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Name of the Year Report 2024

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Summary

On January 9, 2025, the American Name Society convened a special session to conduct the Name of the Year (NoY) election. The online deliberation was chaired by Name of the Year Coordinator, Laurel Sutton, and the new ANS President, Dr. Brandon Simonson. The report provides a detailed summation of the Name of the Year election results and gives background information about the decision-making process.

Introduction

On January 9, 2025, during a special session of the American Name Society, a group of name scholars and enthusiasts convened to select the Names of the Year for 2024. As per ANS tradition, nominations were solicited from the onomastic and linguistic communities, as well as the general public. There are six categories for nominations: Personal Names, Place Names, Brand Names, Artistic/Literary Names, E-Names, and Miscellaneous. In addition to the nominations received in advance of the meeting, during the deliberations, nominations from the floor were also accepted by the Name of the Year Coordinator and Immediate ANS Past President, Laurel Sutton. After all nominations were received, deliberations were conducted over the relative merits of each onomastic candidate (e.g., innovative morphology or unusual orthography; demonstrated lexical productivity; high rates of recognition and/or broad range of usage; assessed referential significance for the year of nomination). The popularity or infamy of the entity named is not a point of consideration during the deliberation process.

Once the discussions had subsided, the attendees were asked to cast their vote. The online election was conducted by the incoming ANS President, Dr. Brandon Simonson, who announced the results in real time. In cases where no nomination received a clear majority of the votes cast, a run-off election was conducted. The winners of each category and last-minute floor nominations were then considered for the title of “Overall Name of the Year”. In this report, the election results of the individual onomastic categories as well as the arguments for and against many of the leading nominations are presented. For ease of discussion, the results are presented by category.

Category Winners

Personal Names

One of the most popular fields of research in onomastics is anthroponymy. Not surprisingly then, the ANS received a large number of nominations for this category. To begin with, those nominations which did not meet the prerequisite onomastic selection criteria were removed from the list. The remaining list of candidates included the following top contenders: (1) *Biles*, the surname of multi-Olympic Gold medalist Simone Biles, whose uncommon artistry and athleticism resulted in her innovating a recording-breaking number of five different original gymnastic skills which all carry her name (O’Kane 2024); (2) *Giséle Pelicot*, the first and last name of a French woman, whose husband drugged her and arranged for men across Europe to rape her over many years, before his crimes were discovered. During the ensuing trial, Ms. Pelicot insisted on her full name being used instead of a pseudonym like *Jane Doe*, saying that it was not she but the rapists who had reason to hide in shame (Chrisafis 2024) ²; (3) *Kamala*, the first name of the US Vice President Kamala Harris who became a leading contender to become the first female US President; (4) *Kennedy*, a surname once associated with a political dynasty of leaders within the Democratic Party, until the emergence of the one-time Republican Presidential Candidate, RFK, Jr.; (5) *Saltanat*, the first name of Saltanat Nukenova, whose murder helped to highlight domestic violence in Kazakhstan, where Human Rights Watch estimates that approximately “80 women die annually from domestic violence [. . .] while 150 women sustain injuries amounting to grievous bodily harm and more than 4,000 incur [non-grievous] bodily harm” (Kim 2024, para. 3); and (6) *Raygun*, the performance moniker for the Australian breakdancer Rachel Gunn [*Rachel + Gunn* → *Raygun*], who both thrilled and angered the world during the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. After discussing the relative linguistic merits of the candidates, a vote was taken and a clear winner emerged. Securing third place with 12.50% of the votes was *Biles*; coming in second with 25.00% was *Giséle Pelicot*; and taking the number one

spot was *Kamala* with 43.75% of the vote. There were several factors which made *Kamala* the number one choice for the 2024 Personal Name of the Year.

Aside from its obvious prominence in US public discourse, this name has also helped increase public awareness of and sensitivity to the harm inflicted by the repeated and intended mispronunciation of a person's name. This form of onomastic discrimination was repeatedly displayed in the political speeches of the then Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, who proudly crowed to a crowd of supporters: "I couldn't care less if I mispronounce it. I couldn't care less". (NPR 2024, para. 18). The insistence that one is entitled to disregard the correct pronunciation of another person's name is not only a clear sign of personal disdain and disrespect. As Joe W. Bowers, Jr. of the California Black Media explained in an opinion piece for the Observer:

Mispronouncing Kamala Harris's first name isn't a just a harmless mistake; it's a reflection of a deeper issue [. . .] Harris, as the first female Vice President of the United States, carries a first name that is rooted in her Indian cultural heritage passed down from her mother, Shyamala Gopalan [. . .] So, when so-called leader can't be bothered to say her name correctly, it signals a disregard for the significance of that heritage, as well as a lack of commitment to understanding and representing all Americans. (2024)

