

Idiom by Lon Yan

求仁得仁

qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2

The jailing of three students activists by the Court of Appeal has created a controversy.

Some staged a march on the streets, crying foul. Others, however, supported the court's decision, saying people who break the law should be punished according to the law.

Some went so far as to call the sentences "political persecution". A legal heavyweight disagreed, saying instead that the three should consider themselves "求仁得仁" (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2*).

"求" (*qiu2*) is "to look for," "to seek," "仁" (*ren2*) "benevolence," "mercifulness," "kind-heartedness," "得" (*de2*) "to get," "to obtain," "to gain," "to result in," and "仁" (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2*) is, again, "benevolence," "mercifulness," "kindheartedness."

Literally, "求仁得仁" (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2*) is "ask for benevolence, getting benevolence."

The idiom means "getting what one has asked for," "finding what one look for," "achieving what one set out to do."

"求仁得仁" (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2*) means so long as you get what you are seeking, you should not complain, even if you suffer from the quest. When you consider what you are doing is noble and just, knowing full well that you are going to get punishment, and when you finally do get punished, it is "求仁得仁" (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2*).

The question, of course, is whether you are really prepared to take the consequence of your actions, hence the saying "Be careful what you wish for, you may just get it!" an advice that you should think before you say that you want something, as you may not actually want it.

Terms containing the character "求" (*qiu2*) include:

求助 (*qiu2 zhu4*) – to ask for help

求職 (*qiu2 zhi2*) – to seek for employment

求婚 (*qiu2 hun1*) – to propose marriage

求情 (*qiu2 qing2*) – to plea for leniency; to ask for a favor