Naming Expeditor: Reimagining Institutional Naming System at Harvard

Citation

Permanent link
https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37376055

Terms of Use
This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA

Share Your Story
The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Submit a story.

Accessibility
Naming Expeditor: 
Reimagining Institutional Naming System at Harvard

By

Yuanlu Peng

Bachelor of Architecture, Tianjin University, 2020

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Design Studies
Art, Design, and Public Domain

At the Harvard University Graduate School of Design

May, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by Yuanlu Peng

The author hereby grants Harvard University permission to reproduce and distribute copies of this Final Project, in whole or in part for educational purposes.

Signature of the Author _________________________________________________________________

Yuanlu Peng

Your name
Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Certified by _________________________________________________________________

Your Advisor
Advisor’s title
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
Naming Expeditor:  
Reimagining Institutional Naming System at Harvard

200 words Abstract:

Taking naming as not a product but a meaning-constructive process, not a single dominant narrative but an iterating device in public realm, the “Naming Expeditor” project seeks to demystify the institutional process and principles of naming (including denaming and renaming) at Harvard University through research on the historical archives and contemporary testimonies and propose potential interventions to this institutional naming system enrooted in a long philanthropic tradition. By drawing on theories and practices at the intersection of art and activism, the project explores alternative channels, forms, and tools in reimagining a collective naming process and system as a device to amplify community voices with more awareness, democracy, and participation. The project's final deliverable contains an image essay analyzing the current institutional naming system at Harvard, a zine explaining the proposal of an agency named "Naming Expeditor" and related strategies, as well as a live performance, aiming to display the power behind the texts in the existing institutional naming system, and evoke public discussion and actions in the broader community.

Context

How names play a role in shaping our collective imagination and understanding of history? From the very beginning, when European powers colonized other parts of the world, they often imposed their own language, culture, and beliefs on the indigenous by changing the names and erasing the existing identities. It is a deliberate strategy employed by colonizers to assert control, undermine indigenous cultures, and enforce their dominance, which had profound and lasting effects on indigenous communities, contributing to the loss of cultural heritage, identity, and connection to their lands.
Conversely, naming also played a role in resistance and liberation movements. The process of reclaiming indigenous names then became an important aspect of indigenous rights and decolonization efforts. In the past century, movements on removing Confederate monuments and renaming spaces, schools, that honor Confederate leaders, who fought to uphold slavery and white supremacy. Later it expanded to include renaming institutions and other cultural entities that are named after individuals whose legacy was an oppression of marginalized groups. In April 2019, the Cambridge City Council passed a policy order seeking a full accounting of streets, schools, and public buildings named in honor of those involved in slave trade, with the goal of renaming them.

**Literature Review**

The project's theoretical base lies in the understanding of the nature of naming as a knowledge-producing process and names as symbols of culture, values, and power. These scholars explained how names was and has always been a means for institutions to exercise and consolidate power, the importance of developing critical reflection and dialogue to challenge the dominant values and beliefs behind the names, and how naming-related actions should take place in the public realm and involves plurality in decision-making processes.

Michel Foucault uncovers the relationship between knowledge and power as inseparable and mutual reinforcing, indicating that naming was and has always been a means for institutions to exercise and consolidate power. Similarly, the institution-dominated, unilateral decision-making process in naming is a sign of cultural hegemony in reference to Antonio Gramsci, struggling to which calls for individual’s critical thinking and actively seeking for alternative cultural practice. Further, Hannah Arendt’s notion of action as a public activity that takes place in the public realm and involves expression of opinions and the participation in decision-making processes also applies to the situation of naming in this project, with her emphasis on plurality making a powerful counterpoint to the institution’s dominant voice in cultural landscape. In relation to Harvard’s identity as an educational institution, Pablo Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy also provides theoretical tools in developing critical reflection and dialogue to challenge dominant values and beliefs in institutional naming and promote social justice. These theories help define
why naming is so significant and could serve as a lever and entry point of fighting against the systemic deficiencies of institutions that lead to the absence of public discourse.

**Motivation:**

Despite the research on several typical naming controversy on campus related to issues including legacy of slavery (e.g., Royall House), racism (e.g., Lowell House), and improper marketing and profiting from lethal addictive medication (e.g., Sackler Building), the project intents not to push forward a certain renaming case. Especially considering my identity as none of the direct stakeholders of any of the issues mentioned above, there were moments that I felt self-suspicious or even haunted by a sense of “guilt” of speaking for others. However, I received warm encouragement from almost every potential collaborator I’ve talked to, whose response gradually built-up recognition of a similar agency that a secondary stakeholder like I could have. I gradually realize that being a member of the Harvard community, or simply a citizen already legitimizes and empowers us to reflect on the institutional naming issues and propose our opinions. We believe that naming is not just a product but a meaning-making process, not a single dominant narrative but an iterating device in public realm. That necessity and potential of improvement calls for alternative channels, forms, and tools in reimagining a collective naming system as a device to amplify community voices with more awareness, democracy, and participation.

**Methodology:**

The project takes various methods in research, presentation, and intervention. The early-stage research includes policy analysis, interviews, focus group meetings, field observation to collect historical archives, context information and testimonies, which are sorted out and analyzed through mapping, text annotation, flow charts to make it more accessible. Through examining the institutional process of naming and renaming at Harvard, the research discovers how an institution exercises its power and defends itself as the dominant voice on this naming issue which is supposed to go public. After reflecting on the past disputes and potential problems caused by this dictatorial model of current institutional naming process, the research calls on
bringing in more transparency and democracy to the current infrastructure, and proposes a cross-campus and intergenerational agency between the institution and community, which develops, demonstrates, and practices alternative approaches and tools contributing to the reimaginations of a collective naming system to amplify community voices. The presentation mainly takes a cultural jamming strategy of creating an agency of “Naming Expeditor” both cooperative and antagonistic to the institution. By crafting this alternative model from articulating its niche, mission and vision, operational model, to a previous portfolio and press releases, a design fiction establish itself as a “not-yet” picture that integrate critiques into embodied, accessible, and playful activities such as workshops, campus tours and performances, for evoking further reimaginations and discussions. These methods will help to demystify the historical and current institutional naming system, identify the problems, and seeks for public opinions related to it, and propose feasible long-term interventions.

