

WORLD NEWS AND POLITICS

A HERO AND A VILLAIN IN 2010—The tyranny of Nazism and the bombing of Pearl Harbor tugged America into a conflict that would ultimately establish it as a world superpower. From a combined Army and Navy of nearly two million on the eve of Pearl Harbor, America’s armed forces expanded to more than ten million soldiers by mid-1945. The number of men and women who take arms to serve this great nation today has obviously multiplied, as this nation’s population has multiplied. And half a century later, America and other nations of the world are still at war.

2010, like other periods in history, may be marked by countless stories of social and political events; but if we were asked to close our eyes for a brief moment, take a deep breath and filter out all the noise, two stories resonate above all. They are the tales of two men who commanded the world’s attention in two contrasting styles: one is a southpaw boxer from the poverty stricken streets of the Philippines whose iron fists and heart of gold earned him the admiration and adoration of a nation; and the other is a silver-haired Australian Internet activist whose perseverance and activism stirred a political earthquake so big that it shook the very foundations of the White House and the Pentagon. The aftershocks of these two men’s activities are being felt from the streets of London to the marble hall of the President’s home.

Manny Pacquiao, a Philippine fighter, and Julian Assange, an Australian journalist and founder of a whistleblower website called WikiLeaks, however starkly contrasted their philosophies of life may be, will be remembered for many years to come. Moammar Gadhafi, Kim Jong II, Silvio Berlusconi, Robert Mugabe, Hamid Karzi, Robert Mugabe, and other world leaders, took punches to their faces, figuratively, on a fateful Sunday in November 2010 when WikiLeaks released secret U.S. diplomatic cables and offered us insights into the personal lives of these world leaders and how U.S. diplomats view them. Who would imagine that a man and his four-year organization held such power? Trained as a physicist and mathematician at the University of Melbourne, and later developed into a brilliant computer programmer whose specialty is devising software encryption, Julian Assange certainly left his mark on history by leaking to the world classified military documents dealing with the war in Afghanistan.

While Julian pounced on his opponents with a blitzkrieg of secret documents, Manny Pacquiao was destroying his opponents with lightning fast punches. Armies and rebels stopped fighting, streets emptied, and all eyes, young and old, were glued to every available television screen whenever Manny stepped into the ring. That is the power and influence of Manny Pacquiao, also known to his fans around the world as the Pacman. William Harrison Dempsey might have caught the boxing world’s attention in the 1920s, Cassius Clay in the 1960s, Muhammad Ali in the 1970s, and Mike Tyson in the 1980s, but none achieved what Manny has accomplished so far. The Pacman’s punches are like the blazeblitz that pummeled London in 1941. The impact from his fists explode at his opponents’ bodies like the crackling incendiaries of blue and rose-colored flames that once illuminated London’s smoke choked air.

Manny is the only boxer in history to win 10 world titles in eight different weight divisions. He has destroyed much bigger and stronger opponents. A short list of legendary fighters dismantled by this southpaw’s blazing speed and jaw dropping punches include Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton, Joshua Clottey, Miguel Cotto, Antonio Margarito, Erik Morales, David Diaz, and many more. Not only is he the premier fighter of all, time but he is also a humanitarian and a Congressman. The Boxing Writers Association of America named him “Fighter of the Decade” and *The Ring*, a boxing magazine, named him “Fighter of the Year” for three different years.

A poor boy struggling to survive in the poverty stricken streets of the Philippines, Manny earned his meals one fight at a time. From the streets he rose and his past hardships made him a better man, a more humane man who feeds the poor with his hard earned money. Manny is not only loved by boxing fans from his homeland but also by people from around the world. His voice captivated the attention of millions when he appeared on national television and sang “Imagine” alongside actor Will Ferrell.

Manny Pacquiao and Julian Assange: each a giant in his own right—one revered by millions and the other coined “Destroyer of Worlds”—will go down in history books, each in his own distinct way. They certainly have left indelible marks on 2010. Manny has entertained millions, given to the poor, and is preparing for a new style of fighting—in the political arena. While Julian has stirred the curiosity of millions, provoked nations, and forced us as a people to reexamine our First Amendment Rights. Freedom of Speech and Press will never be the same as the impact of WikiLeaks’ media blitz continues to be felt worldwide.



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