

10 Real Life Superheroes Who Have Actually Made a Difference

The Real Life Superhero (RLS) phenomenon has steadily picked up steam over the last decade. Just like in Alan Moore's comic classic *Watchmen*, otherwise normal people are suiting up and fighting crime.

Some have attributed the rise of the RLS to the recent popularity of comic book heroes, while others have interpreted it as a cultural response to the national tragedy of 9/11.

Whatever the case, these Real Life Superheroes walk the streets of cities throughout the world (though many are based in the United States) working for the good of their communities. From *Rolling Stone* to the *Associated Press*, their adventures have been documented. And while many ridicule the grown men and women who wander the streets in outlandish costumes, it's undeniable that many are serious about giving back to the community.

Here are 10 Real Life Superheroes who have actually made a difference:

#10 Alain Robert, the Human Spider

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



French rock and urban climber Alain Robert scales the City Tower on November 12, 2008 in Jakarta, Indonesia. (Getty Images) [more pics >](#)



Born: August 7, 1962

Location: Worldwide (Based in Paris)

Special Ability: To climb up the sides of skyscrapers

Nemesis: Police

Means of Transport: Climbing shoes

Everyone on this list has made a difference in some way, but not everyone on this list actually possesses some superhuman power over the physical world.

While [Alain Robert](#)'s ability is no mutant power, it doesn't even seem possible that a human should be able to climb like he climbs.

Robert has climbed many of the world's tallest structures. He climbed the Sears Tower (recently renamed [Willis Tower](#)) in 1999, completing the climb even after heavy fog made the surface dangerously slick. In all, Robert has climbed more than 85 skyscrapers.

And how has he made a difference? By furthering his political goals of course. Robert is an outspoken activist who has taken up the banner of environmentalism in the fight against global warming. In February, 2009, when Robert climbed the Cheung Kong Centre in Hong Kong, he first unfurled a banner directing people to the global warming Web site [onehundredmonths.org](#). Then in April of 2009, he climbed the Lloyd's building in London and unfurled a similar banner.

But the granddaddy was his June, 2008 climbing of the New York Times building. Upon reaching the top of the building, Robert let fly a banner declaring, "Global warming kills more people than 9/11 every week." That's a ballsy way to get a message across in New York. At least the man stays on point.

#9 Citizen Prime

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Prime (RealLifeSuperheroes.org)

Location: Arizona

Purpose: To educate children and the public at large on safety and preparedness

True Identity: Jim, an executive at an unnamed financial institution

Means of Transport: Xterra

Cost of Costume: \$4,000

Not all caped crusaders are losers with nothing better to do, and Citizen Prime

is proof.

A financial executive by day, Citizen Prime dons his \$4,000 costume, which includes custom-made breast plate armor, and patrols the streets. Citizen Prime separates himself from other neighborhood watch style "superheroes" by distributing literature on how to help in the community and making appearances to talk to children about drugs and crime.

While Citizen Prime has said he respects the work of other superheroes, like the Black Monday Society in Salt Lake City, he takes a different approach by focusing on community involvement. He says the most useful tool at his disposal is a keen sense of humor for diffusing awkward situations.

#8 Polar Man

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Man

Location: Iqaluit, Nunavut; Canada

Notable For: Shoveling snow from

driveways

Mode of Transport: Not a polar bear

Special Ability: Resistance to cold and isolation

Clad all in black and white with his trusty shovel, nary a snow-covered driveway stands a chance when Polar Man is on the case.

While a snow-shoveling hero from an isolated Canadian town of less than 7,000 might seem laughable, Polar Man has truly made a difference. Not only does he clear walkways for the elderly, he also tidies playgrounds in the summer and takes a keen interest in participating in community events.

Most of the heroes on this list come from major metropolitan areas, which sort of makes Polar Man more valuable. After all, what better way is there to make a sleepy town more interesting than by patrolling the streets and calling yourself a superhero?