**Practices At Harvard**

In Over the past decade, the university’s growing dependence on naming gifts for current and future needs, as well as the ever-lasting debates and protests regarding denaming improper historical legacy, have become two integral aspects of the naming issue that call for a more comprehensive and deeper consideration of name as a public discourse. The research address institutional naming in two categories: of denaming or renaming historical legacies and the contemporary philanthropic naming. On both fronts, Harvard has developed rules and regulations and is constantly introducing new initiatives.

**Denaming/ Renaming**

The recent decade has witnessed series of debates, protests and initiatives regarding denaming and renaming of buildings and other assets with controversy at Harvard, including both bottom-up and top-down practices. In 2016, Harvard Law School changed its shield because of its prior association with the Royall family and their legacy of slavery, and renamed Royall Hall to Belinda Hall, after a former enslaved woman who had sued for her freedom in Massachusetts. Critics of the Sackler family associated with the lethal opioid epidemic, have called for denaming the eponymous museum and the annex building in forms of submitting memos and
proposals, signing petitions, and performative demonstrations for at least 5 times according to available records during 2018 to 2022, yet no further progress have been made since President Bacow’s claim of removing the Sackler name being “improper” in 2018.

On the other hand, steps are taken to promote transparency and accountability in the related process with platforms and channels for raising public awareness and discussions. In 2019, the Presidential Committee on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery was established with a report and documentary published last year. In 2020, President Bacow launched the 16-person Committee to articulate principles on renaming made up of faculty, alumni, students, and staff, helping guide consideration of questions about renaming campus assets associated with namesakes whose advocacy is found of the university’s values, which published a report with the principles and process the year after. In the same year, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) launched task force on visual culture and signage for researching and providing informed guidance and recommendations to foster a more inclusive culture on campus. In 2022, FAS, as the largest of the ten faculties that constitute Harvard University further responded to the president’s advocacy and published the official process for Considering Requests for Denaming at the school level, which further defines more details including the eligibility of initiators, period of validity, legal review processes, etc. So far there has not a university-wide platform been established for submitting proposals, which means non-FAS affiliates have not achieved “legitimacy” of doing so.

A deeper dive into the two published official documents, the Report of the Committee to Articulate Principles on Renaming, and the FAS Process for Considering Requests for Denaming, uncovers the cumbersome and confusing nature of the process and the heavy restrictions placed on the proposers, in the following three aspects:

- **Eligibility:** this item restricts the eligible proposers to current FAS affiliation (faculty, student, staff, or researcher), and exclude any former affiliates (alumni)
- **Scholarship:** There are stringent requirements for the content of the denaming proposal on historical accuracy, depth of analyses, and "strength and clarity" of the writing, which asks for proposers to complete extensive historical research independently. This
academic threshold adds to the difficulty for the eligible proposers predominantly made of undergraduate students.

- **Timing:** According to the regulations, there are two opportunities to submit each year and if not approved, they will not be reconsidered for the next five years.

After the publication of FAS process for denaming in May 2022, a student advocacy group Harvard College Overdose Prevention and Education Students (HCOPES) submitted a 23-page proposal on denaming the Sackler building in October; most recently, another group of undergraduates also submitted a proposal on denaming the Winthrop House this March. While both of them carefully addressed the requirements of the process and presented a well-reasoned written report, neither have reached the stage for further review yet. Conversations with leaders of these groups indicated the still-existing barriers and concerns for students, as the group with the existing largest share of advocates, to have their voice incorporated into the institutional systems.

When it comes to Harvard's current naming practices, the frequency of naming gifts and the ambiguity in related policies form a sharp contrast. Over the past decade, three graduate schools have received donations ranging from $300-500 million and are named accordingly as Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard John A. Paulson school of Engineering and Applied Science, and the most recent Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; with another dozens of deanships, professorships and other positions named after donors, most of which never discloses the amount in the press release. Other “naming opportunities” are listed on the school's official website, waiting to be claimed by potential donors at a set amount (Figure 3).

The only published two official documents are a general gift policy guidance published by the Alumni&development service office, and an agreement template of donation under $100,000, in which much emphasis were placed on the academic freedom and independence of the institution that reserves the rights of the designation of the funds. Further, the regulation also claims an
intentional distance made between the naming gifts and the donor’s character or conduct the documents, for protection against future controversies that prevailing social norms will be assessed “at the time of the gift, not later.”

Apart from the above, no further details regarding the assessment process of accepting a naming gift, the duration of a name, scenarios of usage, visual presentation, or future contingencies, of any of the named entities was disclosed so far. While the "legal and contractual considerations" that President Bacow mentioned seems the main reason for Harvard’s not removing the Sackler name, what this exactly refers to remains unspoken. Conversely, the three conditions proposed by Mrs. Eleanor Widener between Harvard, the donor for the Widener Library a century ago, which set out the responsibilities and obligations between the gift recipient, Harvard, and herself the donor, are still widely circulated by campus tour guides, whether true or not.

![Image](https://hms.harvard.edu/departments/development/types-gifts/leadership-giving)

*Figure 3.* A screenshot of the naming opportunities from the official website of Harvard Medical School, [https://hms.harvard.edu/departments/development/types-gifts/leadership-giving](https://hms.harvard.edu/departments/development/types-gifts/leadership-giving)

After the alumni and development service office takes charge with all the early negotiation, what reach the public are the donation announcement and naming decision along with a ceremony and
replacement of visual signs following on the same day. In the case of the recent naming of graduate school of art and science, for example, the road flags outside the Lehman Hall, which houses the GSAS student center, were replaced “like, one second after the announcement.”, according to a student’s description - a stark contrast to the tedious and drawn-out renaming process.

Case Studies

Specifically, the project echoes the institutional critique as a long-lasting art practice aiming at exposing and challenging the power structures and systems of authority within the art world and society at large and draws inspirations of aesthetics and tactics from art and activism. The occupy movement highlights interventions in the physical space shrouded in economic inequality and corporate power to make it accessible and inclusive. Guerilla girls’ high-profile occupation of museums and galleries empower the under-represented women and people of color in the art world. Most relevant to the project, Nan Goldin led performative protests targeting the Sackler’s profiting in opioid crisis in several world-class art institutions, using banners, prescriptions, pill bottles and blood-stained dollars to draw attention to the sufferings behind the name and money, which will be discussed deeper in a later part. Liberate Tate, a UK-based art collective, has been calling for the Tate museums to cut ties with fossil fuel companies and to adopt a more sustainable and ethical funding to art through a series of creative interventions, including performances, installations, documentaries, and publications. Augusto Boal’s theatre of the oppressed offers practical techniques in taking performance as a democratic and participatory approach to evoke and embody public opinions. In terms of media strategies, the art collective Yes Men’s elaborate culture jamming, such as use of alternative names, pseudonyms, fictional news, social media posts showcase how temporal and low-cost tactics in virtual space could also disrupt dominant narratives and open up new spaces for public debate and engagement. These precedents provide precious references in consideration of space, narratives, engagement, and social protocols.

