

# 不寒而慄

*bu4 han2 er2 li4*

A Chicago policeman has been charged with murder for shooting an African-American youth 16 times. In Toronto, a police officer is on trial for second-degree murder and attempted murder after he fired nine shots at a young man on a deserted streetcar downtown.

Both incidents were captured on video, which have been made public. In both cases, they show an officer continuing to fire after the suspect collapses and is lying motionless on the ground.

Release of the video of the Chicago shooting by court order has triggered massive demonstrations on the streets. Whether the officers were justified in using deadly force is a question for the courts to decide, but the circumstances of the shootings as they are seen on the videos certainly make people “不寒而慄” (*bu4 han2 er2 li4*).

“不” (*bu4*) is “not,” “寒” (*han2*) is “cold,” “而” (*er2*) means “but” and “慄” (*li4*) is “to shudder,” “to trem-

## Idiom by Lon Yan

ble.” Literally, “不寒而慄” (*bu4 han2 er2 li4*) is “not cold but tremble,” “trembling all over but not cold.”

The body trembles when it is cold. We also tremble when we are very frightened, even if the surroundings are warm. What the idiom describes is this common physiological reaction to fear.

So “不寒而慄” means “shaking with fear,” “trembling with fear,” or “makes one shudder.” When something makes people “不寒而慄” (*bu4 han2 er2 li4*), it means it is terrifying.

When someone does something callous and vicious, you can say “What you do makes me “不寒而慄” (*bu4 han2 er2 li4*)!”

### Terms containing the character “寒” (*han2*) include:

寒冬 (*han2 dong1*) – a cold winter

寒冷 (*han2 leng3*) – cold, freezing

寒流 (*han2 liu2*) – a cold stream

寒暄 (*han2 xuan1*) – to exchange greetings and make small talk