

NEWSWEEK

What makes a Villain Super?

By REBECCA M. CHEN ON 3/7/11 AT 7:47 PM EDT

The trial of singer Paige Mcabee, both famously and infamously known as Bad Canary, has come to a close today, and the once popular parahuman pop star now serving a life sentence in the Baumann Parahuman Containment Center after her lawyer submitted two guilty pleas for use of a parahuman ability; both aggravated and sexual assault, due to her horrific actions against her former partner.

Today, we speak with Yale Psychology professor, Dr. Claudius Monroe on his thoughts about parahumans villains, and why they end up doing what they do.

Q: Let's not beat around the bush, Doctor: In your opinion, what is it that makes a super villain the way they are?

Monroe: Well, first of all, I want to say that you phrased that very interestingly. In fact, I'd have to say that it's a very interesting question. Very few people ask me that. Usually, they would ask why would a supervillain do this? Or what makes a supervillain different from a regular criminal, other than their superhuman abilities, of course.

Q: Of course.

Monroe: From what I've come to understand, the issue is not generally one of a drastically altered mental state, as in that parahumans aren't *inherently* mentally and emotionally different from otherwise normal humans to any massive degree.

Q: But Doctor Monroe, I mean, just on the East Coast, I can name several parahumans with what I believe are enhanced minds.



Yale Psychology Professor Doctor Claudius Monroe is calling for a re-evaluation of the parahuman criminal justice system in relation to what he claims is fear-mongering over specific categories of parahuman abilities.

GETTY IMAGES

Monroe: Notice that I said inherently, Ms. Chen. Granted, powers do often grant enhanced senses, processing ability, and often a drastically different way of understanding the world, and that's not even taking into account those with powers that drastically alter their actual brain matter. Some parahumans simply lack traditional brains completely, let alone other organs. That much is very true, but underneath all that, they are comparable to humans on a mental level.

Q: I... I'm still not sure I understand.

Monroe: Alright. Let me put it this way for you. Much in the same way that a blind person, a person with a genius level IQ, a savant or an individual with synesthesia might interpret the world differently, it does not make their minds any less human.

Q: I see now.

Monroe: I'm glad you do.

Q: So, if they don't inherently act differently because of their powers, then what is it?

Monroe: See, see. That's the kicker. It's not that they don't inherently *act* differently. It's that they're not inherently different on a mental level from human beings. *However*, the effect the powers have on their minds and behaviors going forward are in themselves the issue.

Q: Doctor, I feel like we're talking in circles. Surely, we can get a specific answer.

Monroe: That's the thing about psychology, parahuman psychology even more so. Direct answers are rather hard. However, I will leave you with an example a colleague of mine once gave regarding villains and I'm going to paraphrase it here but... superpowers aren't like a toy or a trick that can be put down and put away. In pretty much all cases, these abilities are weapons or tools to create weapons.

Nearly every power we have seen is directly geared for combat in some manner, if not implicitly, then very, very explicitly. Your own body has suddenly become a vastly efficient killing machine, in many cases making you capable of committing mass murder simply by accident. What kind of an effect will that have on your psychology? What kind of

psychological state did you begin with that your mind would demand such a thing to use for protection? If you think about it, it's about the same as carrying a gun, with the only difference being that it's "part of your body".

Q: But just having the ability to do so wouldn't make you want to commit criminal acts, though?

Monroe: Of course not, and I'm not even implying that capes, especially capes with powers that aren't very nice-looking or marketable, have the urge to kill simply because they have the ability to. However, one has to understand that from a medical and psychological perspective, our perception of self comes as much from our body as our mind.

You'd need to assume that whatever power one develops would have a strong effect on sensory feedback from the body, which could have a profound impact on how you perceive both the world around you and your own body from somatosensory and proprioceptive perspectives. Current medical science is divided on how many senses humans actually possess. Conventional wisdom says five. However, a large percentage of neurologists list over twenty different senses.

However, most of these are not consciously used by the average individual. With powers on the table, though, who knows? Even then, the impact that would have on a person's mental state or personality would depend a lot on their baseline before a trigger. Veterans with prosthetic limbs don't all react the same way to their new hands or legs.

Q: Wow, I understand where you're coming from.

Monroe: Exactly, so it's not really all that surprising that some of these people who found themselves bulletproof with chrome skin or a body that shifts out of phase from our reality or the ability to shoot lasers from their eyes through three inches of steel or a mass of tentacles where their limbs used to be or a body that seems to shift and squirm everytime you look at it got a little... *weird*, to use a colloquial term.

Q: Of course not.

Monroe: And then, of course, people start to look at them a little weird, maybe a bit fearfully because they can pop meter long claws out of the back of their hands, launch explosive blasts from their fingers or wade through a hail of gunfire and they

no longer think, react or behave like a normal person should and they stare at you with glowing, pupil-less, unblinking eyes, and are they even human anymore, especially when they specifically appear non-human? Then the next thing you know they're maybe feeling a little alienated from their fellow humans and now they've become a hammer and maybe the world is beginning to look like it's made out of nails that fear and hate you, so maybe some of that aggression accidently leaks out, but you're a man of steel now and the world is made of cardboard and, whoops, there goes that building...

Q: ... Wow.

Monroe: If you'd like to know more, you can buy my book *Give A Man Power: An Understanding of Disenfranchisement & Villainy* in bookstores across the country.

READ MORE

- [Protectorate ENE Baffled with Many Tinker Bombs Unaccounted For](#)
- [CEO of MedHall on White Knight: "A Homegrown Hero"](#)
- [Marked Increase in Brockton Bay Parahuman Population](#)
- [Surviving a Villain Attack: How to Plead for Your Life](#)