Besides, through interviews, three advocacy groups with time and space proximity to this project brought rather direct and relevant experience at the executive level and helped building reliable partnership for further steps.
Agassiz Baldwin Community

This local community has successfully conducted a renaming project since 2020 to re-examine the legacy of Louis Agassiz, a nineteen-century scientist who is blamed for his theories on polygenism and their roots in white supremacy. The combined efforts of the initiator, a high school student from the community and the community liaisons of the neighborhood council include the establishment of an online context library, a survey distributed to over 5,000 residents, with a petition for a name change was presented to the city council where the petition of renaming the neighborhood for an esteemed African American educator Maria L. Baldwin was eventually endorsed.

A Brief Timeline of the Neighborhood Name Process

Name change process highlights (updated January 2022)

- **Rename the Neighborhood?**
  - Jan 2020 Neighborhood Council Meeting, resident and high school student, Maya Coulter opened the question: should the neighborhood be renamed, retracing scientist Louis Agassiz’s name and instead honoring educator Maria L. Baldwin.
  - Oct 2020 - Feb 2021
  - Developed Process
    - Discussed how the community wanted to engage, created an online library with statements and videos submitted by community members, and collected additional name suggestions.

- **Community Survey**
  - With support from Cambridge Community Development, distributed flyers neighborhood and invited residents to take a name binding survey. Processed survey results, shared results with Neighborhood and Cambridge City Councils. 88.4% of respondents wanted to rename — with some form of ‘Baldwin’ the most popular choice.
  - Mar - Jun 2021
  - Baldwin Name Endorsed
    - At a Special Meeting, Cambridge City Council voted 7-0 to endorse renaming the neighborhood for Maria L. Baldwin.

- **Neighborhood Council Name Changed**
  - Following discussions during fall 2021, the Neighborhood Council voted to adopt the new neighborhood name. It is now the Baldwin Neighborhood Council.
  - Sept - Dec 2021

Learn more: https://bit.ly/neighborhood-dev-projects

Figure 4. A brief timeline of the neighborhood renaming project of Agassiz Baldwin community, made by the community center staff. https://agassiz.org/agassiz-neighborhood-council/neighborhood_development_projects/

This advocacy, while ultimately successful, also revealed the high complexity of renaming. Firstly, the city council had no established official process to follow, which means the petition, review and outreach process are all self-driven, and hardly replicable in other future cases; secondly, although the residents of the neighborhood are all considered as direct stakeholders on the naming, there is also limited willingness to participate. For example, only fewer than 500
responses were collected among the 5000 surveys distributed. Thirdly, in the view of Ms. Sinclair, an essential facilitator of the project, the renaming proposal celebrating Maria L. Baldwin, a spiritual leader, was a key factor of the success of this whole project. It seems an instructive lesson for advocacy groups at Harvard that hadn’t been able to come up with a compiling enough figure as an alternative to the removal of the name of Sackler, or Winthrop. However, the FAS naming process again expressly provides that “any consideration of a new name is undertaken in a separate process and at the discretion of the FAS Dean”.

**Harvard Non-Tenure Track Union**

The non-tenure-track faculty members at Harvard launched a public card campaign for official recognition this February, seeking to bargain a contract for the University’s non-tenure-track faculty, including lecturers, preceptors, postdoctoral fellows, instructors, researchers, teaching assistants, and adjunct faculty, who may only hold teaching appointments up to eight years.

The proximity of this advocacy group to this project lies in several specific features of the group: it is a widely distributed group of people who have a slightly longer than students but still limited time at Harvard, and therefore face the same problem of the sustainability of the actions they initiate. Before launching a public card campaign for official recognition this February, the group has been preparing for five years with the support from professional staff organizers from UAW (United Auto Workers), which filed an unfair labor practice charge against Harvard University in 2018. During the process, UAW provides expertise on the outreach range and strategies, and especially on determining the optimal timing for each step and making the action public.

**P.A.I.N (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now)**

As a well-known activist group, P.A.I.N has been actively and constantly fighting against the Sackler names at art institutions since its founding in 2017, with its specific connection to Harvard makes it extremely relevant to be brought into the ongoing conversation. The founder artist Nan Goldin, who is also an alumna and former faculty at Harvard, brought the group to Harvard Art Museum and conducted a protest in 2018. During this five years’ span, their protests had already paid off at MET, Louvre, and Guggenheim Museum. Recently, P.A.I.N came back to Harvard for another attempt, and therefore gave me a chance of experiencing the planning and
execution of the protest in person, as well as having a further conversation with core members of the team.

After contacting with several Harvard undergraduate advocacy groups for determining a general plan, two core members of P.A.I.N. arrived in Boston from New York City with readymade props developed in previous protests - including banners, fake prescriptions, pill bottles, bloodstained dollars, etc. The entire event consisted of a public screening of a documentary of Nan Goldin, *ALL THE BEAUTY AND THE BLOODSHED*, hosted at the Carpenter Center on the evening of April 19, followed by a talkback, and a subsequent mass protest at Harvard Art Museum at noon the next day, using the former, a recognized academic event to leverage the latter.

With expertise of external groups and thorough preparation, the event went smoothly. The previous day's public screening and conversation served an educational and promotional purpose while keeping the subsequent protest well under wraps. With over a hundred of attendance, the indoor protest last for about twenty minutes, followed by a quick clean-up of all the props and an orderly retreat, causing no confrontation with the museum staff. Later, protesters gathered on the steps outside the gallery on Quincy St and delivered another round of demonstration and public speeches which drew broader attention of passers-by.

It is noteworthy that the unprecedented scale of the protest in the museum largely lied on the intention of engaging more secondary stakeholders, including other student advocacy groups, or simply those who came to the screening and learnt about the story behind. A special note in the document shared among the group also indicates that “any students, faculty, and Harvard community members” who wish to “emphasize the solidarity between different struggles at the institution” are welcomed, accompanied by a kind risk level assessment to address the concern from especially international students. Here are some slogans used during the protest:

“If we can take down one name, we can take down them all!”

