

2007 Name of the Year

CLEVELAND EVANS

The fourth annual Name of the Year voting was held at the American Name Society meeting in Chicago on 4 January 2008. For the first time, members of the Society present voted by show of hands from among the nominees. The voting was for the year 2007.

The winner of the voting was 'Betrayus.' This pejorative nickname was nominated from the floor by ANS member Kemp Williams. Betrayus was first used on 25 January 2007 by conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh in the phrase 'Senator Betrayus,' referring to Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska after he voted for a resolution calling the Bush administration's escalation of the war in Iraq as being 'against the national interest.' The name was later used by the online organization MoveOn.org in an advertisement in the 10 September 2007 *New York Times*. In that ad the phrase 'General Betray Us' referred to General David Petraeus, who was criticized for a report to Congress in which he stated that the administration's troop surge strategy in Iraq was effective. ANS members who supported Betrayus for Name of the Year pointed out how its use by both right-wing and left-wing commentators illustrated the deep divisions in American society over the war in Iraq. Betrayus therefore fit the goal of choosing a Name of the Year that shows how the use of names is an important part of contemporary North American culture.

The first runner-up in the 2007 Name of the Year contest was 'Google,' nominated for its ongoing penetration of American culture, especially shown by its uses as a new eponymic verb. The second runner-up was 'Barack Hussein Obama,' nominated for how a Presidential candidate's name has become part of the discussion about him. Those opposed to Obama's candidacy use his name as part of attempts to link him with Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, while some in favor of his candidacy seem to think that his name will be an asset in dealing with the Muslim world.

Other nominees for 2007 Name of the Year included 'Addison,' a newly popular name for girls given a boost by a female character on the television series *Grey's Anatomy*; 'Forever Stamps,' the brand name of US postage stamps sold with the promise of still being usable for first-class mail, no matter how rates rise in the future; 'Daughtry,' the name of an album by singer Chris Daughtry, illustrating the use of one-word names by modern celebrities; and 'Jersey Boys,' the name of a Broadway musical based on the career of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

Past winners of the Name of the Year have been 2004's 'Fahrenheit 9/11,' the title of Michael Moore's controversial film about George W. Bush; 2005's 'Katrina,' the name of the hurricane that devastated Louisiana and Mississippi that year; and 2006's 'Pluto,' the name of the celestial body which was demoted from planetary status by

the International Astronomical Union, causing an uproar among American school children which illustrated the power of naming to give people a feeling of personal involvement with even distant balls of ice.

For the 2008 Name of the Year, the American Name Society will first vote on Names of the Year in the four categories of Brand Names, Literary Names (which will include names of fictional characters from all media), Placenames, and Personal Names, before choosing an overall winner. Please send your nominations to Cleveland Evans, either by email to cleveland.evans@bellevue.edu, or by postal mail to him at Psychology Department, Bellevue University, 1000 Galvin Road South, Bellevue, NE 68005-3098, USA.

Notes on Contributor

Cleveland Evans is Immediate Past President of the American Name Society and a Professor of Psychology at Bellevue University in Bellevue, Nebraska.

Correspondence to: cleveland.evans@bellevue.edu