

REPORT

Name of the Year 2018

CLEVELAND EVANS

Bellevue University, USA

The twelfth annual Name of the Year vote was held at the American Name Society meeting in New York City, on 4 January 2019. For 2018 we had 26 total nominees, considerably less than 2017's record of 38. However, several names were nominated by more than one person. Twenty-four nominations came in by email before the meeting, and two were nominated from the floor.

There were four nominations for Trade Name of the Year. This was the first year 'miscellaneous' names were not included in the Trade Name category. *SpaceX*, the trade name for the company 'Space Exploration Technologies Corp.' was nominated because in February 2018 it became the first private company to successfully launch an object into an orbit around the Sun.

Gritty, name of the Philadelphia Flyers mascot that debuted on 24 September 2018, received two nominations. The team had previously lacked a mascot, and the name and the mascot's orange costume invoked many responses. Left-wing activists made him a socialist meme, a blue-collar monster fighting on behalf of workers. On 24 October 2018, the Philadelphia City Council passed a formal resolution honoring *Gritty*, declaring he honored the city's spirit and passion. According to SBNation, 'The name "Gritty" itself is an inside joke used as a descriptor by fans for any player who isn't the most athletically talented, but still inspires overwrought metaphors.'

Sans Forgetica is the name of a new font developed at Melbourne's RMIT University. The font's broken letters are designed to require extra effort to read, causing readers to dwell longer on individual words, thereby increasing reading comprehension. The nominator pointed out the name plays on two common typographical terms, *Sans Serif* and *Helvetica*, so that the name sounds like a font, while simultaneously invoking the meaning 'without forgetting,' which is the font's intended purpose.

The last Trade Name nominee was *Fortnite*, the esports game released in September 2017 which spread exponentially in 2018, attracting 2.8 billion views on YouTube in February alone. The name is a variation of *fortnight* (a period of two weeks) because in one game mode, Save the World, players must 'survive' for two weeks. The name has additional overtones of fort-building, knights, and darkness. *Gritty* won as Trade Name of the Year on the first ballot with 72% of the votes.

There were three nominees for Place Name of the Year. Three persons nominated *Paradise*, name of the city of 27,000 in Butte County, California, which was largely leveled in the devastating Camp Fire that burned a 250-square-mile area in November. One nominator stated

the power of this place name lies in the startling contrasts between the original beauty this toponym was chosen to represent and the catastrophic events that came to mark this community. Within the United States ‘Paradise’ became a common rhetorical trope for wordplays such as ‘Paradise Lost’. In other parts of the world, the name was used in commentaries about the current U.S. Government’s failure to enact regulations that would protect its residents against harm from disasters.

Bear’s Ears, name of the United States National Monument in south-east Utah established by Barack Obama in December 2016, was nominated because of the further fame it received when Donald Trump reduced the size by 85% from the original 1,351,849 acres a year later. The third Place Name nominee was *Parkland*, the city in Broward County, Florida, which was the site of a 14 February mass shooting at Marjory Stoneham Douglas High School. *Parkland* quickly became shorthand not just for the tragedy but for a student-led movement – March for Our Lives – to raise awareness of gun violence and gun control. *Paradise* won as Place Name of the Year on the first ballot with 63% of the votes.

Eight nominations for Personal Name of the Year were received by email. Three persons nominated *Abcde*, in the news when a Southwest Airlines gate agent mocked five-year old Abcde Redford’s name, both in person and on social media, after seeing it on a boarding pass. *Abcde* (pronounced “Absiddy”) has been given to US American girls, especially in Hawaii and New Mexico, for decades. 16 were born in 2013, the same year as *Abcde Redford*.

6ix9ine, the professional name of Brooklyn rapper Daniel Hernandez, was suggested by a nominator who pointed out ‘Recently, the rapper 6ix9ine was arrested for crimes in which he both participated and live-streamed on his popular Instagram account. Sentenced to serve time, 6ix9ine now suggests an incarceration number.’

Jamal Khashoggi was the name of the Washington Post journalist and critic of Saudi regime assassinated at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on 2 October. The nominator wrote:

His name is associated with the increasing threats journalists face as they pursue their craft in a political atmosphere that brands them ‘enemies of the people’ and creators of ‘fake news.’ President Trump’s dismissal of CIA reports that strongly conclude the Saudi Crown Prince ordered the murder also kept Khashoggi’s name in the news.

Names of three 2018 newborns received nominations. *Kulture*, daughter of rappers Cardi B and Offset, was born 10 July 10. Squire Sebastian Senator was in the news when his mother publicly cancelled a baby shower because relatives

were ridiculing it. She asserted ‘This name conveys power. It conveys wealth. It conveys success. My baby’s name WILL be a revolution.’ Finally, *Stormi* is the name of celebrity Kylie Jenner and rapper Travis Scott, born 1 February 2018. Stormi’s nominator also pointed out the name (under a different spelling) was in the news because of Stormy Daniels, the pornographic actress who accused Donald Trump of paying her \$130,000 to prevent her discussing their affair.

The last two advance nominations for Personal Name were *Meghan Markle*, the US American actress with African-American ancestry who married Prince Harry in England; and *Individual-1*, which originally appeared in legal documents released during the investigation and prosecution of lawyer Michael Cohen. In his guilty plea, Cohen admitted to having purposefully made false statements in an effort to ‘be consistent with Individual 1’s political messaging and out of loyalty to *Individual 1*.’ The nominator wrote, ‘What is particularly interesting about this name from both a linguistic and political perspective is, that despite its surface opacity, it is clear to whom this name refers (i.e., Donald J. Trump).’