“Mather,
Wadsworth,
Winthrop,
and more!
ALL HAVE TO GO!

“We won’t wait another 5 years!”

As shown in the wording, the protest has somehow gone beyond the single Sackler name to reach a deeper, systematic problem. In addition, the “five years” refers not only to the five years in which no action was taken since P.A.I.N.’s last protest in 2018, but also to an item from the current institutional (de)naming protocol that "a denaming request will not be reconsidered for a period of 5 years from the issuance of the school recommendation of the review committee".

Figure 5. An instagram post for the recent action, refering to the last protest in 2018, @sacklerpain
Another essential take away from the practice of P.A.I.N is the power dynamic between individuals and the institution. A core member of P.A.I.N mentioned that most art museums and galleries they intervened had Nan Goldin’s work as their essential permanent collection, which in a way contributed to the positive acceptance of their protest. For example, Nan once announced that she would reject the invitation of doing a retrospective exhibition at National Portrait Gallery if they continue to take the Sackler money. Considering the protests mainly initiated by undergraduate students with neither the longevity of staying nor yet the establishment to pose an effective check on the institution in either economic, academic, professional, or reputational aspects, it is understandable that how this lack of long-term commitment and strategies as well as inequitable power can make it particularly difficult to organize sustainable and effective actions.
Outputs:

The project's deliverable contains an image essay analyzing the current institutional naming system at Harvard and proposing an agency of "Naming Expeditor" as well as a live performance as part of the final defense. The Naming Expeditor is a response to problems and findings of the research with gestures and interventions taken and to be take that serve the central purpose of reimaging a collective naming system. It will continue to serve as a sustainable platform for community members to make proposals and engage in discussions about the naming. The final performance contains scripts, props and blockings developed and designed based on research and collaborative workshops to showcase the research findings, the proposal and to engage broader. All these outputs combine to demystify the existed knowledge and practice in institutional naming process and evoke further discussion in the community towards a collective naming system as a device to amplify community voices with more awareness, democracy, and participation.

Reimagining a Sustainable Collective: “Naming Expeditor”

Naming Expeditor is a cross-campus and intergenerational nonprofit organization that uses research, design, art, and activism to amplify community voice and facilitate public engagement in the current institutional naming system. We work with students, faculty, alumni, staff, the local community, and external activists, as well as with relevant institution-appointed committees and task forces, on integrating research outcomes, collecting community input, developing tools to demystify the current institutional naming system and conducting strategic interventions of both short-term and long-term.

We hope each action taken will work as a step adding up to a sustained effort leading positive changes toward a collective naming system with more transparency from the institution side, more democracy and participation from the community, and more awareness for all.
Niche

The project identifies and integrates the existing relevant programs and organizations both on campus and from outside to create a connective platform.

Figure 9. the niche and partnership model of Naming Expeditor within the ecosystem

Institutional Partners:
Harvard Renaming Committee
Harvard Alumni and development services
FAS Task Force on Visual Culture and Signage
Harvard Legacy of Slavery Project
Harvard University Visitor Center

Student Group:
HCOPES (Harvard College Overdose Prevention and Education Students), submitting a proposal of renaming Sackler in October 2022

HGAASA (Harvard Generational African American Student Association), submitting a proposal of renaming Winthrop House in March 2023

Social activists:
P.A.I.N (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now)

Local community:
Cambridge community Center
Cambridge community foundation
Agassiz Baldwin Community

Strategic Planning

The preceding research and analyses uncover the gap between the official process and channels and the current claims regarding denaming, renaming or naming gifts of the public. According to the Value-Capacity-Support model raised by Herman B. Leonard on public sector strategy building, the overlap of the three, also known as the “sweet point”, can be reached through three potential approaches:

1) moving capacity(ies) toward the current validly based best estimate of where public value lies;
2) leading support toward the current best estimate of where public value lies;
3) improving the accuracy and reliability of the estimate of where public value lies,

In the present case, 1) suggests that advocates need to develop the knowledge, skills and tools related to such advocacy to enable more sustainable and effective interventions. For example, that P.A.I.N. as an artist and activist group with expertise in museum protests provide valuable guidance for student activists. Therefore, Naming Expeditor can function as a consultant for people with similar value but not enough capacity to lead changes; 2) illustrates the need to seek
out existing resources as much as possible, for example by plugging into the institutional infrastructure through not just submitting a proposal or ephemeral demonstration, but also permeate into the regular committees and ongoing projects, etc. 3) on the other hand, focus on making the value more commonly recognized through educational programming so that more secondary stakeholder are engaged and bring in potential capacity and support. These strategies then lead to more detailed steps to be taken.

Figure 10. Strategy analyses for combining value, support, and capacity in the Leonard’s model.

Media Strategy

Inspired by both the cultural jamming strategies used by artists and activists in previous case studies as well as Arthur M. Sackler’s key role in unethical medical advertising in this specific case, the project creates a series of visual materials mimicking typical advertising forms to uncover the hidden facts in Harvard naming practices, combining dates, events, figures scattering throughout historical press releases to create a straightforward visual statement.
The project also creates an Instagram account (@NamingExpeditor_Harvard) for publishing these materials constantly and interact with other advocacy groups actively.

Another series of side-by-side comparison between the status quo and the speculated “Naming Expeditor” draws inspiration from a recruitment poster made by the CIRCA (Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army) against the U.S. Army. Utilizing satire and parody, the texts interrogate the absurdity in current institutional naming and denaming practice and call for an agency like this to undertake a role as collaborator, supervisor and connector between the institution and the public.
Other Engagement Tools

