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Name of the Year Report 2021

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Summary

The fifteenth annual Name of the Year vote was held during the online annual conference of the American Name Society on January 23, 2022. The vote was chaired by Deborah Walker, the ANS Name of the Year Coordinator, and was attended by 23 international onomasticians. This report provides a summary of the deliberations and gives background information about the onomastic nominations.

Introduction

One of the most enjoyable conference traditions of the American Name Society is the Name of the Year (NoY) vote. However, the selection of these names is by no means a frivolous endeavour. The names chosen for this annual distinction serve as historical markers of the significant linguistic and cultural shifts that the US and the world at large have undergone. With that goal in mind, each year, the NoY Chair collects nominations from onomastic experts and the general public for six principal name categories: people names, place names, artistic names, e-names, trade names, and miscellaneous names.¹ The relative merits of each nomination are then discussed in detail. During these deliberations, the NoY Chair may also accept nominations from the floor. As a long-standing rule, the degree of notoriety or popularity endured or enjoyed by the named referents is not a selection criterion. Instead, nominations are judged on their linguistic innovation and productivity as well as their degree of public recognition and usage.

After the NoY Chair calls the scientific discussions to an end, a formal vote is taken. For each of the above-mentioned onomastic categories, the nomination which receives fifty percent or more of the tallied votes is declared the winner. In instances where this threshold is not met, run-off elections are held until one nominee crosses the fifty percent threshold. Once this portion of the selection process has been completed, the category winners are reviewed again to determine an overall winner. During the review process, the NoY Chair may also accept nominations from the floor for this final distinction. For 2021, the NoY Chair was Deborah Walker. The election tellers were ANS President, Laurel Sutton, and Rachel Lorch of Georgetown University. The attendee votes were cast and automatically counted using an online Zoom poll. The following report presents the numerical results of the 2021 NoY category and overall elections. It also offers background information about some of this year's most interesting nominees.

Category Winners

Personal Names

In total, eight names were nominated for this category. In alphabetical order, the nominees were *Donald Trump*, *Elon Musk*, *Fauci*, *Ghislaine Maxwell*, *Harry & Meghan*, *Simone Biles*, and *T***p*. Even a cursory look at these nominees reveals that the vast majority belong to individuals who captured the international headlines in 2021. *Elon Musk*, for example, is the personal name of the South African-born tech mogul whose personal net wealth was recently estimated to be just over 222 billion US dollars (Forbes Magazine 2022). In Autumn of 2022, the Tesla CEO made onomastic news himself when he announced that his newborn son would be named *X Æ A-12*. Aside from great confusion over how to pronounce the name, Musk's announcement caused consternation amongst government officials who explained that in California, the child's date of birth, digits and symbols are not permitted for baby names (Lerman 2020). According to information released by Grimes, Musk's partner, their son's name was inspired by abbreviations for their favorite things: *Æ* is Grimes' personalized spelling of 'AI' (Artificial Intelligence) in an invented "elven" language; *A-12* is the name for the weaponless high-speed aircraft that came before the SR-17; and *X* is the perennial symbol for the "unknown variable" (Yasharoff 2022, para. 5). Although the tech innovator and his partner deserve credit for their creativity in selecting their son's name, there is nothing particularly unusual about Musk's own moniker. Neither were the forename *Elon* [Hebrew 'oak tree'] or the surname *Musk* associated with any significant naming trends in 2021 (Social Security Online 2022).

The same can be said for the next nominee *Donald Trump*, the personal name of the 45th US President. In 2021, the former TV personality and hotel owner made international headlines by becoming the first President in US history to be impeached twice. This ignominious distinction, coupled with decades of questionable financial and legal dealings, has prompted many of his critics to avoid using his name,

preferring instead to use various linguistic circumventions such as *T***p* or *T*****. This is an orthographical convention usually reserved for words considered to be too vulgar or offensive to appear in polite speech (e.g., *f**k*, *c****) (Trask 1997; Wajnryb 2005). Further evidence of this name avoidance can be found in official statistics gathered by the US Social Security Administration (SSA). According to their records, in 2020, the start of his presidency, the name *Donald* ranked 485 on the SSA list of popular baby names (US Social Security Administration 2022a). Four years later, after the incumbent's loss to democratic presidential candidate Joseph R. Biden, the first name of the former Forbes mainstay (Alexander 2021) had plummeted to rank 610 (Social Security Online 2022).

