

Idiom by Lon Yan

寡不敵衆

gua3 bu4 di2 zhong4

The expression “there is strength in numbers” means a group of people has more influence or power than one person.

Julie Andrews disagreed. In her *The Sound of Music* number “I have confidence”, she sang about how strength lies neither in numbers nor in wealth, but in “nights of peaceful slumbers.”

A Hong Kong man who visited Taiwan recently apparently subscribed to her view, to his serious detriment.

He tried to fight off a group of men on the street, and found out that in certain situations, strength actually does lie in numbers, and not believing that could land you in a peaceful slumber, six feet under.

He was beaten to a pulp, so to speak, and had to be taken to a hospital. Some would say he’d asked for this, as he was drunk at the time and was acting in an obnoxious manner.

In any event, his predicament can be described as “寡不敵衆” (*gua3 bu4 di2 zhong4*).

“寡” (*gua3*) is “few,” “scant,” “不敵” (*bu4 di2*) “no match for,” “be defeated,” “cannot beat,” and “衆” (*zhong4*) “many,” “numerous,” “a crowd.” Literally, “寡不敵衆” (*gua3 bu4 di2 zhong4*) is “the few are no match for the many,” “a small group cannot defeat a big group.”

“寡不敵衆” (*gua3 bu4 di2 zhong4*) means “to be hopelessly outnumbered,” “to fight against hopeless odds,” “heavily outnumbered.”

A related idiom is “衆寡懸殊” (*zhong4 gua3 xuan2 shu1*), which means “a great disparity in numerical strength,” “unequally matched,” “heavily outnumbered.”

The lesson to be learned is: when you find yourself in a situation of “寡不敵衆” (*gua3 bu4 di2 zhong4*), run!

Terms containing the character “敵” (*di2*) include:

敵人 (*di2 ren2*) – an enemy; a foe

敵對 (*di2 dui4*) – antagonistic; hostile

敵意 (*di2 yi4*) – animosity; ill blood; malice

敵軍 (*di2 jun1*) – enemy troops