Public performances

In the Agassiz Baldwin Neighborhood renaming project, students from the neighborhood school wrote and presented a play of the life story of Maria Baldwin, which played an essential role in educating the local residents. Similarly, P.A.I.N.’s performative die-in actions at art museums and galleries produced striking image that became the unique and power language for their protest. All these inform us the effectiveness of performance as an embodied experience in bringing together the public and stimulating both emotional touch and deeper discussion. On the other hand, the scripts of performances are also used as a device to deconstruct and restructure the institutional order marked by the lengthy official documents. In the first version of the performances, the host raised a series of questions (see Appendix A) as a survey on peer students’ awareness and level of engagement on the Sackler naming issue, which further exposed the over simplified assumption of the “Participation ladder” model by Sherry R. Arnstein that citizen participation goes in a hierarchical linear way.
The second version of the performance aims to delve into the status quo of institutional naming (Appendix B). It presents reflections and commentaries on the widely known stories of four influential namesakes: Winthrop, Widener, Lowell, and Sackler. These narratives are intertwined through a mock-up guided campus tour. The journey of the tour guide begins by reciting a predetermined script to visitors, but gradually evolves into an active exploration of the hidden narratives within the space. However, numerous obstacles and barriers symbolized by spikes, cones, and warning tapes representing existing institutional naming regulations impede the progress. Ultimately, the tour guide seeks alternative paths and brings to the table the problem for open discussion. This process goes along with the internal exploration in this project and intends to provoke further actions regarding the current practices of institutional naming at Harvard.
Figure 18-20. photos of a performance in April and May, Sackler Building stairs, photo by Yolanda Yuanlu Peng & Nobuhito Mitsuoka.
Alternative Campus Tour

As mentioned in the Report of the FAS Task Force on Visual Culture & Signage, “the sound of tour guides reciting familiar stories, these tours color the experience of our institution”, the most straightforward and easy approach for millions of tourists visiting Harvard annually to learn about the histories of the space is the campus tour. However, we must face the reality that most of the registered tour guides nowadays are undergraduate students who, even if unwilling, are obligated to follow a stereotypical script to fulfill their duty of providing explanations to visitors in exchange for compensation. The script is cleverly crafted into a natural, engaging, and lively tone, even occasionally making jokes at Harvard's authority. However, as the following excerpt shows, when it is about to come to addressing the weighty historical significance behind some controversial names, it quickly shifts the topic towards light-hearted gossiping:

“When most Harvard Presidents die, they have large, luxurious upperclassmen houses named in their honor. President Mather got Mather House. President Lowell got Lowell House. President Dunster got Dunster (gesture to the crowd to get them to respond with “house”) House! You get the pattern.

To your left is Lowell House home to Academy Award winners Matt Damon and Natalie Portman. Straight ahead is Winthrop House home to John F. Kennedy.

Although the tour guide's script is not an official document with strict requirements to adhere to, it undoubtedly plays a role in concealing certain unsavory histories and conveying an unjust value system. Even though an alternative tour developed by Harvard Legacy of Slavery project was already available a year ago, it has never been integrated into the mainstream and known by the majority.

Based on this, Naming Expeditor would like to collaborate with the currently tour guides registered at, and paid by the Harvard Visitor Center to encourage them to include even just a few sentences of additional information or a new site in their current tours to remind visitors of the hidden history or ongoing debates of the space. As these sorts of knowledge builds up
gradually, we will hopefully be able to provide a full alternative guided tour route in the future and negotiate with the Harvard Visitor Centre to bring this route official.

**Booklet and Participation Loop**

Naming Expeditor's promotional material, a zine(Appendix C) contains most of the explanatory and visual material described above. It is backed by a board-like game named "participation loop" with some referential descriptions of the different levels of participation. It is adapted from the participation ladder model by Arnstein, which has been found unsatisfying in previous discussion. Here, participation is understood as a cyclical process in which participants may be at several levels simultaneously, could take actions in both directions, or jumping from one level to another seemingly distant one. It further suggests the concept of a naming expeditor that could start at any time, regardless of their stakes or level.

*Figure 21-22. promotional zine of "Naming Expeditor*
Bibliography


Appendix A

Performance Lecture 0221 Script
Yolanda Peng
Video link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ELV4Y_y0_5hksfd83tKApN4fGecJpNS?usp=share_link

(Yolanda behind the window on 2nd floor, dial in via zoom on the laptop held by Melissa on the ground floor)
I’d like to invite all of you to a game. Now you are seeing this long staircase unfolding itself in front of you. These signs of numbers from 1 to 8 on the steps stands for 8 rungs on a ladder, which I will explain later. May I ask everyone to stand start at the ground floor and keep facing the entrance of this building? Thanks. For each of the following questions I’m going to ask, please give your answer with “yes”, by going up for one step, or “no” by staying still. --- I know this may be oversimplified, please just choose the side closer to your situation and remember there is no right or wrong. Reminder: if you stop at an earlier question, you cannot go up further even a later answer is “yes”. If I make it clear, we are starting now.

Question No1: Do you know this building’s namesake, and the role of the Sackler family in the opioid epidemic? (Ignorant—( no read out))

If your answer is yes, please go up one step.

Question No2: Have you learnt about the context and ongoing discussions of renaming the Sackler building, or other improper naming legacy at Harvard? (Aware)

If your answer is yes, please go up one step.

Question No3: Do you have an opinion, whether clear or vague, on this renaming issue? ( Opinionated)

Question No4: How concerned are you about the issue of renaming our public space? ( Concerned)
(Approximately where people start to see me, if not, try to get their attention)

**Question No5:** Have you actively sought out information on the Harvard renaming process? *(Informed)*

**Question No6:** Have you taken any actions to address the issue of renaming at Harvard, such as signing petitions, participating in protests, or simply avoid using that name in your everyday life? *(Active)*

**Question No7:** Do you have an idea regarding how can we improve the process of naming at institutions? *(Committed)*

**Question No8:** Do you seek to mobilize and lead others in addressing the naming issue at Harvard? *(Leader)*

Now please take some rest, you may want to place yourself at a step where you feel most comfortable with. To hold an opinion, to conduct an action, to make long-term commitment, or to lead the change? please stay still, I’ll be with you in a minute for the ACT2.

(go out to the 2nd floor platform, let Melissa play the pre-recorded audio from the laptop at the ground floor facing me)

1/ **Dear Mr HC,** do you make the decision of naming the buildings, scholarships, prizes, and other items without informing the community, using information to manipulate the community to support your decisions?

-- **No,** I let them know. How can you hide a name? *(one step down, showing the word: manipulation)*
2/ Dear Mr HC, do you try to persuade the community that your decisions are for the community's own good, without allowing their involvement in the decision-making process?

--No, I do not need to persuade. We share the good. (one step down, showing the word: therapy)

3/ Dear Mr HC, do you provide information about the decision-making process, and also actively seek out community input?

--Yes, we have all kinds of platforms for collecting feedbacks, while they are a little hard to find. (one step down, showing the word: informing)

4/ Dear Mr HC, do you set up channels for feedback, and also reply to them?

--Yes, while it takes couple of weeks. (one step down, showing the word: consulting)

5/ Dear Mr HC, Do you take community feedback into serious account?