Alongside the names of these male referents, there were two women whose personal names received a nomination for this category. The first was Simone Biles, Winner of 19 World Championships and seven Olympic medals (Team USA 2022), Biles' uncommon combination of artistry and athleticism not only revolutionized the sport, but also earned her the distinction of being the only female gymnast in US history to have four different signature skills named after her (Park 2021; Team USA 2022; USA Gymnastics 2022). In addition to this eponymous honour, in 2021, Biles also made the news for withdrawing from several competitions during the Olympic Games in Japan. In the media frenzy that followed, Biles explained that the stress related to having testified against the former US Gymnastics employee who had assaulted her and multiple other underage athletes had taken its physical and mental toll (Lutkin 2021). Biles' willingness to address these once taboo topics tied the champion's name to mental health advocacy, particularly amongst survivors of sexual abuse.

Ironically, the other woman whose personal name was nominated this year was also tied to an historic child sex abuse scandal: *Ghislaine Maxwell*. The name of the British socialite recently captured international media attention after she, her paedophile protégé Jeffrey Epstein, and their long-time associate, Prince Andrew, were all three accused of child rape. During an interview with BBC reporter Emily Maitlis, the Royal brought Maxwell's name into the spotlight again when the journalist asked him about multiple allegations that he had sexual contact with underage Virginia Roberts Giuffre, who had been trafficked to him by Maxwell (BBC News 2019). In 2021, discussion over the pronunciation of Maxwell's first name surfaced when the disgraced heiress was found guilty on five charges related to child sex trafficking (*Wall Street Journal* 2021).

In contrast to the above-mentioned nominees, the remaining candidates for this category are single names. *Fauci*, for example, is the surname of the Chief Medical Advisor to the US President and the long-time Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) (NIAID 2021). Thanks to his role in fighting the COVID-19 crisis, *Fauci* has quite literally become a "household name". So much so that he can be unambiguously identified by everyday parlance using a single moniker: a phenomenon more commonly seen with popstars (e.g., *Adele*, *Bono*, *Cher*, *Elvis*, *Prince*, and *Sting*).

The last contender in this category, *Harry & Meghan*, also shares this onomastic distinction. Although it is commonplace for modern journalists to affectionately refer to younger members of the British Royal Family using just their first name (e.g., *William & Kate*; *Charles & Diana*) (Mc Cluskey 2019), in the case of *Harry & Meghan*, the casual compound may also reflect their historic transition from UK royalty to LA celebrity. After officially stepping down as senior members of the British monarchy to begin their married lives as private citizens, the couple no longer use the titles "His/Her Royal Highness" (Whitehead 2021). For official documentation, their new designations now are *Henry Charles Albert David Duke of Sussex* and *Meghan Duchess of Sussex*.²

After reviewing all of the candidates, the ANS members cast their ballots. As can be seen in the table below, in the first round of voting, the field split in half between winners and losers.

Table 1. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Rounds 1 & 2 for Personal Name of the Year 2021

Nominations	Percentage of Votes per Round	
	Round 1	Round 2
Donald Trump	0.00	
Elon Musk	4.76	
Fauci	23.81	45.45
Ghislaine Maxwell	9.52	
Harry & Meghan	4.76	
Karen	28.57	54.54
Simone Biles	9.52	
T****/T***p	19.05	

In the second round, a run-off was held between the two nominees with the highest percentage of ballots and a final victor emerged. Beating *Fauci* by ca. 12%, the winner of the 2021 personal name of the year category was *Karen* (54.54%).

Unlike the other contenders in this category, the nomination *Karen* is not the personal name of any one individual. Instead, this personal name was nominated for its increasing use as a term of derision for women—particularly but not exclusively White women—who are believed to be histrionic, manipulative, rude, and racist, irrespective of what their actual name might be. In fact, many of the women who are most strongly associated with this onomastic phenomenon are not in fact named *Karen* (Vera & Ly 2020).³ Nevertheless, hardly a day goes by when yet another anti-Karen meme is posted in the social media. As an ANS officer rightly cautioned, this international phenomenon has many negative consequences for people who carry this forename. Anti-Karen attitudes have become so widespread that many people with this name have found themselves the repeated target of verbal, emotional, and physical abuse. The damage caused by such name-based prejudice is not to be underestimated. Whether *Mohammed*, *Ignatz*, *Fatih*, or *Luigi*, *Sung-Yee*, *Karen*, *Keesha*, or *Ravi*, using personal names to pass judgement about another person's character is as discriminatory as using their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender, or nationality.