However, as the discussions over the (mis)pronunciation of the Vice President's first name brought to light, this form of linguistic disparagement is not one that only people in the media undergo (Svensson 2022). It is a common experience shared by many marginalized communities and individuals (Enriquez Duque 2023; Nicholson and Di Mei 2020). As Lipski (1976) explains, intentional mispronunciation may be used with the "desire to degrade, belittle, or ridicule" (113). Rather than ignoring this verbal aggression, the Vice President and her campaign developed many innovative onomastic strategies which utilized her first name. An excellent example was "Yes we Kam!" which played on the wildly successful campaign slogan of President Barack Obama: "Yes we Can!". Another social issue which was highlighted by the 2024 Personal Name Winner was the tendency of media to refer to the Vice President by her first name, while male contenders for the highest elected office in the country were more often referred to using either their last name or title and last name. For many observers, this onomastic difference revealed deeply ingrained prejudices which invite or permit non-males to be afforded a lower level of respect.

Place Names

Toponymy is another major sub-division of onomastic research which often garners a relatively large set of nominations. This year was quite different, however. Initially, only one place name was received by the nomination deadline. That toponym was *Denali*, the original Indigenous name of the US National Park and Preserve and Mountain. The original name was restored in 2015 during the Obama administration. However, throughout 2024, the then Republican Presidential nominee threatened to change the toponym back again to *McKinley*, despite strong protests from Alaska's state representatives and many decades of US government place naming policies. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska issued a statement in response to the threat to once again strip the name Denali: "You can't improve upon the name that Alaska's Koyukon Athabascans bestowed on North America's tallest peak, Denali, the Great One". (Rosen 2024, para. 8). Based on a recent state poll, the majority of Alaskans agree. By more than two-to-one, Alaskan residents opposed changing the name *Denali* (Sabbatini 2025). The mountain at the center of the newly revived dispute was given the name *Mt. McKinley* in 1917 by a gold prospector who wanted to honor the then Republican presidential nominee. On January 20, 2025, on the day of the Presidential inauguration, the nation watched the signing of an executive order entitled: "Restoring Names that Honor American Greatness". According to this edict, the name of the mountain is to revert again to *Mount McKinley* (White House 2025).

William McKinley served as US President from 1897 to 1901, until his assassination on September 14, 1901. After a state funeral, McKinley's body was laid to rest in a domed mausoleum located in the President's hometown of Canton, Ohio (National Park Service n.d.) Given McKinley's purported love of his home state, it seems fitting that the 2024 Winner of the Place Name of the Year Winner, earning 88.89% of the votes, was none other than *Ohio*.

The name of the state is derived from the Seneca word "ohi:yo" meaning "good river". The Buckeye state—where according to the official state slogan "All things are possible, with God" — has a reputation for the "unusual". In 2016, the name first became synonymous among Generations Z and Alpha for anything odd and the surreal. By 2022, the association had gone viral with countless videos profiling odd and unexpectedly terrifying situations under the caption "Only in Ohio". According to research conducted by Forbes magazine, between July 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024, Ohio memes on social media grew some 193%. By July 2024, there were 10.2 million likes, comments, and shares associated with an Ohio meme (Johnson 2024). There is no

evidence that the trend is ebbing. The toponym has already generated a string of meme themes (e.g., Only in Ohio, Can't Even X in Ohio, and Swag like Ohio).

Brand Name

This category includes the names of products, companies, organizations, and businesses (both for-profit and non-profit). The following six different candidates were found to meet the above-mentioned onomastic selection criteria: (1) *Ozempic*; (2) *ChatGPT*; (3) *Walmart*; (4) *the Department of Government Efficiency*; (5) *CrowdStrike*; and (6) *Eras Tour*. Of these candidates, there were two that had been nominated in years past. The first was *Eras Tour*, the name of Taylor Swift's 21-month music extravaganza which yielded just over 2 billion US dollars and earned Swift the title of the world's highest grossing concert performer on record, beating out other concert juggernauts such as the Rolling Stones, Coldplay, U2, Beyoncé, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers (Sisario 2024). The second returning nomination was *ChatGPT*, the generative artificial intelligence chatbot which was launched in 2022 by the tech company Open AI and was selected as Brand Name of the Year in 2023 (Nick 2023). However, for 2024, *ChatGPT* faced stiff competition from the two newcomers to the field. Nominated from the floor was *Wrapped*.