Polar Man models himself on an Inuit legend where an unknown white man riding a polar bear brings food and clothing to people in need. It's just too bad no one has figured out how to use polar bears as a means of transportation, because a snow shoveler on a polar bear would be truly awesome.

#7 Superhero

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Superhero and his beloved 1975 Corvette Stingray ([from his MySpace profile](#))

Born: c. 1969

Location: Clearwater, Florida

Mode of Transport: 1975 Corvette Stingray

Qualifications: Navy veteran; Police Academy training; professional bodyguard; training in wrestling and boxing

Personal Style: Loud and proud

True Identity: Dale Pople

It's a tad redundant to be a superhero named Superhero, but what this Florida crimefighter lacks in creativity, he makes up for in style.

Superhero has made a difference not only by showing up at events and showing off his Corvette and bright red Spandex. Sure that tends to leave an impression on people (and not always the good kind), but Superhero's real contribution is patrolling the roads and helping people in need of assistance -- like people who need a flat tire changed.

"I don't really know when I made the transition, but just all of a sudden one day it seemed like a good idea to put on my costume and go out and help people with roadside assistance."



Patrick Wilson (left) played Nite Owl in *Watchmen*. Superhero (right) worked his security

detail in civilian clothes. (From MySpace)

Superhero has proven socially adept enough to find himself a Lady Hero, a fellow superhero in training and girlfriend who he says he met in a gym, where he taught her how to do squat thrusts.

Whether you think Superhero is awesome or ridiculous, (there doesn't seem to be much middle ground), he does get points for having the coolest mode of transport, and being an actual bodyguard. When *Watchmen* and *Little Children* star Patrick Wilson showed up in Florida for the Sunscreen Film Festival, Superhero was on hand to work security.

#6 Troy Hurtubise

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Troy Hurtubise in his Trojan Ballistics Suit

Born: November 23, 1963

Location: Hamilton, Ontario; Canada

Nemesis: Grizzly Bears

Purpose: To invent ground-breaking safety gear and body armor

You May Know Him From: The Discovery Channel, *Project Grizzly*

Not a superhero in the traditional sense of the word, think of Troy Hurtubise as the poor man's Tony Stark (that's Iron Man for all you non-nerds).

Like those traditional heroes, Troy does have an origin story. Back in 1984, while hiking near Humidity Creek in British Columbia, Troy was attacked by a grizzly bear. He defied the odds by surviving the attack, but was soon consumed with his desire to know more about the fearsome juggernaut of the natural world. But to get close enough to really learn about grizzly bears, he'd have to get close... really really close. Like close enough that he might be attacked again.

Troy's epiphany came while watching *Robocop* in his college dorm room in 1987. While most of us would probably disregard any epiphany brought on by a Paul Vanderhoeven film about a half-machine supercop, Troy spent the next 7 years, and most of his money, on developing a bear-proof suit.

The various iterations of Troy's suit have been the subject of television shows, pop culture references, and even the documentary *Project Grizzly*. He tests them himself to prove that his suits can withstand being slammed by a swinging log, beaten with baseball bats and even hit by a car.

Troy is currently trying to make a difference by creating body armor for use in combat situations. His most recent suit was based on the *Halo* videogame and features an air conditioned helmet, a magnetic holster, and a built-in canister of heavy-duty bearspray for use in hand-to-hand combat. Unfortunately for Troy, no military or security organizations have shown interest in mass producing the ballistics suits. That might have something to do with the over-the-top nature of the inventor himself. Watch the video at left to see what I mean.

#5 Terrifica

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 19, 2009



Born: c. 1975

Location: New York City

Reason for Fighting: To protect drunk girls from being taken advantage of by opportunistic men

Nemesis: Fantastico

Means of Transport: Red High-heeled boots

Status: Retired

Though she's hung up the ruby red

cape, Terrifica is remembered as a New York City superhero with a very practical goal. Keeping vulnerable girls safe from predatory guys.

