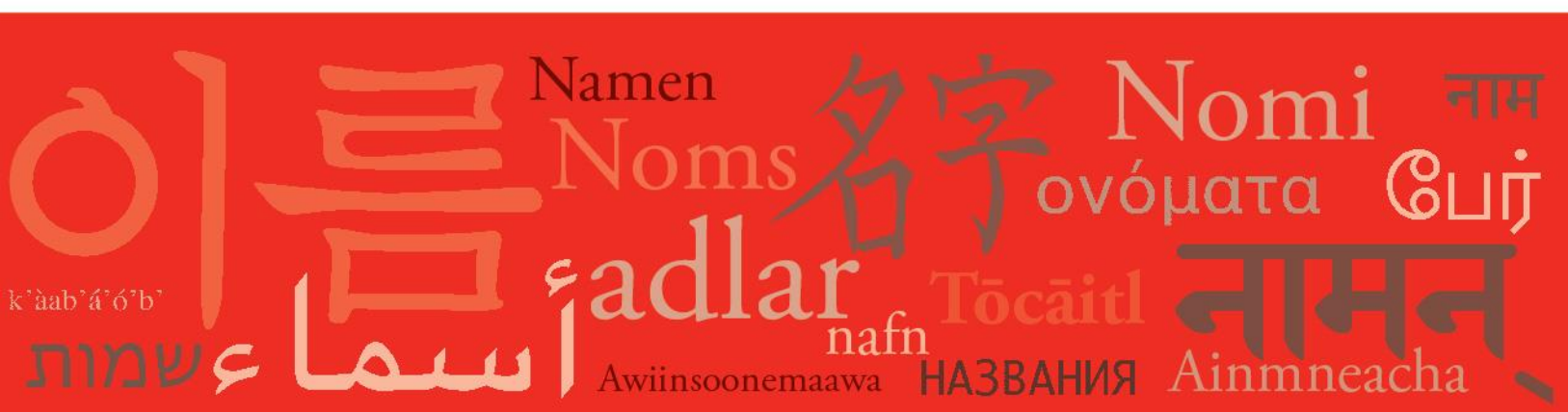


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Name of the Year Report 2020

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Summary

The fourteenth annual Name of the Year vote was held online by the American Name Society on January 24, 2021. The discussion was moderated by ANS President Laurel Sutton and former Name of the Year Coordinator, Dr. Cleveland Evans. The event was attended virtually by 23 scholars from around the globe. This report provides a summary of the deliberations and onomastic selections.

Category Winners

Personal Name of the Year

George Floyd was chosen as Personal Name of the Year. Floyd was killed during his arrest on May 25, 2020 when one of four police officers knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Floyd was accused of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill by a local store clerk. His death triggered worldwide protests against police brutality and systemic racism. *George Floyd* won by one vote over the runner-up name, *Kamala*. The nominations *Kamala* and *Mommala* both refer to Kamala Harris, who was a US Senator in 2020, as well as the Democratic candidate for Vice President in the US Presidential Election of 2020. With the victory of President Joe Biden, Kamala Harris is now not only the first female US Vice President, but also the first person of African-American and Asian descent to hold the second highest office in the US. Her given name, *Kamala*, is rooted in her South Asian heritage and means ‘lotus flower.’

Also earning votes were the name *Trump*, the name of the former US President Donald Trump, as well as *Joe Exotic*, the name of a former zoo operator and US American felon who is featured in the Netflix reality series *Tiger King*. *Karen*, one of 2019’s entries, was again nominated for 2020. This first name has come to be used as a mocking slur against white women thought to be insensitive, self-absorbed, racist, and/or heterosexist. Of all the onomastic categories examined for 2020, the Personal Name of the Year received the most nominations. Other nominations included *Dr. Anthony Fauci* (US American scientist, chief Medical Advisor to Presidents Trump and Biden); *Kobe* and *Gianna* Bryant (a famous US American basketball player and his daughter, both of whom died in a helicopter crash); *Moscow Mitch* (the nickname for Republican senator Mitch McConnell, the former Senate Majority Leader, this name was used in 2020 to refer to a suspected/alleged Russian interference in US elections in 2016); *Bernie Sanders* (US American senator from Vermont and presidential candidate in 2020); *Breonna Taylor* (a Black woman killed by police who had mistakenly entered her home in Kentucky after having been given the wrong address); *Tekashi69* or *Six9ine* (the stage names of US rapper Daniel Hernandez); *Saint Corona* (the reputed patron saint of pandemics, whose coincidentally shares a name with the coronavirus); *Megan Thee Stallion* (the stage name of US rapper Megan Jovon Ruth Pete); and *Elon Musk* (the CEO of the US electric car company, Tesla).

