity among our producing community," said theater owner Jordan Roth to the *Times*.



The cast of 'Hamilton' win a Grammy Award in February.

Source: [Theo Wargo/Getty Images](#)

A cynical awards-watcher could look at the numbers and see not hope, but coincidence. As the *Times* piece notes, it wasn't as if producers gathered together and decided as a collective to make this the most diverse Broadway season in recent memory — and next season only has one planned show with a nonwhite cast on the books so far (*Motown*, a production that already played Broadway in 2013 and thus will not be eligible for Tonys next year).

But Tuesday morning, there was enthusiasm that indeed, the Tonys were #SoDiverse.

Call it change, call it circumstance: For this year, actors of color have been and will be recognized. After exactly zero film actors of color could get the Oscars' attention earlier, 14 feels pretty extraordinary. Here's hoping it's a sign that one day, such a nomination pool will be completely ordinary instead.