Place Names

Eight nominations were received for this category. Six named locations outside of the United States: (1.) *Nur-Sultan* ~ the capital of Kazakhstan which became the site of mass protests, arrests, and an undisclosed number of deaths (BBC News 2022); (2.) *La Palma* ~ the Canary Island where thousands of tourists and residents were forced to evacuate after the violent eruption of the volcanic ridge, *Cumbre Vijaya* 'old peak' (Kassam 2021); (3.) *Tokyo* ~ the national host of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games; and (4.) *Afghanistan* ~ the war-torn middle eastern country that descended into chaos as the US and other Western nations struggled to evacuate, leaving behind countless Afghanis and Western nationals desperate to escape the rapidly advancing Taliban forces. All of these toponyms labelled geographical regions that underwent radical changes in 2021. However, none of these place names demonstrated significant onomastic features.

Consequently, as shown in the table below, when it came time to vote, these nominees received a small number of ballots.

Table 2. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Place Name of the Year 2021

Nominations	Percentage of Votes
Afghanistan	8.33
Cuscatalan	0.00
La Palma	0.00
Nur-Sultan	0.00
Suez Canal	12.50
space	8.33
Tokyo	4.17
United States Capitol	66.67

As shown in Table 2 above, in the first round of voting, a single nomination easily surpassed the fifty percent threshold and was declared the category winner. The 2021 place name of the year was *United States Capitol*.

Like the other toponymic contenders, this place name was also the site of violent unrest in 2021. On the 6th of January 2021, a demonstration was in the US capital of Washington, D.C. to protest the results of the presidential election. The highlight of the rally came when the 45th US President entreated his followers to march with him to the US Capitol and to protest against the impending congressional ratification of the election results. Soon thereafter, what began as a legal political demonstration rapidly disintegrated into a deadly riot. Thousands of protestors stormed their way into the Ccapitol, while others outside the building erected gallows to hang former US Vice President Mike Pence (US Department of Justice 2022). Given the historical significance of this attack, it comes as little surprise that the 3,000 delegates of the American Dialect Society (ADS), the Sister Society of the American Name Society, selected the term “insurrectionist” as Word of the Year. As Dr. Ben Zimmer, Chair of the ADS New Words of the Year Committee, explained in a column for the “Wall Street Journal”,

More than a year after the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, the nation is still coming to grips with what happened that day. [...] At the time, words like coup, sedition, and riot were used to describe the disturbing events at the Capitol, but insurrection—a term for a violent attempt to take control of the government—is the one that many felt best encapsulates the threat to democracy experienced that day. The lasting effects of that insurrection will be felt for years to come. (2022, para 2)

Similar argumentation was used by ANS members who selected *United States Capitol* as the Place Name of the Year. However, the sociohistorical importance of this home-grown terrorism was not the only reason for the selection of this toponym. Also a decisive factor was prominence of this place name in public discourse and the enduring confusion over the words “capitol” and “capital”. In fact, the consternation over the two terms was so great Merriam Webster was compelled to release an explanatory article to explain the differential usage. The noun “capitol” is derived from the Latin word “capitolium” and has been used since the 17th century to refer to “a building in which a state legislative body meets”. By comparison, the term “capital” comes from the Latin term “caput” ‘head’ and refers to the “seat of government”. So, on January 6, 2021, after a Pro-Trump demonstration in the nation’s capital of Washington, D.C., a deadly insurrection erupted in which the congressional halls of the US Capitol were breached (United States Department of Justice 2021).

