

Christian McGlothlin-Clason

Dr. Sunita Lanka

HCOM 312

7 May, 2014

Anonymous: Protest to the New World Issues

Anonymous is an idea, utilized by various groups of people for internet protest.

Anonymous is the idea of using the cyber web to protest injustice and indiscretions that go unpunished, either judicially or morally. It does not serve individual organized groups, but rather the people as a whole. Anonymous is generally known through the Vendetta masks donned for protesting bad government, greedy corporations, and forced silence. The question to ask is: "Is Anonymous a good representative, standing against legality, so that corrupt who are indifferent to the general public must take seriously the needs of the general public, rather than tolerating them? Do we need Anonymous around or is it a criminal nuisance?" Anonymous is indeed necessary in that it is an idea uniting people who would otherwise sidestep injustices that are now being protested for the injustices that they are.

Anonymous is an idea, based off of internet hackers, who use their talents to protest wrongs, due to the freedoms allowed to corporations who use them to oppress or harm others. The organization is not a group, the way it is presented. Their famous line of "We are Anonymous, we are legion" refers to more than just the people who have signed up in a group. They are referring to anybody who chooses to take up the mask that protects them and others for the sake of protest. And they need this mask because what they do in protest is often illegal or damaging. Various protestors use their talents to hack a website or network for one reason or

another. To get the point across, they leave behind damage that costs the companies or groups that run these sites a lot of money for reparation of said websites.

The acts of Anonymous have altered between normal protest to illegal activity that despite the intent is still illegal and harms somebody. Much of Anonymous' acts of protest is a call to action against things that the general public normally ignores, but the activities are often uncalled for. An example of this is the attempt to get the government's attention, by shutting down the Department of Justice's website and posted in place of their information a video announcing that they had information that would be distributed about a warhead. This presents a threat to the general public, internationally. This is not simply a threat to the Department of Justice's security and image, it presents questionable security for the United States and surrounding countries. It also gives some insecurity to the Department for its image, this is supposed to be a section of the government that presents some concern. The question of the content that is being revealed online without permission presents a question of what consequences this information may have. Who are these civilians to choose the fate of our justice system's consequences based on their own moral views? Believing and demanding that change be made is one thing, but taking matters into one's own hands is illegal as a vigilante for the reasons that there are disagreeable consequences of these actions. And much of the population disagrees that Anonymous in the right to reveal sensitive information from the Department of Justice. But, given the change of times, with new ways of doing things. Bad government means a government has done wrong by the people, an example being the Department of Justice (U.S.).

With greedy corporations, there are often times when something happens that the police themselves cannot protect people from, due to the "Terms of Agreement" which people sign when they sign up for things. Forced silence is probably the worst crime of all, on an

international pleather of information. As a country of freedoms, with free speech being one of the decided rights, to protect oneself from the government itself and fascism, it is a surprise to find a silence on the internet that cannot be policed.

One of the most tedious lines to walk is that of warfare and treason. One of the ways that Anonymous is working for justice is against the Department of Justice itself. Though, there is much disagreement with their tactic of threatening that they have a key to a warhead that is being placed into the hands of civilians, there is agreement about the positives of revealing information hidden by the Department of Justice. Information on the faults of the system has been made available for download to anybody willing to find said download. This made internal emails and the entire database dump accessible, so that the Department of Justice cannot hide the facts from the people. Important information revealing problems in the system, problems involving peoples' lives, innocent or guilty, should not be hidden so that the Department of Justice can keep the United States passive to it, but it should be known. And that is what Anonymous did, they made their information known.

Corporations have found new ways of making an extra dollar as well, regardless of who suffers for it. Just as the government does as it sees fit, these days, more and more big corporations are doing things the way they want to, through signed contracts and license agreements. Much of what Anonymous does surrounds damage that requires a large budget to repair. Anonymous' most popular form of protest is hacking into websites and causing enough damage to get attention. Following this damage, they send messages to the owners of the website, making them aware of what they have done and warning them that if something did not change, then more damage would come their way. There are numerous examples of this damage, done out of response to companies' conduct and the mere fact that these websites can be infiltrated.

One of the largest examples of this infiltration and damage of website property is the hacking of Sony's PlayStation website. The company sued George Hotz for hacking a device he bought, to utilize how he desired, and for publishing his information for others to use, free online as part of the public domain. To the company, this is utilization of their property, taking prospect money out of their pockets. The profits that rightfully belongs to the company based on the idea of capitalism that is a large part of the U.S. mindset of business, are being stolen through the information that originally belongs to the company and was not permitted to George Hotz.

Anonymous claims that the lawsuit is a form of silence, a crime against free speech, as Hotz has only done this on his own equipment bought with his money, and has shared the information with the general public, without financial gains. Arguments against this claim that Hotz is vandalizing Sony's product, removing business from additional purchases of equipment that customers would otherwise need if they did not know the information Hotz found. But Hotz has not harmed anybody in this process, has only hacked his own equipment, and has shared information with the world so that others might use their equipment the way they want to use their things. Sony does not depict the way people use their things after they are bought, so Sony should not be allowed to decide that people cannot use their equipment for certain games so they can make extra profits.