--Yes, for sure. I seriously take some of them as inappropriate. (one step down, showing the word: placation)

6/ Dear Mr HC, Do you work in partnership with the community to come up with mutually agreed-upon names?

--- Yes, some of them are good partners! (one step down, showing the word: Partnership)
7/ Dear Mr HC, Have you found a committee made up of community members delegated decision-making power in the naming process?

--- Yes! Our committee values a lot the diversity in its composition, made of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. (one step down, showing the word: delegated power)

8/ Dear Mr HC, Do you allow a community-led initiative to take charge of the decision on naming buildings, scholarships, prizes, and other items, with no input or approval from you?

(showing the word: citizen control)
(rushing down the last step)
No! absolutely not! I’m the one who has the last say.

(beat, turn back to the people on the stairs)
HC stands for Harvard Corporation.

What you have just seen and experienced is my adaptation to a real-life case of the concept of “participation ladder” developed by Sherry R. Arnstein in her essay “Ladder of Citizen Participation" published in 1969. describing the 8 different levels of engagement that citizens can have in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Also, you have seen two versions of it, a bottom-up one, measuring citizens’ achievement in self-driven participation from being ignorant to a leader, as you guys go up just now.
Another Top-down one from manipulation to citizen control focuses on the increasing power handed over to the public by authorities, as shown by my going down. The obvious limitation of this theory, as you may have felt, is to interpret lower levels as universally negative or worse and higher levels as positive. We shall ask: Is it always the best to have you there, at the highest step, as a community leader, and me here at the lowest step, giving the power to citizen control? Or Are they symmetric or complement to each other?

Arnstein herself also admitted other drawbacks of this model as not including an analysis of the “roadblocks” to authentic citizen participation and empowerment.

As she said, “These roadblocks lie on both sides of the simplistic fence. On the powerholders’ side, they include racism, paternalism, and resistance to power redistribution. On the have-nots’ side, they include inadequacies of the poor community’s political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledgebase, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizens’ group in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust.”

With all these extreme difficulties, it’s extremely hard and painstaking for an individual from the community to sustain high commitment to a public affair, especially to lead the campaign, while for the authority, benign and symbolic compromise can always be made in the first 7 steps. while the last step, the bottom line is no way to trespass.)

I was playing Mr Harvard Corporation just now, but I’m just one from you all. In this Sackler case, the biggest roadblock I, as a researcher and activist encountered so far, is distrust. I have always been questioned by my advisors and peers about the motivation behind this research and initiative on this naming issue - -After all, I don't have a family or friend who lost their lives to opioid crisis, and I admit that I could never empathize with the pain those who have suffered, and I didn't even know the namesake of the building and the story behind until last year. I would have felt ashamed of being “left behind” if I were a participant in this game then. We assume people are only likely to devote to the actions concerning their essential interest, that make sense. If it’s protesting against this Sackler name, I may be not qualified as most of you here to conduct this performance. But if the issue is no longer about the name of a building, but how our voices are heard and respected, I care and have as much say as anyone here.
Appendix B

0417 Performance plan

- Site: stairs of the Sackler building
- Performer:
  Yolanda, as Harvard & MC (ACT1), Harvard (ACT2)
  Actor 1-4, as donors and namesakes (ACT1) some are partner (ACT2)
  - 1: John Winthrop (namesake of the Winthrop House, a prominent early benefactor of Harvard born in 1606, slave holder.)
  - 3: A. Lawrence Lowell (namesake of the Lowell House, the 24th president of Harvard, who served from 1909 to 1933, infamous for his institutionalization of racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism)
  - 4: Arthur Mitchell Sackler (namesake of the art museum, who personally passed away before the OxyContin is introduced to the market, but not blameless for his involvement in the production and marketing of an earlier addictive drug Valium and creating a template for unethical marketing)
- Actor 5, as a campus tour guide (ACT1) activist/ Naming expeditor (ACT2)

- Props:
  - A donation box strong enough to carry the weight of one person as a podium
  - A dozen of Paper cones
    - one-side with names, one-side with relevant texts: contract/report/Press release/receipt...
    - one-side with similar texts, one-side with proposals
  - Tape
  - Pen
ACT1

set up:
actors 1-5 wander on the stairs, with paper cones (names facing outside) in their hands as goblets
audience: on the ground floor
Yolanda: upstairs, holding a donation box

action:
1. MC announces the opening script1.1
2. Harvard come down a few steps, reaching out to the donors, nodding, waving greetings
   and talking to each other as if in a gala (improvise, script1.2 as a reference),
3. Actors pass the paper cone and insert to the donation box
4. actor 1-4 line up on the stairs

(The following steps repeat for each of the actors 1-4:
MC announce the starting of the naming ceremony(script1.3), and repeat the following steps for each namesake:
   o MC picks out a paper cone from the box,
   o call on a name
   o the namesake goes up to the platform and gets coronated
   o The namesake goes down to a certain point, pulling out a string between them
     and Harvard, and occupies one step

( script 1.4-1.7)
5. MC announces the end of the gala (script 1.8)
ACT2

Set up:
Yolanda stands on the upper platform
Actors 1-4 with their cone hats with names on it scatter around on the stairs (Intertwined strings in the air above the stairs between Yolanda and the actors)
Actor5 with audience on ground floor

Action:
Actor 5 comes out from the audience, holding another paper cone as an amplifier, and leads them to go up to visit each “building” and gives introductions (script 2.1)
Actor 1-4 take off the hat one by one, roll them backwards into a new paper cone with heavy texts facing outside, and stick them to the stairs, leave, stand on the front floor in a horizontal line
Actor5 (with some visitors?) get trapped by the paper cones (spikes) and entangled strings, stopped from going up
A conversation between actor5 and Harvard, look back to the history(script 2.2)

Actor5 (as activist now) gets more pissed-off, unroots paper cones, crumples them into paper balls, and smashes it at Harvard on the upper floor
Harvard dodges left and right, while picking up the paper and read them as a monologue(script2.3)
Meanwhile, Actor1-3, now as partners, start unroot the rest cones (b, those with proposals on them, should be colored otherwise?), turn upside down, go to the audience and ask for their signature (or vote into the cone?), come back and hand it to Harvard

Proposals may include:
1\include a clause about the duration a name will last
2\ Make public the gift agreement template
3\ Revisit and reassess the names every couple of years
4\ include community members in the alumni development service office
5\ make visible annotations and supplements in the space around the original name