Trade Names

Of the eight nominees in this category, the majority were names of companies or products in the 2021 news: (1.) *Pfizer* ~ the often-mispronounced name of the biopharmaceutical company that successfully developed one of the world's first COVID-19 vaccines; (2.) *GameStop* ~ the commercial name of the international videogame retailer associated with a historic run on meme stocks by young stock investors (La Monica 2022); (3.) *Tesla* ~ the US American electric car company founded by Elon Musk; and (4.) *Amazon* ~ the trade name of the global e-commerce company, owned by Musk rival, Jeff Bezos. Although all these commercial names were innovative at the time of their creation, none were found to have undergone significant onomastic developments that would warrant their selection as trade name of the year 2021. However, two nominees did meet this criterion.

In the fall of 2021, one of the world's Big Five Tech Giants announced that it would be undergoing a major name change. *Facebook* was to become *Meta*. Facebook critics roundly scoffed at the announcement as onomastic white-washing. It certainly would not have been the first time that an industrial giant had changed its name in an attempt to wash itself clean from public scandals. For example, in 2012, the cancer support non-profit organization announced that it would be changing its name from the *Lance Armstrong Foundation* to the *Livestrong Foundation* after its founder and namesake—Lance Armstrong, the Tour De France legend—was charged with years of doping. According to industry experts, the Facebook name change was no different. As Professor Taina Bucher of the University of Oslo detailed in an article for *New Scientist*, the tech giant's name change was, in her opinion, simply an attempt to escape “all the bad press and political battles it is currently fighting” and is “a way to completely rebrand and start afresh, without changing much with the existing problematic products” (Stokel-Walker 2021, para 11).

However, in an interview with *The Verge*, Zuckerberg stated that such accusations were “ridiculous” (Canales 2021, para 6). As Zuckerberg went on to explain, the idea of changing the company's name had been on the table since 2014. The decision to implement the plan now was simply a natural evolution in the company's overall business plan. According to company press releases, *Meta* is the short form of *Metaverse*: a coin that combines the Latin prefix *meta-* meaning ‘transcending’ (e.g., metaphysics) with the clipping *-verse* from “universe”.⁴ According to statements released by the company, the movement from *Facebook* to *Meta* reflected Zuckerberg's long-term plan to create a platform where users can work and play in a hybrid virtual world (Yadav 2021). In Zuckerberg's Metaverse, the plan is to expand online social experiences into three dimensions or project them into the physical world (about.fb.com 2021). As shown in the table below, *Meta* received a large number of votes during the first round of voting and easily surpassed many top tech contenders like *Amazon*, *Bitcoin*, and *Tesla*.

Table 3. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Rounds 1 & 2 for Trade Name of the Year 2021

Nominations	Percentage of Votes per Round	
	Round 1	Round 2
Amazon	4.35	
Bitcoin	13.04	
Cyber Ninjas	26.09	60.87
GameStop	17.39	17.39
Meta	17.39	21.74
Pfizer	13.04	
PopIt!	4.35	
Tesla	4.35	

Despite Meta’s initial success, by the second round of voting, it lost by a wide margin to another futuristic coin: *Cyber Ninjas*. As NoY Chair Deborah Walker explains, this candidate is “the name of the firm that led the partisan 2020 election review in Maricopa County, Arizona”. For readers outside of the US, the name of this company first came into the headlines after the results of the presidential election were announced. In a shocking break with centuries of electoral history, the former President staunchly refused to accept his defeat. Instead, he claimed that a nefarious network of clandestine operators had stolen the election from him. According to him and his supporters, clear evidence for *The Big Steal* (or the *Big Lie* as others prefer to call it), could be found in states like Arizona, where election officials declared Biden had won by 0.4 percentage points. When subsequent analysis revealed that the key to Biden’s victory was Maricopa County, the Republican-controlled Arizona Senate demanded a recount. That review was conducted by the Florida-based internet security firm *Cyber Ninjas*.

The irony that in their effort to bring transparency and neutrality to the election process, the Republican-held senate had enlisted the assistance of a company named after a group of hired assassins was not lost on many. True to its name, *Cyber Ninjas* announced that it had indeed identified numerous irregularities in the Maricopa County counts (Fifield & Anglen 2020). It did not take long, however, for government authorities to completely debunk the company’s claims. As the Maricopa County Election Department announced in its official report (2022), “Our analysis found that *Cyber Ninjas* made faulty and inaccurate conclusions about more than 53,000 ballots in 22 different categories” (1). In January of 2022, the discredited *Cyber Ninjas* announced that it was going out of business (Murray 2022; Cooper 2022). In retrospect, the spectacularly public failure of the short-lived company rendered its corporate name hugely oxymoronic. Even some GOP insiders today admit that “[you can’t] help but chuckle at the *Cyber Ninjas*’ name” (Politico 2022). As seen in Table 3 below, although the *Cyber Ninjas* company proved to be one of the losers of 2021, the name was declared the winner of ANS Trade Name of Year.