Place Name of the Year

Place Name of the Year received six advance nominations and one for the floor. Names in this category continued to reflect concerns about both the global pandemic and the political protests of 2020: *Manaus, Brazil* was one of the worst-hit Brazilian cities in the first wave of COVID-19, while *Black Lives Matter Plaza (Northwest)*, a pedestrian plaza in Washington, DC, was officially renamed by Mayor Muriel Bowser, on June 5, 2020 and was adorned with giant yellow capital letters that spell out the civil rights slogan “BLACK LIVES MATTER.” In a similar vein, the acronym nomination *CHAZ (Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone)* later called *CHOP (Capitol Hill Organized Protest)*, was the name given to both an occupation protest and a self-declared autonomous zone in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. The area was established during the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020.

Referencing the US Presidential election, there were multiple nominations for *Four Seasons Total Landscaping*, a small business in Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was the unexpected site of a press conference held by former New York city mayor, Rudy Giuliani, to discuss the Trump campaign’s legal challenges to the election results in Pennsylvania. Also nominated was the US state of *Georgia*, the site of

several challenges to the 2020 US elections and two important US Senate races. Nominated from the floor was *Jerusalem*, from the name of the song “Jerusalem” by South African DJ and record producer Master KG. Released in 2020, the song soon went viral across the US. Despite this stiff competition, the place name *Wuhan, China*, a toponym that had been nominated by many people, was voted Place Name of the Year. This geographic name was the first site in the world where the COVID-19 virus was identified. In a runoff vote, *Wuhan, China* won by a narrow majority over *Four Seasons Total Landscaping*.

Trade Name of the Year

By comparison, earning 63% of the vote was *Zoom*, the winner for Trade Name of the Year. The rise in familiarity of this name is directly due to the changes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To limit the spread of the virus, schools and university campuses were closed and businesses were forced to turn into virtual offices where possible. These lockdown measures led to an increased need for an online platform for virtual meetings and classrooms. During the quarantine measures, Zoom’s software usage increased significantly across the globe, spawning neologisms such as *zoombombing* and *zoom fatigue*.

Many other nominees in the Trade Name category also pointed once more to pandemic concerns. Both *Pfizer* and *Moderna*, developers of COVID-19 vaccines, were nominated, along with the *3M N95 mask*, the respiratory protective device recommended for COVID-19 protection during life in time of the quarantine. Rounding out the list of advance nominations were names that expressed increased prominence as people were forced to stay home during the pandemic. These included *Peloton*, the popular indoor cycling exercise equipment; *Alexa*, the Amazon voice assistant; *DoorDash*, the fastest growing home delivery brand in the US; *Amazon*, the online retailer and e-commerce company; *Twitter*, the online social media platform; and *PS5*, the newly released Sony PlayStation game console. A nomination from the floor, *Netflix*, continued the theme of work, play, and entertainment while living in lockdown. Final nominations for Trade Name included *Dominion*, the manufacturer of voting machines used in some locations during the US elections; and *Tesla*, the electric vehicle company.

Another nominee in the Trade Name category was the *Washington Football Team*, formerly known as *Washington Redskins*. Despite previous statements by the owner of the team, Dan Snyder, that the name would never change, 2020 saw commercial and public pressure catalyze the toppling of one of the most visible offensive sports names in US history. This name-change also helped trigger a wave of renaming of other derogatory commercial names. However, as the list above demonstrates, the vast majority of nominations in this category were either directly or indirectly related to the global pandemic.

Artistic and Literary Name of the Year

Not surprisingly, many of the Artistic and Literary Name nominations were focused on in-home entertainment, since attending events such as plays, concerts, and movies became impossible during much of 2020 thanks to the viral outbreak. Four original Netflix series names were nominated: *The Queen’s Gambit*, a coming-of-age period drama miniseries about a young girl’s talent for chess; *Tiger King*, an exploration of big cat breeding and its bizarre underworld; *Cheer*, a docuseries that follows the nationally ranked Navarro College Bulldogs Cheer Team from Corsicana, Texas; and *The Last Dance*, a documentary series about the rise of basketball player Michael Jordan and the 1990s Chicago Bulls basketball team. Another Netflix-related nomination was *Jaja Ding Dong*, which is the name of a song from Netflix musical comedy *Eurovision Song Contest*.

