

# WAS YEOH THE FIRST ASIAN OSCAR WINNER?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addresses the issue of ethnic identity:

Am I who I say I am, or am I what nature says I am? The former is an interesting psychological issue but it has no bearing on reality: our ethnicity, like our sex, is biologically determined. It is not a function of perception. It matters not a whit what we claim to be. What matters is who we really are.

NPR lit up the Twitter sky when it said that Michelle Yeoh was the “first person who identifies as Asian” to win the Oscar for Best Actress. The Identity Police quickly swung into action, maintaining that Merle Oberon was the first Asian woman to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1935. Not so quick.

Poor Merle didn't know who she was. She was born in India to her pre-teen mother, but grew up thinking her mother was her sister. That's because her English dad was bedding the gal whom Merle thought was her mother (she was actually her grandmother). After her father abandoned her, Merle's real mother ran off with some other guy and married him, and this opened the door for her dad's lover to assume the role of her mother. Got that?

As to her ethnic identity, Merle grew up lying about it, choosing to identify as a white person, claiming to be born in Tasmania to an elite British officer. But did she lie? After all, her dad was Anglican, but then again Barack Obama's mother was white yet he is considered a black man. Are there no biracial people anymore?

To complicate matters more, consider the reaction of the Identity Police. Their hissy fit over Merle not being

recognized as the first Asian to be nominated for Best Actress is wholly without merit. According to their twisted ideology, identity is all that matters, and since she identified as a white girl, that means she was as white as Snow White. Therefore, she wasn't the first Asian to be recognized for Best Actress. Yeoh was.

The Identity Police cannot have it both ways. We are either what nature says we are or we are what we say we are. But perhaps we should not be so judgmental and simply welcome them to our club—the reality club—the one that treats identity as a farcical attribute. Now if they would only admit that they are a fraud, that would be real progress.