

Idiom by Lon Yan

不由分說

bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1

A 44-year-old man talked excitedly with the lady cashier at a restaurant at Mei King Street, To Kwa Wan. Another customer, aged 53, thought the cashier was being bullied.

Apparently seeing himself as a hero coming to the rescue of a damsel in distress, he went over wielding a weapon – a beer bottle. In a dramatic intervention, he duly smashed the glass container on the head of the “bully.”

Wounded, the 44-year-old was not down, and he punched the attacker. In the ensuing melee, both were injured and arrested. The way the 53-year-old handled the situation can be described with the idiom “不由分說” (*bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1*).

“不” (*bu4*) is “no,” “not;” “由” (*you2*) “to follow the wishes of;” “to allow or entrust someone to do;” “分說” (*fen1 shuo1*) means “to defend oneself (against a charge);” “to explain matters.”

Literally, “不由分說” (*bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1*) is “not allow to explain,” which is what the idiom means – “allowing no explanation;” “giving no chance to explain;” “not allowing one to speak;” “without giving sb. the opportunity to explain;” “without listening to sb.’s protests.”

“不由分說” (*bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1*) is never a good policy. Even if you feel aggrieved, you should at least let the other party explain. Usually, the dispute would turn out to be just misunderstanding.

“不由分說” (*bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1*) is not reasonable behavior. But that seems to be exactly how some of the critics have been acting. Habitually, they would “不由分說” (*bu4 you2 fen1 shuo1*) and launch scathing attacks at officials.

Terms containing the character “分” (*fen1*) include:

分析 (*fen1 xi1*) – to analyze; an analysis

分店 (*fen1 dian4*) – a branch store

分配 (*fen1 pei4*) – to allot; to distribute

分手 (*fen1 shou3*) – to part company; to separate