Harvard continues the monologue until coming to the new texts brought by others (script 2.4) when one is finished, one takes on the cone, stand around Harvard Actor5 reaches the top as the obstacles removed, now as the naming expeditor hosting another ceremony (script 2.5),

Actor4 is left at the end of the line, reveals as Dr Sackler

Harvard & MC: the ending toast (script 2.6)
script1.1

Yolanda, as MC:
Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and valued donors, welcome to the naming gala here tonight as we celebrate several milestone moments for this prestigious institution.

script1.2

1: Have you heard that Griffin just made a gift of $300 million to FAS here at Harvard?
4: Yes, I just saw it from the news.
3: Yeah. Also the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will be renamed the Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in his honor.
2: To name a school cost much more! I wish I could in my lifetime
1: Absolutely, but it is a remarkable opportunity to leave a lasting impact.

script1.3

Yolanda, as Harvard:
On behalf of the entire Harvard community (point to the void), I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support. Your generosity has enabled us to create a better future for our students and for society at large. I am deeply appreciative of the confidence you have placed in us — and in our mission — to do good in the world.

Let us raise a toast to the visionary leaders and committed philanthropists who have made tonight’s celebration possible.
now let’s uncover these names of honor!

script1.4 (Winthrop)

Yolanda, as MC(step onto the podium)
Mr. Winthrop, as one of the earliest benefactors of Harvard college, your funds for the construction of the first building on Harvard's campus, now known as Harvard Hall, had played a key role in establishing the college as a leading center of education. We honor your legacy by naming one of the undergraduate houses after you.

1, as Winthrop: It’s my honor, too.

MC:
In grateful recognition of Mr. Winthrop’s generosity, do you accept Mr. Winthrop as the permanent namesake of this undergraduate house?

Yolanda, as Harvard(go down) Yes, I accept.

MC:
I join you in marriage and hope this relationship will stand the test of time!( high five with Winthrop, then with oneself)

script1.5(Widener)
2, as Mrs Widener: (sobbing) Harvard, I will give you $3.5 million if you build a library in my son’s honor. Will you take my money?

Harvard: Mrs Widener, let me express my deepest condolences for the loss of your son, Harry... I dohope you will find some solace in knowing that Harry's memory and passion will live on. But for your request, we need to think about it...

Voiceover? They thought about this for a really, long time, at least a second or two OR almost a full minute!

Harvard: Out of full understanding and empathy of the loving heart of a mother, we have decided to make an exception and accept your donation for building a library in memory of your son. —we plan to tear down the old memorial library and replace it with a new one named Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library!

2, as Mrs Widener(skeptical): to tear down the old one...are you sure?

MC: I understand your concern. What if I, as the witness, help you two to establish some conditions for the donation to ensure that both of you are satisfied?

Harvard& Mrs Widener: Yes. (Discuss, find out a paper and sign on it)

MC: 1,2,3... if any of these three stipulations are broken, that Widener Library, the building, its books, and the land it sits on, will all be transferred away from Harvard to the city of Cambridge. Good job! By making these conditions, I believe your connection will bear longevity and stableness. Prenuptial agreement, sign of a modernized marriage!

script1.6 (Lowell)
MC:
Mr. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, your leadership of the university during 1909 to 1933 was a remarkable achievement, your contribution, especially on the expansion of the undergraduate residential house system would benefit countless students from then on. I hope your name will stay on enlightening students here forever.

3, as A. Lawrence Lowell: My pleasure.
In grateful recognition of Mr. Abbott Lawrence Lowell’s generosity, do you accept Mr. Lowell as the permanent namesake of this house?

Harvard: Yes, I accept.

MC:
I join you in marriage and hope this relationship will stand the test of time, as long as the one with Mr. Winthrop!

script1.7(Sackler)
MC:
Mr. Arthur Mitchell Sackler, do you accept to make this donation of 2.5 million dollars to establish this world class museum at Harvard, support the museum in any way you can, and to ensure its success, as a commitment to this honorable naming?

4, as Arthur Mitchell Sackler: Yes, I accept.

MC:
In grateful recognition of Mr. Arthur Mitchell Sackler’s generosity, do you accept Mr. Sackler as the permanent namesake of this museum and annex, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health(stressed), till death do you part?

Harvard: Yes, I accept.

MC:
By making these vows, Harvard and Sackler have joined a marriage that will stand the test of time, a partnership that will benefit the community for years to come. Let us all give them a round of applause!

script1.8
MC:
Your generosity and commitment to supporting Harvard's mission have made it possible for us to continue providing exceptional education to our students, advancing groundbreaking research, and creating positive impacts on the world.

I promise, your names will be permanently associated with the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence. You have contributed to the growth of this university and have helped us maintain our position as a leader in higher education. Your contributions have touched the lives of countless individuals, and your legacy will inspire generations to come! Let's raise a toast to commemorate this meaningful night!
5, as a campus tour guide to the audience:

Come this way! I’m showing you the incredible historical legacy of Harvard over the past four centuries...

When most Harvard Presidents die, they have large, luxurious upperclassmen houses named in their honor. President Mather got Mather House. President Lowell got Lowell House. President Dunster got Dunster (gesture to the crowd to get them to respond with “house”) House! You get the pattern.

To your left is Lowell House home to Academy Award winners Matt Damon and Natalie Portman. Straight ahead is Winthrop House home to John F. Kennedy.

Wanna visit the new campus? Ok, follow me on this Quincy Street.

The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, designed by the famous Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier. You can tell how it stands out among the traditional architectural styles around. What? You are asking if students do carpentry here? Maybe since its used by the art department... But I’ll say because it was made possible by a gift from Alfred St. Vrain Carpenter.

Who is this guy on the museum plaque and appears again on the building we are now in? (look at Dr. Sackler from head to feet) Arthur Mitchell Sackler... it should be a more recent thing without much to tell. BTW, this building was also designed by a renowned architect named James Stirling, look at this marvelous combination of modernism and post-modernism...

5, still as tour guide: Sorry I start to forget my scripts with these interminable names... Harvard, can you tell how many do we left?

Harvard: To be a campus tour guide, you need to remember these names! In the current 799 buildings and sites as the possession of Harvard, over 200 are named after individuals, with duplicates counted for only once. while you don’t need to remember all of them... like, McDonald’s.

5: (stumbled by a cone) Hey Harvard, these cones are so annoying! Can we get rid of this?

