

Idiom by Lon Yan

不識抬舉

bu4 shi2 tai2 ju3

A man burst into Wong Tai Sin Temple, brandishing a knife. Worshippers scurried for cover as the man started to slash up bunting and attacked a security guard who tried to subdue him.

It looked very respectable – the president of the United States of America Donald Trump and First Lady Melania walking down red carpet on the tarmac with their entourage to meet waiting dignitaries as they arrived in Israel for a visit.

But then something funny happened: the president slowed down his pace and reached for his wife's hand, but the First Lady ignored him. In fact, news video showed that she appeared to bat off (or flick off or slap aside, depending which media report you are reading) her husband's hand.

Perhaps Melania thought a display of affection was not appropriate on such a

dignified occasion, or that the couple just had a lover's spat on the plane. Whatever the reason, and as one media said, "It left the world wondering "What game is FLOTUS – the First Lady of the United States – playing?"

When the president wants to hold your hand, you should be flattered and grateful, and take it. Snubbing the president could be described as “不識抬舉” (*bu4 shi2 tai2 ju3*).

“不” (*bu4*) is “no,” “not,” “識” (*shi2*) “to know,” “to recognize,” “to discern,” “抬” (*tai2*) is “to lift,” “to raise,” and “舉” (*ju3*) is “to raise,” “to lift up,” “to recommend,” “to praise.” A direct translation of “不識抬舉” (*bu4 shi2 tai2 ju3*) is “not know lifting up,” which does not make sense. “抬舉” (*tai2 ju3*), as a term, means “to praise or favor someone.”

So “不識抬舉” (*bu4 shi2 tai2 ju3*) actually means “not to know how to appreciate favors,” “fail to appreciate someone's kindness.”

Terms containing the character “舉” (*ju3*) include:

舉行 (*ju3 xing2*) – to hold (a meeting, an event etc)

舉動 (*ju3 dong4*) – a movement

舉例 (*ju3 li4*) – to give an example

舉手 (*ju3 shou3*) – to raise one's hand