

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 衆叛親離

*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*

It is no surprise when your enemies call you a disgrace. But when your friends start to say the same thing about you, you are a lost cause.

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump had been spewing racist and sexist slurs for months. But when a video, depicting him describing women in vulgar and sexually aggressive terms, was released, many of his “friends” decided enough is enough.

So over 100 of his party’s leaders made it clear that they will not vote for him, others have withdrawn endorsements or have called for him to step down as the nominee. For Trump, it is a clear case of “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*).

“衆” (*zhong4*) is “the public,” “a crowd,” “叛” (*pan4*) “to betray,” “親” (*qin1*) “close,” “intimate,” “close friends,” “relatives,” and “離” (*li2*) “to leave.” Literally, “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1*

*li2*) is “the crowd turns against you and those who are close to you leave,” “people rebelling and friends deserting you.”

Figuratively, “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*) means “to be deserted by one’s followers,” “to be deserted and all alone,” “to find oneself utterly isolated.”

People who find themselves in the predicament of “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*) often deserve it, like Trump. But “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*) can happen even if a person has done nothing wrong.

When someone loses power or money, they often find themselves “衆叛親離” (*zhong4 pan4 qin1 li2*) too. People want a friend, not a liability, so when you become the latter, they cut you loose. That is just a sad fact of life.

### Terms containing the character “離” (*li2*) include:

離開 (*li2 kai1*) – to leave

離職 (*li2 zhi2*) – to leave office

離婚 (*li2 hun1*) – to divorce

離譜 (*li2 pu3*) – too far out