

女中豪傑

nu3 zhong1 hao2 jie2

Two women became the first female soldiers to graduate from the Ranger School. This school feeds the US special forces (特種部隊), hence its training is extremely demanding. In fact, 17 out of 19 women in the same 61-day training program did not last even the first four days.

These successful female soldiers will be hailed (喝采) by many as “女中豪傑” (*nu3 zhong1 hao2 jie2*).

“女” (*nu3*) is “female,” “woman,” “中” (*zhong1*) means “among,” “middle,” and “豪傑” (*hao2 jie2*) means “a person with unusual courage and ability,” “a hero.” Literally, the idiom is “a hero among women,” which is exactly what it means.

When a woman achieves something remarkable, people often use this idiom to describe her.

There are a few well-known “女中豪傑” (*nu3 zhong1 hao2 jie2*) in Chinese history and folklore. One of them is Hua Mulan (花木蘭), or

Idiom by Lon Yan

Mulan as featured in modern day movies, who took the place of her aged father to fight gallantly in the army.

“女中豪傑” (*nu3 zhong1 hao2 jie2*) is invariably meant to be a compliment. Yet, in this day and age of gender equality, one cannot help but notice a hint of political incorrectness in the idiom.

We don't call a male hero “男中豪傑” (*nan2 zhong1 hao2 jie2*). And some would say the idiom “女中豪傑” (*nu3 zhong1 hao2 jie2*) is discriminatory, as highlighting the female gender reflects a presumption that it is an exception to find a “hero” among women.

Terms containing the character “女” (*nu3*) include:

女校 (*nu3 xiao4*) - girls' school

女士 (*nu3 shi4*) - title Miss attached to a surname

小女 (*xiao3 nu3*) - my daughter

女性 (*nu3 xing4*) - the female gender