Two nominations for Personal Name were made from the floor at the meeting. The first was *Beto*, the nickname of Texas congressman Robert Francis O’Rourke, who narrowly lost a race for United States senator in November but whose charisma has led to speculation about a run for the Presidency in 2020. Beto is a common nickname for ‘Roberto’ in Mexican-American culture. The second-floor nominee was for the pair of *David Hogg* and *Emma Gonzalez*, two of the student leaders of the movement against gun violence sparked by the Parkland, Florida mass shooting.

During discussion before the vote, it was pointed out *Khashoggi* is of onomastic significance since it illustrates modern media’s more careful treatment of non-English names. Initially, reporters rhymed it with ‘soggy’. Over time, most switched to ‘Ka-SHOG-zhee’, closer to the Arabic pronunciation. This contributed to *Jamal Khashoggi* winning as Personal Name of the Year with 86% of the votes.

The four nominees for Artistic or Literary Name of the year began with *June/Offred*, names of a character in the television series *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The nominator wrote the pair ‘represent the re-oppression of women in the current regime. Names are very important in this post-apocalyptic tale which seems all too familiar.’

Childish Gambino, the ‘rap name’ of actor/writer Donald Glover, was suggested by a nominator who wrote ‘Where did Glover come up with “Childish Gambino”? From something called the Wu-Tang name generator. There were two Wu-Tang name generators, and both of them yielded “Childish Gambino” when Glover typed in his name.’

Two persons nominated *Wakanda*, name of the fictional African country, created in 1966 by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby for their ‘Black Panther’ comic, featured in the 2018 film *Black Panther*, one of the biggest world-wide box office

successes ever, praised for its positive treatment of Africa and Black African characters.

The final nominee for Artistic and Literary Name was the film title ‘Black Panther.’ The nominator pointed out that the name of the Marvel comic book superhero character was created by Stan Lee in 1966, inspired by the political activist organization, the Black Power Movement, also born in 1966. The term ‘Black Panther’ was coined by Black Activists such as Bobby Seale and Huey Newton to recognize and stimulate pride, strength and beauty. *Wakanda* won the prize as Artistic and Literary name of 2018, just avoiding a run-off with *Black Panther* by obtaining 55% of the votes.

This was the first year the fifth category of Miscellaneous Names was voted on. There were six nominees in the category. The first was *Pleasure*. Its nominator wrote: ‘the name attributed (to the town) by Donald Trump when visiting Paradise, California. He made the misnomer twice in a press conference before being corrected by local firefighters. This became the subject of many an internet meme.’

The second nominee was *QAnon*, the name of a conspiracy theory first appearing on anonymous Internet message boards in October 2017. ‘Q’ refers to ‘Q clearance,’ a security authorization in the US Department of Energy. In the June issue of Harper’s magazine, Walter Kirn called the theory

a retread, for the most part, of Cold War-era John Birch Society notions ... which described a sinister global power struggle only dimly visible to ordinary citizens. On one side of the fight was a depraved elite secretly sowing chaos and strife. On the other side was the public, brave and decent but easily deceived.

The third nominee was *BBQ Becky*, nominated as a representative of nicknames given White people who’ve reported Black people for sitting in Starbucks, shopping at CVS, mowing lawns, playing golf, staying at an Airbnb, or napping on a couch in a college dorm. Fourth was *Laurel/Yanny*, whose nominator wrote: ‘In May, it seemed everyone was puzzling over an audio clip that sounded to some listeners like “Laurel” and to others like “Yanny.” The New York Times built a tool to test your own perception.’ Fifth was *#Metoo*. Its nominator wrote:

Although this name originated in 2017, the linguistic and cultural significance of this term has continued almost unabated. The once innocuous phrase of sympathy has turned into an international rallying cry for justice and survivors’ rights. It is now more than a hashtag, but also the name of an international activist movement for survivors of sexual assault, the title of a documentary film, and a US Congressional Act, the ‘Member and Employee Training and Oversight on Congress Act.’

Individual-1, described above in the Personal Name category, was also nominated as a Miscellaneous Name.

After the initial vote, a run-off between *QAnon* and *#Metoo* resulted in a win for *#Metoo* as the first Miscellaneous Name of the Year. *#Metoo* was the Trade

Name of the Year for 2017, when that category still included ‘miscellaneous’ names. The five winners in the overall categories became nominees for overall Name of the Year. There were no other nominees from the floor. In the vote for the overall Name of the Year for 2018, a run-off between *Jamal Khashoggi* and *Paradise* saw the former win with 61% of the votes. The ANS Executive Council voted to add a new sixth category of Internet Names to the Names of the Year vote for 2019 and beyond.

For 2019, the American Name Society will vote on Names of the Year in the six categories of Artistic and Literary Names, Place Names, Personal Names, Trade Names, Internet Names, and Miscellaneous Names before choosing an over-all winner. Send nominations to Dr. Cleveland Evans, by email at cevens@bellevue.edu. Please include a rationale for your nomination, which will be included on the list of nominees presented at our annual meeting in New Orleans during January 2020.