This trademarked name was first launched by the music streaming company Spotify in 2016 and is the name for a marketing service that allows users to compare their annual listening activity (Georgi 2024). Both the service and the name have since been adopted by other companies, such as Duolingo and Reddit. The second onomastic newcomer for this category was *Ozempic*. Developed originally by the Danish-based pharmaceutical company NovoNordisk, as an injectable anti-diabetic medication, the drug is now commonly used by non-diabetics for weight loss. Although Novo Nordisk also released *Wegovy*, a product containing the semaglutide which was specifically for the cosmetic market, this brand name has proven unable to establish itself against *Ozempic*. For many language users, the name *Ozempic* has become synonymous with weight loss medications. So much so that it may well join the ranks of other brand names turned generic like *Kleenex* for facial tissues, *Band Aid* for adhesive bandages, and *Xerox*, *Google*, *Hoover* (Abadi 2018; Desai and Rierson 2007; Wadhwa 2022; Dictionary.com).

Table 1: Common Words Derived from Famous Brandnames that Became Generic

Aspirin	Flip Flop	Jeep	Ping-Pong	Rollerblade	Tarmac
Astro Turf	Frisbee	Jet Ski	Plexiglass	SaranWrap	Teflon
Band Aid	Granola	Kool Aid	Popsicle	Styrofoam	Trampoline
Bubble Wrap	Hula Hoop	Mace	Post-it	Superglue	Velcro
Escalator	Jacuzzi	Magic Marker	Q-Tip	Taser	Walkman

Each of the brandnames became so popular that they were soon adopted as the generic name for an entire class of products, irrespective of the maker. So much so that it is nearly impossible to think of another name for these household items without resorting to something like "thingamegig", "thingy", "whosamawhatchit", or simply "THAT!". When this happens the strength of the original brand name essentially dies as a function of its own phenomenal success. For that reason, this process is often referred to "genericide"³ and is said to occur when a brandname no longer refers to the specific individual product or service it was originally designed to identify, but is used by consumers to refer to any brand within an entire class of goods or services (Dinwoodie and Janis 2008).

The power of *Ozempic* is also demonstrated by the fact that the name has already generated a number of phrases such as "Ozempic face", "Ozempic Olympics", "Budget Ozempic"⁴, and "Ozempic hedge" (Fiore 2024; Pasque 2023; Urban Dictionary n.d.). After reviewing each of the candidates, the votes were cast, and once again *Ozempic* emerged the winner, garnering nearly twice as many votes as the nomination in second place; *Ozempic* earned 58.82% of the votes, while *ChatGPT* earned on 23.3%, and *Wrapped* came in third with 17.65%.

Artistic/Literary Names

In comparison, to years past, the ANS received many strong contenders for the category of literary onomastics. The nominations came from a broad range of the arts. From cinema, there was *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, the title of the 2024 sequel to Tim Burton's 1988 cult classic. As one name expert remarked, the choice of name is especially clever, as it forces people to utter the very name that should not be said lest the mischievous character appear.

From politics came the name *brat*. Originally featured as the title of Charli XCX's popular album, the name later appeared in the phrase "Brat Summer", a term used to signify the season as a time of female strength and empowerment. *Brat* was also embraced by Vice President Kamala Harris's presidential campaign (Clarke-Billings 2024). In 2024, *Collins Dictionary* announced "brat" as its 2024 word of the year, defining it as "characterized by a confident, independent, and hedonistic attitude".

Representing the field of technology came a name from the next AI revolution. Released by OpenAI *Sora* allows users to generate video clips from short texts prompts. The name is based on the Japanese word meaning "sky". (Metz 2024). The fact that once again a tech company had selected a name that has phonological and morphological features often associated with female names was the matter of much debate

From the world of music, there was *Diddy*, one of the many monikers chosen by the rapper, Sean Combs. Aside from the nicknames *Swag*, *Love*, and *Brother Love*, the name *Diddy* is one of an assortment of derivatives over the years. Examples include *Puff*, which the rapper is believed to have begun using professionally (ca. 1990)⁵; followed by *Puffy* which was inaugurated (ca. 1995); then *Puff Daddy* (ca. 1996); *P. Diddy*, 2001; *Diddy*, 2005 and 2022; *Brother Love* and *Love*, 2021 (Massabrook 2022). The majority of these names are derivatives of the original stage name *Puff Daddy*. After Comb's arrest in 2024, on charges of assault, rape, illegal drugs, and trafficking, Diddy became the basis for a number of memes and word plays in African American English including *No Diddy*, *Did-he-do-it*, *The Diddler*.

From the world of literature came the nomination *James*, the title of a 2024 novel by Percival Everett. The winner of the National Book Award, the book retells the story of Mark Twain's classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, from the perspective of the African American main character, whom his White enslavers call *Jim*. In protest against this onomastic emasculation, the main character rejects this slave name and goes by the name *James* instead. The fact that he does not have a surname stands as a reminder of the violently severed family ties caused by US slavery⁶.

