

AGAPE

The Anti-Good Alliance for Professional Evildoers (or AGAPE) is a carefully-calibrated bane of the superheroic community's life. Too much villainy, and they get shut down, hard. Too little, and people won't take them very seriously. And that's the problem, right there; it's hard enough to take AGAPE *too* seriously, thanks (as usual) to bad branding.

The concept was sound, on paper. Pink! Fluffy! Liberal use of heart and rose motifs! Nobody else was doing it, which made the look unique; and the mix of Hallmark aesthetics with grand larceny would make people shocked and appalled! Villainous groups like it when civilians are shocked and appalled. They're more likely to run away, which means that you get fewer hostage situations, and professional super-crook groups **hate** hostage situations. A lot of superheroes think that the gloves get to come off just a little when they're facing a criminal menacing a nice old lady or something, and society tends to agree with them. It's **different** when the heroes are facing crooks by themselves, somehow. Some kind of psychology thing.

Unfortunately, AGAPE's founder -- Dark Valentine, a supervillain with mild gadgeteer and shadow powers -- didn't bother to hire an image consultant, and by the time he got a good look at the results it was too late. It just all looked... dumb. Dumb, and flashy, and memorably so. And there was no way to shake the public's first perception of that.

AGAPE might have closed down almost immediately, except that while Dark Valentine may have had no real experience in aesthetics, he *could* read a spreadsheet -- and he realized pretty quickly that AGAPE's average time of incarceration numbers were noticeably lower than for other super-crook organizations. So were AGAPE's employee medical expenses. It turns out that superheroes *pull* their punches when they're smacking around a crook dressed like a relic from a 1980s animated cartoon about rainbows and magic animals, and that juries are more inclined to let the poor bastard go with a reduced sentence as long as he didn't, again, menace anybody.

So what could Dark Valentine do, except lean into it? Which meant he had to design more non-lethal weapons, and make a carefully-considered attempt to keep AGAPE's public image from being entirely awful, and of course going with an entire 'theme' for the group's crimes.

AGAPE might hate the resulting public perception, but that public perception somehow gets the job done, and the banks robbed -- and that's why people become super-crooks.

They all still look ridiculous, though.

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