Artistic Name

In this category, voters could pick from six different nominees: *Seong Gi-hun & Kang Sae-bok*; *Spider-Man*; *Squid Game*; *Yellowstone*; *Dexter*; and *cool girl*. Despite that variety, as illustrated in the table below, after only one round of voting, a clear winner emerged.

Table 4. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Trade Name of the Year 2021

Nomination	Percentage of Votes
cool girl	25.00
Dexter	0.00
Seong Gi-hun & Kang Sae-bok	5.00
Spider-Man	0.00
Squid Game	65.00
Yellowstone	5.00

Securing 65.00% of the ballots, *Squid Game* is the name of the blockbuster film produced by Netflix, a US American-based subscription streaming service and production company. Written in 2009 by South Korean playwright and director, Hwang Dong-hyuk, “*Squid Game*” is a chilling survival drama in which viewers (both inside and outside of the film) watch as men and women compete against one another in a deadly series of childhood games. While the winners of each round are allowed to compete another day for the fabulous cash prize, the losers either die or are murdered, before their organs are harvested and sold by the game organizers.

Just weeks after its release, the dystopian South Korean drama became Netflix’s biggest series “reaching 142 million households globally and becoming the first to surpass 100 million views” (White 2021, para 2). The global popularity of the film is also reflected in the fact that *Squid Game* was one of the top ten google searches for the year 2021 (Bennet 2021), a distinction no other NoY nominees shared in 2021. This phenomenal success came as a surprise to many, including the film’s own writer. As Dong-hyuk revealed, for years his screenplay had been rejected by executives who claimed that his story was simply too disturbing and

“violent to be commercially viable” (Verhoeven 2021, para 2). That was long before COVID-19. As Dong-hyuk described in an interview with the “Hollywood Reporter”, after the world was hit with a global deadly pandemic, his script was no longer perceived as “absurd”. Part of the secret of the film’s international success also no doubt lies in the fact that the games played are, with slight variations, familiar to viewers all over the world. In fact, *Squid Game* is not only the name of the film; it is also the name of an authentic game played by children in South Korean playgrounds. Moreover, in a cycle where fiction imitates life and reality mirrors fantasy, since the film’s release, it has been reported that children have begun to play violent versions of Netflix’s “Squid Game” (Mayer 2021; Baker, 2021). Thus, the name has multiple references, both inside and outside of the world of cinema.⁵

E-Names

Of the seven names nominated for this category, three were candidates for at least one of the above-mentioned categories (*Karen*, *Meta*, and *Spider-Man*). This overlap may well reflect the fact that e-names often refer to entities that straddle both the virtual and real worlds. An excellent example here is the nomination *NFT*, the abbreviation for “non-fungible token”. Explained briefly, an NFT refers to a unit of data that is stored on a cryptographically linked list of records organized and stored on a blockchain. These units are used to provide proof of authenticity and/or ownership for digitalized audio(-visual) property such as photographs, artwork, and music. As digital art increases in popularity, the market has seen an explosion in the value of NFTs. Since November 2017, approximately 174 million US dollars have been spent in purchasing NFTs. From an onomastic point of view, what is unique about this e-name is the speed with which this abbreviation has established itself in the English lexicon. It has a singular and plural form and has already appeared in composites such as *NFTP*, a non-fungible toilet paper piece which reportedly “sold out in minutes” (Conti & Schmidt 2021, para 20). Although some economists remain sceptical about the longevity of NFTs, as ANS Secretary, Star Vanguri, quipped, if nothing else, the prominence of the name “has taught many people the word ‘fungible’” (ANS-NoY 2021, 11:27).⁶