This is not the only infiltration of the website. One of Anonymous' other infiltrations of the website was out of spite for the website's loopholes. By their statement, the website has been hacked various times before them. And what Anonymous did was take sensitive information belonging to customers and send that information to the company, stating that this was done to bring to light the weakness in the website. When the company's customers found out, they felt violated of their privacy and several of them sued the company. As these customers were

unaware that this was happening before, and they did not know what information might already be in somebody else's hands, they are angered by the company's policy in handling their sensitive information. This also stands to show how Anonymous was necessary to show this problem. After countless hackers already took information from the company, it took Anonymous' announcement to force the company to hire a professional to patch up the holes in the site.

Corporations are not Anonymous' only targets, however. Two particular religious groups have rallied together for their own ideas of free speech, freedom of religion and moral rights. As American citizens, they take to the streets to announce what they believe and to say what they want to. They are merely taking liberty of their freedom of speech, and that is permissible by law in public. The Westboro Baptist church is one of the two, and has made a lot of noise about the gay laws being instated to allow homosexual relations to be legally binding. This anti-gay, anti-Semitic group chose to picket the funerals of the Boston Marathon bombing. The church claims that the bombs were not a terrorist attack, as declared by police investigators, but rather a warning sent from God for legalizing gay marriage in 2004. Through the view of the Westboro Baptist church, it is their right to freedom of speech to say what they want to when they want to, because it is free speech. This is not the church's first personal attack on people, as it has picketed and protested nearly 53,000 events since its founding in 1955, simply using its freedom of speech to make its views heard.

The general public is tired of it and has joined forces through Anonymous by picketing the church at these events, giving their support to the people who are being attacked. The general public sees the picketing of the Boston Bombing funeral as harassment of the mourners and those who are not affiliated with said church. Anonymous nipped this issue by making

threatening statements to the church, stating that if they planned to picket the funerals, that Anonymous would protest in its own way. They threatened the site, released information about members of the church, such as addresses, causing the members to respond by not attending the protests at all.

Another religious group that is on Anonymous' hotlist is the Church of Scientology. To go into any sort of explanation about how this group works would require a novel's worth of pages. But, the church itself believes what it preaches, and willingly greets people into their church. In fact, the church believes it stands above the status-quo of churches for not forcing its general public to rely on faith to believe in a God but to science to prove that a God exists. The basics of this church is that it tears apart the lives of its own members while trying to bring others into it.

The church believes in a scientific spirituality that is based on belief in science that has not been proven by real science, such as UFOs that have not been seen or identified yet. The church cons its own members into paying money for its services. Members who show the slightest bit of lacking in faith are not only cast out of the church, but from families. Any member of the church may not associate with people outside of churches. Any question of their association with outsiders or of lacking absolute faith, they are immediately outcast, forced away from their families, and exiled to a world they have become unfamiliar with. Children growing up in these churches are limited in contact with the students they go to school with grade school and onward, giving them a limited social contact and a confused construct of what their religion is. They are not allowed to question the church or any church official, only do what they are told when they are told to do it, even if it causes grief or costs them money. Many people have been scammed out of their life's savings. The church has gone on through this mask of being a

religion with rights to freedom of religion, while it is merely a cult conning its own public and fooling its own children. People become attacked and are monitored with harsh interrogations if they question anything going on within the church. Anonymous has protested the church through picketing and website attacks, to get the message across to the cult that the controlling that they are doing is wrong.

There are always lines that are crossed when it comes to religion and freedom of religion. The argument, however, is not whether people believe in L. Ron Hubbard's work, founder of Scientology. Rather, it is the church's work, the conning, controlling and threatening that the church does to pull people away from the rest of the world. Many people who leave the church join a new church, or they continue to believe in the work of the founder, L. Ron Hubbard, but do not think that the church itself in this day is right for them. Actress Leah Remini is an example of somebody who has left the church but still believes in Hubbard's work. Having grown up in the church, she had believed in it from her childhood, but after years of donating millions of dollars to the church, and an incident where she was closely watched and interrogated, she decided to break those ties. The church takes money, not often in the form of donations as Leah Remini might have given, and controls the way its public thinks and feels about things, down to the letter, so that if one question is spoken, it is shut down with threats and interrogations.

These are only a few examples of what Anonymous has done and will do. There are numerous examples of how Anonymous has infiltrated or picketed corruption, silencing or taking advantage of civilians. But, they are important facts that point to the matter that Anonymous is the idea we can cling to. In this day and age, with technology on the rise, internet being the most popular thing around, and every hacker holding access to any kind of information

in the palm of their hands, we can take up the mask. Today, we do not have some of the luxuries of the past, when there was less information to track humans by. However, Anonymous provides us with a way to unite for good causes and break away from corporate greed, political corruption and speech oppression.