Terrifica, later revealed to be a New York artist named Sarah, patrolled New York City bars and clubs where she would try to prevent women from making decisions they would regret by going home with guys who just wanted to get laid. Armed with, among other things, pepper spray, a cell phone, and Smarties candy (for energy), Terrifica said she would try to distract men, who were often intrigued by the sexy, masked girl in a red cape, to give women a chance to get away.

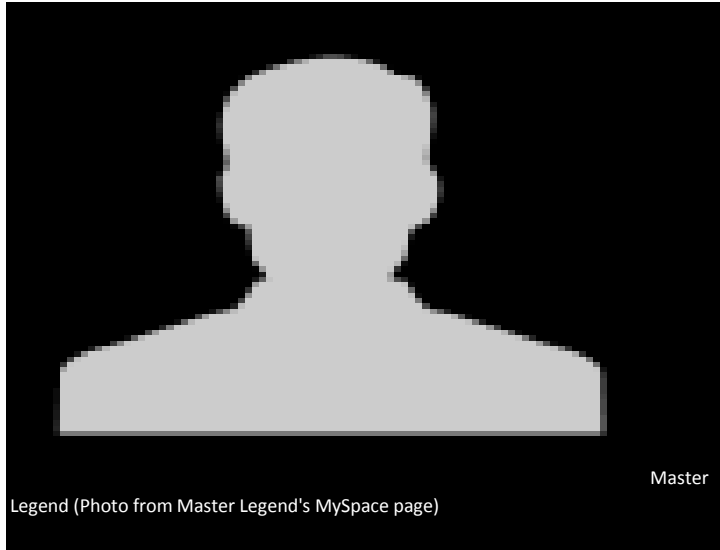
"I protect the single girl living in the big city," [Terrifica told ABC in 2002](#). "I do this because women are weak. They are easily manipulated, and they need to be protected from themselves and most certainly from men and their ill intentions toward them."

Interestingly enough, Terrifica did have a nemesis. A player named Fantastico whose attempts to take home women were thwarted several times by Terrifica. Obviously he was not terribly impressed with Terrifica, who, to be honest, does seem to have some issues with guys.

"She seems to have it in for men," he said. "I'm convinced she is loveless and would love to have the rest of the city as loveless and miserable as she is."

#4 Master Legend

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 17, 2009



Born: June 27, 1966
Location: Orlando area
Team: Justice Force
Fighting Style: Way of the Diamond Spirit
Means of Transport: Battle Truck, Legend Cycle
Signature Weapon: Master Blaster personal cannon (modified potato gun)

Sort of the granddaddy of American Real Life Superheroes, Master Legend

is based in the Orlando suburb of Winter Park, and has been active for the better part of the decade.

Master Legend received national recognition in December, 2008, when [Rolling Stone ran a feature story](#) and pictorial on the superhero clad in a silver and black uniform with a German World War II helmet. Though Legend is little more than a middle-aged man in a costume, he's garnered the support of his community by patrolling the streets, fighting for causes he deems worthy, and working for charity.

His shining moment came in 2004, when he received a commendation from the sheriff's office for helping to save people in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley.

Though many have called into doubt Master Legend's bombastic stories, one police sergeant, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed to ROLLING STONE that Legend had helped bust real criminals.

From *Rolling Stone*:

Based on the neighborhood, [the sergeant] figured, Master Legend might be a good local contact. "And sure enough," the Sergeant tells me, "I start getting calls from Master Legend with information. And it checks out. Master Legend has helped put away a few criminals."

#3 Zetaman

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Zetaman (RealLifeSuperheroes.org)

Location: Portland, OR

Purpose: To protect and serve the community

True Identity: Illya King

Superhero Team: Formerly of The Alternates

Cost of Costume: \$4,000

Zetaman is the epitome of the comic book nerd turned Real Life Superhero.

Zetaman, who draws and writes comic books in his spare time, patrols in a costume inspired by his favorite heroes. He carries a collapsible baton, a stun gun, an air horn, a cell phone, and perhaps most importantly, gloves and sandwiches.

