NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

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People have a breaking point, like walking along an edge with too many pushes and then you’re falling down, down, down. What we do during the descend is on us, and sometimes the world is left to reel from it. There is no way but up from rock bottom, and every inspiration I ever took from superheroes, fictional, or not have cemented this belief. After countless series and comics on wronged civilians turned law- enforcers (cue Batman theme song), we have grown accustomed to fictional vigilantes, the undermined heartthrobs that turn their pain into needed justice. But how many us are aware of the real-life models that are out to shake the world the right way?

Starting with the crowd favourite, Anonymous are a decentralised international group of cyber activists, taking anarchic actions against any and all prominent political figures, institutions, and corporations they deem to be in the wrong. The 2003 founded group holds true to the motto of, “We are Anonymous. We are legion, We do not forgive. We do not forgive. Expect us,” and have since exposed countless organisations and their alter egos. They have evaded being ID-ed with the members’ use of the Guy Fawkes mask made infamous through the movie, V for Vendetta and using voice distortion or speech-to-text programmes for any audio releases. Once noted in 100 most influential people by the Times magazine, they first came under public scrutiny by their mass protest against the Church of Scientology. Since then, they have stepped up their security to target larger fishes like the US and UK Government, Al-Qaeda, KKK, and ISIS. Anonymous kept on laughing different operations and successfully delivering the information needed to bring down the corrupt till suddenly they vanished without a trace around late 2016.

After four years of silence, the group has resurfaced to aid in the current troubling times by shedding light on the Taiwan issue and showing solidarity towards George Floyd. Having exposed Trump and the Royal family for rape and sex trafficking, these cyber vigilantes have once again managed to garner the world’s attention and support. A classic story of bad turned good is the previously active Lulz Security, or more commonly known as LulzSec. They started off as a bunch of internets savvies using their skills to prank and trick online accounts. Later, being inspired by Anonymous, they launched joint operations to take down MNCs involved with money laundering and other suspicious undercover activities. They had a patent statement of “Laughing at your security since 2011,” while making public all the security flaws in several big organizations that claimed to hold civilian records securely. The group attacked several media houses to expose the altered news being aired to the public and in their last act of heroism, they helped the Federal Bureau of Investigation bust over 500 high-risk cyber crimes.

Coming back from the cyber world, the insanely covert vigilante squad called, The Sombra Negra, roughly translated as the Black Shadow are legends solely for targeting the world’s most powerful criminal enterprise. Who, you are absolutely entitled to ask. To which, I say with a shrug, nobody except the godchild of El Salvador, Mara Salvatrucha, otherwise referred to as MS-13. They are a death squad, allegedly composed of police and military personnel, born in December 1989. By their infancy stage of April 1995, they had already killed over seventeen criminals they claimed to be mafia affiliated. Now, at their adult phase, they have grown to tread far dangerous waters than lowlife criminals they feel to be petty. From 2014, with the heightened gang activities putting commoners at life risk, the gang took to actively hunting down members of MS-13 and their rival gang, 18th Street Gang, even going so far as to cover their resident city with posters to ask their preys to ‘leave within five days or face certain death.’ And they have since delivered on their promise, continuing to rack their kill count higher than ever. We see the change. We feel the change. We breathe change. Sometimes it’s by breaking laws that were put forth to silence a right we are owed as humans, and sometimes it’s because we are tired, exhausted, frustrated with the promises made to us with a sincerity that only lasted till we held on to the power. But the moment our fingers let go, those pleas of a better tomorrow vanished as raindrops left too long.  Plato left the world with a message – “The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

So what about those who are tired of sitting back silently to let their homes burn? Are they evil to have broken the laws of society to usurp the undeserved head or are they justified in their attempt to take down the bad, even at the cost of themselves?