Another rising e-star that received a nomination was *Pokimane*, the online name of Imane Anys, the 25-year-old female gaming streamer who reached platinum rank in the game “League of Legends”. In 2022, she was estimated to have 8.5 million followers. The popular gamer’s online moniker is a clever composite of the product name *Pokemon*—itself a morphophonological synthesis of *pocket* and *monsters*—and her first name *Imane*. Today, *Pokimane* is considered one of the top female streamers on the Twitch video streaming platform. The road to this recognition was far from easy. As A. Prince remarked during the ANS NoY discussion, *Pokimane* “became a lightning rod for women in the online game community” (ANS-NoY 2021, 05:06:33). As many insiders have revealed, the world of e-gaming is filled with real-life misogyny. In a recent e-sport investigation, it was determined, for example, that almost half of all women and girl gamers had been the target of online gender discrimination (Gardner 2021). In June of 2020 alone, two hundred charges of sexual misconduct were lodged against gamers (*Zenerations* 2021). “Sexism against women is an industry problem in video game communities, ranging from overly sexualized depictions of women in games to online harassment and threats” (*Zenerations* 20210, para 1). Given this threatening environment, “many female gamers disguise their identities, change their profiles and characters to appear neutral or masculine” (Gardner 2021, para 2). One of the most common ways of hiding one’s female identity is to avoid selecting an online name that could be associated as feminine (Crawley & Webb 2021). The fact that *Pokimane* selected a name that outed her gender identity is both courageous and novel. Despite these factors, as shown below, *Pokimane* only received a small proportion of the votes cast for this category.

Table 5. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Rounds 1 and 2 for E-Name of the Year 2021

Nomination	Percentage of Votes per Round	
	Round 1	Round 2
Karen	5.00	
Spider-Man	0.00	
#FreeBritney	35.00	59.09
Meta	0.00	
NFT	25.00	
r/antiwork	30.00	40.91
Pokimane	5.00	

As shown above, e-name nominee associated with female emancipation was chosen as the category winner: #FreeBritney. This hashtag was first devised in 2008 by Britney Spears fans in support of the singer’s legal battle to terminate her father’s appointment as her legal conservator. After the release of the Emmy-nominated documentary film “Framing Britney Spears”, the #FreeBritney protest gained critical momentum from the #MeToo movement (Chan 2021). The documentary helped bring to light how invasive and restrictive conservatorships can be. In Ms. Spears’ case that control included placing surveillance cameras throughout her home and prohibiting the singer from making her reproductive decisions. Once vilified by Ms. Spears’ father and former conservator as a group of “conspiracy theorists” (Kaufman 2020), #FreeBritney successfully sparked a nation-wide discussion over conservatorship and guardianship laws that systematically abridge the civil rights of people with cognitive, psychological, and/or physical disabilities (Van Voris, Ballentine, & Wells, 2021). The e-name #FreeBritney even served as the onomastic inspiration for a congressional bill introduced to the US House of Representatives in July 2021. Called the *F.R.E.E. Act or Freedom and Right to Emancipate from Exploitation Act*, H.R. 4545 is designed to better protect the rights of adults who are placed under a legal guardianship or conservatorship (US House of Representatives 2021).

#FreeBritney was not the only e-name tied to a real-world social movement. With the emergence of COVID-19, large segments of the US American workforce came to a standstill as health restrictions required people to radically reduce their social contacts. In the economic crisis that followed, millions of employees were either fired or quit. Though devastating, many economists optimistically predicted that as soon as effective vaccines arrived and the proportion of immunized workers increased, the labor market would bounce back as people returned to work. However, just the opposite has occurred. On the social media website Reddit, this movement was visible in the proliferation of chat groups where users discussed their disinterest in returning to work. The name for this “sub-reddit” is *r/antiwork*. The productivity and morphology of this e-name combined with its unique morphological composition made it particularly intriguing and earned it a place in the category run-off. However, as shown in the table above, this name only garnered enough votes to earn it second place in the two-way run-off.