While Zetaman patrols the seediest parts of Portland ready for anything, [he told the Willamette Week](#) that he's never had to apprehend any criminals. More often than not, Zetaman spends his nights handing out gloves, sandwiches and other useful items to Portland's less fortunate residents. And while this altruistic action is par for Zetaman's course, he's clashed with some other Real Life Superheroes who believe vigilante justice is their true calling.

"I guess it sounds kind of less heroic, but I don't want to die," he said. "I wish I had a million dollars, like Batman. But I'm just one guy out there. I'm not strong enough."

Zetaman also helped organize the Alternates, a Portland-based group of Real Life Superheroes who banded together to raise money for the [March for Babies](#), a fundraiser that grew from the March of Dimes to help ensure infant health. But unfortunately, Zetaman has recently split from the Alternates, [stating on his MySpace blog](#) that he can no longer "look past misdeeds on the behalf of friendship."

But never fear. Zetaman is still out there doing good. His latest project is to raise \$500 for the Race for the Cure breast cancer fundraising event in Portland. While the Alternates won't be working together anymore, Zetaman has put together the Zeta-Corps, which is open to anyone who wants to help.

"I want to get as many Portlanders to join my team, the Zeta-Corps. My plan is to get involved with different charties and have the good citizen of Portland to join me," he [said on his blog](#).

#2 Angle-Grinder Man

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 20, 2009



Angle-Grinder Man (bbc.co.uk)

Location: London

Fighting: Overzealous parking authorities

Secret Weapon: Angle Grinder

True Identity: Unknown

Not all superheroes work within the bounds of the law. Angle-Grinder Man specifically works against the law where he deems it is being enforced too strictly.

Wheel clamps are a common sight on London's crowded streets. Parking spaces are a valuable commodity, and their protection has given rise to an entire industry of private businesses whose

sole purpose is to go around placing wheel clamps on illegally parked cars. Enter Angle-Grinder Man.

If you were to find yourself one of the many hapless victims of London clampers, you could call Angle-Grinder Man to come by with a big, mean angle grinder and cut right through the clamp. Whether or not you agree with his purpose, you have to agree that's one way to make a difference.

"I may not be able to single-handedly and totally cast off the repressive shackles of a corrupt government - but I can cut off your wheel-clamps for you," [he said in 2002.](#)

Unfortunately Angle-Grinder Man hasn't been active for a couple of years, but his anti-clamping message lives on in the common complaints of Londoners.

#1 Superbarrio

By [JJ Duncan](#) on July 17, 2009



Born: Unknown, but likely in the late 1950s

Location: Mexico City

Reason for Fighting: To protect poor people's right to housing

Nemesis: Greedy landlords and inept bureaucrats

Means of Transport:Barriomobile

Hidden beneath a red and gold luchadore mask is a Mexico City man

who has gone to great lengths to keep poor tenants in their homes. Superbarrio is regarded in some circles with the same sort of awe children reserve for Batman or Spider-Man. And while he isn't as fit as either of them, he is very effective.

In 1985, an 8.2 earthquake rocked Mexico City, destroying thousands of homes and taking more than 10,000 lives. In the wake of this crushing tragedy, the demand for homes rocketed, leaving many of Mexico City's poverty-stricken denizens unable to find a place to live. That's when Superbarrio Gomez (real name unknown), found his calling.

"One day when I was in my room, I was enveloped in a brilliant red and yellow light, and when it dissipated, I was dressed this way," he explained in 1988. "Then a voice said to me, 'You are Super Barrio, defender of tenants and scourge of greedy landlords.'"

Superbarrio ended up running for President of Mexico in 1988, and while he wasn't ever a serious contender, he made his tenants' and squatters' rights platform a serious issue.

While Superbarrio is still a folk hero in Mexico City, where dolls and T-shirts with his image are common, he keeps a lower profile these days. Even though he isn't as active, his spirit and cause lives on.