

Idiom by Lon Yan

見義勇為

jian4 yi4 yong3 wei4

An elderly woman who scavenged used cardboard boxes on the streets accidentally pushed her wooden cart into a car parked by the roadside, denting its door. The car owner demanded HK\$4,000 as compensation, which poor woman, of course, didn't have.

A passerby pleaded with the car owner to just let the old lady go. When he refused, she negotiated the compensation down to HK\$1,000 and paid it too.

The incident was captured on video and uploaded online. Netizens praised the woman passerby for “見義勇為” (*jian4 yi4 yong3 wei4*).

“見” (*jian4*) “to see,” “義” (*yi4*) “justice,” “righteousness,” “勇” (*yong3*) “brave,” and “為” (*wei4*) “to do,” “to act.” Literally, “見義勇為” (*jian4 yi4 yong3 wei4*) is “to see what is right and act courageously.”

The idiom means “to be unhesitant to do what is right,” “to be pro-active in righting injustices,” “to step up against injustice,” “to act bravely for a just cause,” “to stand up bravely for the truth,” “acting heroically in a just cause.”

Someone, however, thought it was right to demand compensation as anyone who damages the property of others should pay up. But others questioned such an attitude, saying accidents happens, and it wasn't too much to ask the car owner to show the old lady a bit of kindness.

“見義勇為” (*jian4 yi4 yong3 wei4*) is laudable, but “乘人之危” (*cheng2 ren2 zhi1 wei1*) is despicable. “乘人之危” (*cheng2 ren2 zhi1 wei1*) means “to take advantage of others' difficulties,” to take advantage of another person's precarious position.”

Terms containing the character “勇” (*yong3*) include:

勇氣 (*yong3 qi4*) – courage; bravery

勇敢 (*yong3 gan3*) – brave; daring; fearless

勇士 (*yong3 shi4*) – a warrior; a brave person

勇猛 (*yong3 meng3*) – brave and fierce; courageous; bold and powerful