The large number and variety of options available made it necessary to conduct two separate rounds of voting to declare a winner. In the first, *Sora* secured 11.76% of the votes, *Diddy* 17.65%, and *Brat* and *James* tied for first place with each receiving 29.41% of the votes. In the second round, *James* and *brat* went up against one another; and in the end, the charactonym *James* prevailed with 58.82% of the vote, and *Brat* received a respectable 41.18%.

E-Names

Despite the spectacular gains that have been made in technology and the prominence of issues like TikTok in the national news, this category received a relatively small assortment of nominations. Aside from nominations that had appeared in years previous (e.g., *ChatGPT* and *Discord*, the name of the gaming platform which generated phrases like "Discord Server" and "Discord Community"), the committee only received a few new names to consider. These were *Wrapped*, which was also nominated for brand name of the year 2024; *Yunga*, the call sign name of the 19-year-old female drone operator in the Ukrainian Army; and *BlueSky*, the open, decentralized social media network which has become an increasingly popular alternative for a growing number of users who have fled sites like Twitter and Facebook. In November 2024, the site reportedly had 13 million users (BlueSky 2024). While *BlueSky* received 29.41% of the votes, the winner of the e-name category amassed nearly twice that percentage. Obtaining 58.82% of the vote, *Wrapped* was named the category winner.

Miscellaneous

This category, as the name implies, is for those submissions which do not fit neatly into any of the other groupings. As a result, the nominations in this group often represent a wide variety of name types. This year, along with the above-mentioned nomination of *brat*, the top candidates for this category included the following: (1) *name peptide*, the set of nomenclature used for amino acid chains bonded together by peptides; (2) *Moo Deng*, the name of an impossibly cute baby hippo who was born in the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand and received her name through crowd-sourcing, a popular strategy used by zoos to garner public interest and much-needed financial support; (3) *Project 2025*, the cryptic name of the highly controversial political agenda published by the Heritage Foundation and considered by many to be a harbinger of the policy agenda for the then President Elect Trump (Frank 2025)⁷; (4) *UAP*, the abbreviation for the full term

“Unidentified Aerial Phenomena”⁸, the increasingly preferred term for *UFO*, which carries many negative associations of pseudoscientific theories involving government conspiracy (NASA 2023; Becket 2023); (5) and *Qinwen*, the name of *Zheng Qinwen*, the enormously popular professional Chinese tennis player who won the Gold Medal in Women’s Singles at the 2024 Paris Olympics (Women’s Tennis Association n.d.). The similarities between the pronunciation of her name in Chinese and the English terms “queen” and “win” have generated a number of clever wordplays as nicknames for the tennis champion (e.g., “Queen Win” and “Queen Wen”) (Wang 2024).

Given the large number and variety of nominations, it is not surprising that more than one round of voting was needed to determine the winner. In the first round, the following results were obtained: tied for third place with 11.76% of the vote each were *Qinwen/Queen Wen/Queen Win* and *UAP*; in second place was *Project 2025* with 17.65% of the vote; and tied for first place were *brat* and *Moo Deng*, each earning 29.41%. In the second round of voting, *brat* was crowned the winner with 68.75% of the vote and *Moo Deng* came in a distant second with only 31.25%.

As explained above, to determine the Overall Winner of the Name of the Year Vote for 2024, each of the category winners were pitted against one another. In the table below, each one of the final contestants are displayed.

Table 2: Nominations Considered for the Selection of the 2024 Overall NoY Winner

NoY Category	Category Winners 2024
Personal Name of the Year	Kamala
Place Name of the Year	Ohio
Brand Name of the Year	Ozempic
E-Name of the Year	Wrapped
Artistic/Literary Name of the Year	James
Miscellaneous Name of the Year	Brat

In reviewing each of the candidates, it was found that some of the terms had a very high likelihood of declining in prominence within a relatively short period of time. This fate is particularly common for innovative applications of terms that have a standard meaning. In a certain sense, the popularity of this novel uses also tends to spell their premature death, as speakers and organizations that once embraced them for their innovation soon replace them with other terms that are less common and more unique. The limited longevity of these terms was underscored by the fact that few of these above names had demonstrated productivity or popularity outside of their original context or set of speakers. Taking those factors into consideration, in just one round of voting, it became relatively easy to determine a winner. In third place was *brat* which received 18.75% of the votes; and in second place was *Kamala*, which received 25.00%. In first place, the nomination which earned a commanding 56.25% of the votes, and was designated the 2024 Overall Name of the Year was *Ozempic*.

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Notes on the Contributor

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