

# 情有可原

qing2 you3 ke3 yuan2

A New York woman caught driving with blood-alcohol level four times the legal limit was acquitted of drunk-driving charges. She told the court she had not consumed alcohol.

It is hard to find a judge who would entertain such a defense. The woman got off because she has a rare condition known as the “auto-brewery” or “gut fermentation” syndrome, in which the digestive system turns ordinary food into alcohol.

Drunk-driving wrecks lives. It is a serious offense that should be punished severely. But in this case, it is apparently “情有可原” (qing2 you3 ke3 yuan2).

“情” (qing2) is “sentiments,” “love,” or “a situation,” “有” (you3) “to have,” “to exist,” “可” (ke3) “to permit,” “to approve,” “to suit,” and “原” means (yuan2) “原諒” (yuan2 liang4), “to forgive.” Literally, “情有可原” (qing2 you3 ke3 yuan2) is “situation permits to forgive.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

The idiom means though a mistake has been made, it is “understandable,” “excusable,” “pardonable,” “justified,” an act committed “under extenuating (情有可原的) circumstances.”

The woman driver’s condition was undiagnosed before, so her “drunk-driving” is “情有可原” (qing2 you3 ke3 yuan2). Now that she is aware of her condition, it is not known what position the court will take next time she drives with excessive blood-alcohol levels.

In any event, legal experts advise inebriated (飲醉的) drivers to not even think about raising this defense unless they really have such a condition, and can produce documented medical evidence to prove it.

### Terms containing the character “情” (qing2) include:

情況 (qing2 kuang4) – circumstances, a situation

情緒 (qing2 xu4) – sentiments, emotion

情報 (qing2 bao4) – information, intelligence

情人 (qing2 ren2) – a lover