Miscellaneous

Historically, the nominations for this category represent a broad spectrum of name types. This year, however, the majority of these candidates fell into one of two thematic categories. In on sub-category, 45% of the nominations were directly related to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Along with *Omicron* and *Delta*, there was also the relative newcomer *flurona*. Linguistically, this name is a composite of two elements: (1.) the “flu-”, a 19th century shortening of “influenza, and (2.) “-ona”, a clipping from “corona”. Medically, *flurona* does not refer to a new viral variant, but to an, as yet, relatively rare condition in which patients are “co-infected” with both the influenza and corona viruses (Osiadacz 2022, para 2). Another nomination belonging to this thematic sub-set was *Miss Rona*, an irreverent name for the COVID-19 coronavirus which was particularly popular amongst younger speakers in the US at the start of the pandemic (Davis 2020).

The second major theme in the miscellaneous category was US politics. Included in this sub-grouping were the following: (1.) *Oath Keeper* ~ the name of one of the largest right-wing extremist paramilitary groups active in the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center, SPLC); (2.) the *Heartbeat Act*, the name of the 2021 Texas legislation which officially bans all abortions after 6 weeks of pregnancy, the point at which cardiac activity may be detected; and (3.) *CRT* ~ a popular abbreviation for the full-term *Critical Race Theory*.

In comparison to all of the other nominees in this category, *CRT* is perhaps the hardest to define. Originally, the name was coined in the 1980s by African-American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who articulated a theoretical framework for examining race as a societal construct that has been historically used to reinforce power differentials and legal inequities. For more than four decades, debates over this postmodernist framework have almost exclusively taken place between academic scholars in higher education. Over the past year, however, school board meetings have become a popular battleground over the perceived use of Critical Race Theory in primary and secondary school curricula. However, as many academics have observed, what lay people mean when they use the name *CRT* often has little or nothing to do with the original meaning of the academic construct (Ray & Gibbons 2021). As is often the case in politicized debates, the denotative and connotative meanings ascribed a term often vary radically with the political perspective of the speakers. The sociopragmatic feature combined with the proliferation of *CRT* across various communicative domains were key to this political nomination being selected over one of the many COVID-19 nominees as the miscellaneous name of the year 2021. In the table below, the election results for this category are displayed.

Table 6. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Rounds 1 & 2 for E-Name of the Year 2021

Nominations	Percentage of Votes per Round	
	Round 1	Round 2
Atmospheric River	4.76	
Bing Dwen Dwen	0.00	
CRT	42.86	59.09
flurona	9.52	
Heartbeat Act	0.00	
Ida (the hurricane)	14.29	
Miss Rona	4.76	
Oath Keepers	0.00	
Omicron/Delta/Delta & Omicron	23.81	40.91

Overall Winner

As per ANS tradition, the winners of each onomastic category automatically became contenders for the overall 2021 Name of the Year. This means for 2021, *Karen*, *United States Capitol*, *Cyber Ninjas*, *Squid Game*, *#Free Britney*, and *CRT* were all considered. However, as displayed in the table below, none of these category winners took the title.

Table 7. ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Rounds 1 & 2 for Overall Name of the Year 2021

Nominations	Percentage of Votes per Round	
	Round 1	Round 2
CRT	5.00	
Cyber Ninjas	30.00	21.05
#FreeBritney	5.00	
Karen	10.00	
Squid Game	0.00	
United States Capitol	10.00	
Great Resignation	40.00	78.95

The overall winner was an onomastic outsider submitted from the floor by former ANS President and long-time NoY Chair, Dr. Cleve Evans. Evan’s winning nomination was *Great Resignation*. Semantically related to *r/antiwork*, the *Great Resignation* refers to the socioeconomic phenomenon in which millions of US workers have decided against returning to their previous pre-pandemic positions, deciding instead to either seek new jobs or leave the workforce altogether (Leonhardt 2022). According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, in July 2021 alone, approximately four million US Americans voluntarily left their jobs. For many politicians and economists, this ongoing trend was entirely unexpected. However, at least one market expert saw the change coming.

In a 2021 interview with *Bloomberg Business Week*, Texas A & M Professor of Management, Anthony Klotz, correctly prognosticated that a record number of US employees would use the pandemic lockdown to rethink their lives: “From organizational research,” Klotz explained, “we know that when human beings come into contact with death and illness in their lives, it causes them to take a step back and ask existential questions” (Kaplan 2021, para 15). According to the professor, for many US American workers, that period of introspection would result in feelings of “great resignation” that could later lead to major life changes such as quitting unsatisfying jobs. Klotz’s prediction proved one hundred percent accurate. Soon after the interview was published, the market began to see signs of Klotz’s prediction. Soon thereafter, his description “great resignation” transformed into the *Great Resignation* and was used to label the anti-work movement.