Harvard: If only you replace it with a better new one. (look around) Mrs Widener, I’m not cueing you.

Actor 1 or 3 (as a GSAS student): What a surprise! the flag in the yard was changed to include Griffin’s name, like one second after the announcement.
Harvard: Yes! I’m so proud of our most efficient staff:

Actor5 (as an HCOPES student leader): But why haven’t I got a response since my submission of a 23-page renaming proposal last October?

Harvard: your proposal is still on view by the FAS department, the renaming committee, president Bacow, Provost Garber, and chief of staff... Based on experience from your predecessor, you should hear back from me in a year.

Actor5: Can I resubmit next year of 2023-2024?  
Harvard: Due to the FAS policy, a petition of denaming cannot be submitted for the next five years except in “extraordinary circumstances”

Actor2(as mothers of victims of OPOID crisis, earlier doubling Mrs Widener): It is still not extraordinary enough?! Allowing the Sackler name continue to exist clearly implies that Harvard University stands with Purdue and the Sacklers in the belief that money matters more than lives. We don’t believe that is the image you want to portray of such an institution.

Harvard: I’m deeply moved by a mother’s heart from your stories and photographs. However, It will be inappropriate to remove the Sackler family name from campus buildings and return any past donations from the family. Dr. Arthur Sackler had passed away before OxyContin was developed and marketed. Given these circumstances and legal and contractual considerations, we do not have plans to remove Dr. Sackler’s name from the Museum.”

script2.3
Actor5, as activists: Come on?! Any more annoying regulations?

Harvard: (talk to oneself)  
I will not accept any gift that provides a donor with real or perceived influence over the structure, process, content, or results of research, curriculum or other academic activities. All intellectual property or data resulting from the use of this gift will be retained by me. Donor will have no rights to any such intellectual property or data. I must retain full control over the administration of the funds. Harvard will not accept gifts with terms that would require involvement by the donor or a third party in directing the use or administration of the gift. If, at some time in the future, the designation of the Fund made possible by the gift is no longer appropriate, including in the event the beneficiary subject separates from Harvard University for any reason before the fund is fully expended, the DEAN/PROVOST/PRESIDENT of the SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY, in consultation with the Donor(s), may direct the Fund to another purpose

script2.4
(Harvard read the text on the cones handed by others(proposals), getting slower)
I acknowledge that the name associated with the gift should be reviewed and reassessed every 5 years.
I agree to make the gift agreement template publicly available on the official website. The template will include information regarding the naming rights, gift amount, duration of the name, and contingency plans for future situations.
I agree to include community members in the alumni development service office addressing name gift affairs.
Even if it’s not yet time to review or change a name that already causes hurts, I will consider making visible annotations and supplements in the space around the original name to provide context and information and make sure the history is not erased.

script 2.5
Actor5, as naming expeditor, the new host on the podium: With these new clauses added, do you still want to go with Mr Harvard?

Actor4(as Arthur M. Sackler): I recognize the University’s commitment to academic freedom and the independent pursuit of truth, as well as the name as a symbol in public realm...

Actor5: Wait! Dr Sackler? Is it you?
Actor4(Arthur M. Sackler): Yes, It is 2023 and I’m...uh should be 110 years old.

Harvard:
In memory of your generosity, this building is as well-sustained as beautiful as the day you left. And still stands in your name, despite the protests I’ve taken for.

Actor4(Arthur M. Sackler): Thanks to your loyalty.

Actor1,2,3,5: We are not taking it personally, Dr Sackler.
Actor5( as naming expeditor): we are reimagining a new system working collectively.

Actor1( as a student) : My voice can be heard and responded during and after my short stay here as a student.

Actor2( as renaming committee): Our expertise in history and sociology, and sustainable efforts can support whoever need that articulation.

Actor3(as local community): We get a better understanding of what’s behind the space we share at the moment.

Actor1( as potential donors) : I realize the corresponding social responsibility when exercising the naming right the institution endow me with when I make my endowment.
Actor2 (as Alumni development service office): Our expertise in fundraising and contract serves to make the process itself more transparent and iterative.

Actor3 (as visitors): We are told the stories of both honor and shame, happiness, and sorrow.

script 2.6
Actor5: Prenuptial agreement is a sign of a modernized marriage. But still, it is a marriage, not a bare trade.
Actor4: Based on good wills and sincere gratitude
Harvard: based on solidary wish instead of solitary desire.
Actor4: I have my family and descendants; they tried to make up for the crisis.
Harvard: and I have mine (look at 1,2,3) around me, thank you.

Cheers!
(The end)
Mission Statement

Naming Expeditor is a cross-campus and intergenerational nonprofit organization that uses research, design, art, and activism to amplify community voice and facilitate public engagement in the current institutional naming system. We work with students, faculty, staff, the local community, and external activists, as well as with relevant institution-appointed committees and task forces, on integrating research outcomes, collecting community input, developing tools to demystify the current institutional naming system and conducting strategic interventions of both short-term and long-term.

Our Vision

We hope each action taken will work as a step adding up to a sustained effort leading positive changes toward a collective naming system with more transparency from the institution side, more democracy and participation from the community, and more awareness for all.
I did some research on the naming issues, including more cases, actions and institutional steps taken both occurring around
and in a broader context.

I learnt about the namesake of this building/space/program (or other entities) by chance, and recognize how their actions,
beliefs or legacy may cause harm to our community.

I agree on the importance of naming, but haven’t felt any real impact on my everyday life.

With a full awareness the secondary stake of myself, and the concerns people commonly hold. I still decide on mobilizing
and leading more people as I used to be in building an organization that keeps the naming issue in the loop at Harvard.

I have community organizations hold the significant cards to assure accountability of their advocacy by having control on a
certain budget, hiring decisions, or having final veto powers.

I have to know some activists personally.

I build diverse channels for consultation, including attitude surveys, roundtable meetings, and public hearings, to make sure that community engagement is involved in the decision making process.

I place a few hand-picked representative community members on board of our decision making, allowing people to propose
or advise, but keep the right to judge the legitimacy, feasibility and priority of these suggested actions.

I redistribute power, share responsibility and interest with self-organized community members through negotiation, instead
of giving them power.

I have community organizations hold the significant cards to assure accountability of their advocacy by having control on a
certain budget, hiring decisions, or having final veto powers.

I have community organizations hold the significant cards to assure accountability of their advocacy by having control on a
certain budget, hiring decisions, or having final veto powers.