One of the 2019 nominees was *Baby Yoda*, the popular designation for a character in the Disney+ Star Wars series “The Mandalorian.” In 2020, Baby Yoda’s name was finally revealed to be *Grogu*, a nomination from the floor for this category. The game name *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* was nominated due to its tremendous popularity during the pandemic. In this game, players can progress through the game at their own pace, starting with a deserted island and, by decorating, constructing buildings, and changing the landscape, slowly develop their island into a beautiful paradise. They can also visit their fellow players’ islands to stay connected socially. Two traditionally literary names were nominated. Nominated from the floor was *A Promised Land*, the title of former US President Barack Obama’s memoir. Also nominated from the floor was *Home Body*, the title of “New York Times” best-selling collection of poems by Rupi Kaur.

After much deliberation, however, *Schitt’s Creek* was chosen to be Artistic Name of the Year with 35% of the vote. The Emmy-winning Canadian sitcom has been lauded for its portrayal of LGBTQ+

characters and relationships. Daniel Levy and his father Eugene Levy created the show that ran from 2015-2020 and the series finale was broadcast in April 2020. The series was originally a cult favorite that experienced a Netflix-bump when it moved to the online video platform. Participants in the ANS discussion pointed out that there was a running requirement on broadcast networks that the title of *Schitt's Creek* could not be said aloud without putting up a card with the title of the show every time it was mentioned.

E-Name of the Year

2020 was the second year that attendees voted on E-Names. These are names of persons, figures, places, products, businesses, institutions, operations, organizations, platforms, and movements that exist in the virtual world. Six names were nominated in advance, but the attendees agreed that two of them—*Wonder Woman* (a DC comics character featured in a new movie) and *Cyberpunk 2077* (a much-anticipated action role-playing online video game)—were disqualified as they belonged to the Trade Names or Artistic and Literary Names categories. After these eliminations, two Twitter hashtags were considered in this category. Both related to violence in the US against African Americans. First was *#SayHerName*, a hashtag referencing the social movement that seeks to raise awareness for Black women victims of police brutality. Second was *#BlackLivesMatter* (sometimes abbreviated as *#BLM*), representing a social movement protesting racially motivated violence against Black people in general. Both of these hashtags were in constant use on social media during the seemingly never-ending stream of state-sanctioned violence, protests, and violence against protesters during the entire year of 2020.

Along with these hashtags, several other E-names were considered in this category. Nominated in advance was *Bitcoin*, a cryptocurrency invented in 2008 but which rose dramatically in value in 2020. Nominated from the floor were *JSTOR* (Journal Storage), the online academic article repository, which became crucial to scholarly research as physical access to libraries was shut down; and *Covax*, internet slang for COVID-19 vaccines. However, after considering all of these suggestions, the winner of the category, E-Name of the Year was *QAnon*. This name refers to a disproven and discredited far-right conspiracy. The name *QAnon* is used simultaneously to refer to the movement, the originator (also called simply *Q* which is short for *Q Clearance Patriot*), and its followers. Formerly viewed as a fringe extremist group, it has now been recognized as a large-scale movement, with some believers charged with violent crimes. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned that *QAnon* poses a serious potential domestic terror threat. *QAnon* won with 50% of the vote.

Miscellaneous Name of the Year

There were six advance nominations for the Miscellaneous Name of the Year, most centered around, again, the US elections and the coronavirus pandemic. *The 'Rona* is a nickname for the coronavirus, while nominee *COVID-19* is the official name for the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2. Politically-oriented nominations were the *Electoral College*, the US American system of state electors used to select the President; *reTrumplican*, a derogatory term for Republican Trump supporters; and *Proud Boys*, the far-right, neo-fascist, activist organization. Also nominated was *NXIVM*, the US American sex cult which was the subject of several documentaries; and *USPS* (the abbreviation of the **United States Postal Service**), an acknowledgement of its importance during the election because of the prevalence of mail-in votes – but also because of recent attempts to dismantle it and slow (or stop) the US Mail. Unsurprisingly, *COVID-19* was chosen as ANS's Miscellaneous Name of the Year, winning easily with 80% of the vote. Interestingly, "Covid" was chosen as Word of the Year 2020 by the American Dialect Society in its annual vote in January 2020.

Overall Name of the Year

As per tradition, the six category winners became the nominees for overall Name of the Year for 2020. *Kamala* was also nominated from the floor for this honor. A first vote resulted in a tie between *Kamala* and *COVID-19*, with a few scattered votes for other nominees. A runoff vote between the two names again resulted in a 50-50 tie. On the guidance of Cleve Evans, both *Kamala* and *COVID-19* were declared joint winners of the 2020 Name of the Year.

For 2021, 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, E-names, and Miscellaneous Names before choosing an over-all winner. Send nominations to info@americannamesociety.org. An online survey will also be distributed to all ANS members to send in their nominations.