What started in the United States has also had an effect in several other industrial countries around the world (Al Jazeera 2022; Cohen 2021; Cook 2021; Gandhi & Robinson 2021; Llach 2021). Accompanying this pandemic economic trend is the onomastic migrant *Great Resignation*. As Jeónimo Maillo of the San Pablo University in Madrid, Spain, observes, the people’s priorities have undergone a cultural shift since the pandemic. “People are now questioning whether work should play the role it had before” (LLach 2021). The emergence of *The Great Resignation* in international lexicons is a reflection of this cultural shift in awareness. Helping to drive the spread of this name is, without doubt, the polysemy of the term “resignation”. On the one hand, the noun can be used to describe the act of deliberately giving up, “especially, to renounce (something as a right or position)” (Merriam Webster). On the other hand, resignation may refer to the state of feeling or showing acceptance of something “that unwarranted or unplanned will happen or cannot be changed” (Merriam Webster). By combining the intransitive and transitive meanings of “to be resigned” and “to resign”, *The Great Resignation* simultaneously expresses both the cause and effect of what is also called *The Big Quit*.

Another probable reason for the appeal of the name *The Great Resignation* is its obvious yet ominous link to *The Great Depression*—when record-breaking increases in unemployment and decreases in production decimated the world economy during the 1930s. In the United States, that terrifying socioeconomic crisis finally came to an end when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the economic stimulus program called “The New Deal”. Nearly a century later, in hopes of bringing an end to the current economic crisis, President Biden has attempted to pass a modern legislative agenda which has been

nicknamed “the *Green New Deal*” (Bump 2021). Whether or not this plan has the power to stop the *Great Resignation* before it becomes a second Great Depression remains to be seen. However, what was abundantly clear during the ANS deliberations was the power of this nominee to encapsulate the events of 2021. Receiving 78.95% of the ballots, *The Great Resignation* beat *Cyber Ninjas* to win the title “Name of the Year 2021” hands-down.

Endnotes

¹ For a list of past category winners, see the American Name Society website: <https://www.americannamesociety.org/about/names-of-the-year/>

² According to the official website of the British Royal family, it is commonplace for reference to the members of the British royal family to be made without a surname. “The royals”, the site explains, “are typically so well known that they don’t need a last name to be recognized”. This does not mean that the British Royal family does not have a surname, however. The sitting family has in fact a double surname *Mountbatten-Windsor*. In the spring of 2021, the couple became the center of onomastic consternation yet again when copies of their newborn daughter’s birth certificate became public. In the space reserved for the mother’s name, Meghan used her birth name *Rachel Markle* and not *Mountbatten-Windsor*; and in the space for the father’s name, Prince Harry “is listed as “The Duke of Sussex, followed by ‘HRH’” despite a Palace announcement that the title “HRH” was no longer to be used for the two (Troy-Pryde 2021, para 6).

³ An excellent example here is Amy Cooper, a White woman who called the police to report that she was being assaulted by a Black man who was bird-watching at the time. After a video revealed that at the time of the Cooper’s frantic call, she was not in fact being attacked, Cooper was frequently referred to in the USA Media as *Central Park Karen* (Vera and Ly 2020).

⁴ According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, the term *metaverse* was originally coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 novel *Snow Crash*. In Stephenson’s work, the term was used for a computer-generated universe.

⁵ The onomastic prominence of the film can also be seen in the fact that it yielded three of the seven nominations for artistic name of the year 2021: one for the name of the film and two for the names of the main characters, *Seong gi-hun* and *Kang Sae-bok*.

⁶ According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, “fungible” is a term used to describe “something (such as money or a commodity) of such a nature that one part or quantity may be replaced by another equal part of quantity in paying a debt or settling an account”.

⁷ Although the paramilitary organization has been in existence since 2009, the group and their name dominated the media spotlight when leaders of the group participated in the attack against the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. According to their website, their organizational name is rather ironically derived from their collective promise to “defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic” (Oathkeepers.org). This pledge, as they emphasize themselves, does not extend to elected political leaders.

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