

# THE LOTUS

## BLOCK 4 NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023

BY UTSHAA BASU '25

## SOUTH ASIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPORTS ON RECENT DIWALI AND GARBA CELEBRATION

### HOW COLORADO COLLEGE SASA CELEBRATES FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Diwali, also known as *Deepavali*, is a five day-long festival celebrated between October and November every fall. It commemorates the victory of light over darkness, and relates to the tale of Lord Ram returning to Ayodhya after his exile and defeat of the demon king, Ravana. In celebration of his return, the subjects of Ayodhya decorated the kingdom with diyas (small earthen lamplight candles) and set off firecrackers, affording Diwali the title: "Festival of Lights."<sup>1</sup> Coincidentally, Navaratri is a festival dedicated to Durga Ma and Goddess Parvati. During the festival, which lasts for nine days, various forms of the Devi, or the Divine Feminine, are worshiped. It concludes with Dussehra on the tenth day. Navratri is celebrated differently in regions of India, and garba is often performed in celebration, especially in Gujarat.<sup>2</sup>

This year, the South Asian Student Association (SASA) collaborated with Campus Activities to host a Diwali and Garba Dance Night at Bemis. Garba was added to the list of festivities this year due to the popular demand and overlapping dates. The event also featured free dinner, diya painting, a henna stand, polaroid photos, dandiya decoration and more.

The decorations lived up to the festival's title, featuring gold and red tablecloths lit with diyas, an intricate balloon arch as the backdrop for the photographs, and tables scattered with craft supplies and assortments of shiny stones, ribbons, and rhinestones. The event was entirely student run, down

to the arrangement of the arch. According to SASA co-chair Mahnoor Rehman '24, the most challenging part is the "logistics". Co-chair George Jogi marvels at the increased collaborative spirit this year, mentioning that it was great to organize the event with a lot more SASA members jumping in to help.

The inclusion of garba was a standout this year. Not only is garba an effective communal dance, where dancers move in a circle, but the repetitive movements, increasing speed, and rhythmic beats can cause garba to be a meditative experience. We led the garba event by teaching participants some simple dance moves using dandiya sticks. Dandiya sticks are often used in garba and Navratri, representing the sword used by Durga Ma or the Divine Feminine during battle.<sup>3</sup> Then we led them in a traditional garba circle, consisting of simple, repeated motions involving clapping and turning

with gradually increasing speed. By the end of the event, we felt as though we were soaring, both on our feet and on the adrenaline pumping through our systems. Prior to the event, we were concerned about the gap in teaching non-South Asian students garba, as people are often intimidated to experiment. We were genuinely touched to find a huge number of attendees excited to take part in learning garba and immersing themselves in this aspect of Indian culture without any prior experience. Furthermore, I believe that the communal nature of garba also makes it more approachable and generates a strong feeling of connectivity with the group and collective.

Events like Diwali become all the more essential in a PWI (Predominantly White Institution) like CC, where there is limited education and representation of minority groups. Genuine authentic representation and collective celebration of ethnic culture can help BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and multicultural students sustain and thrive in homogeneous environments. "I loved getting to dress up and celebrate a holiday that's so close to my heart while being so far from home," says Kaviya Barathi Chidambaram '27 when asked about their first Diwali celebration on the CC campus. They expand on what made the event special: "It was an incredible opportunity to share the experience with my friends, eat good food, dance, and even try doing henna- I think I'll leave that to the experts!"



A picture of people drawing henna at the SASA Diwali and Garba Dance Night

1. TIMESOFINDIA.COM / Updated: Nov 8, 2023. "When in Diwali in 2023? History, Significance, Importance, Story and All You Need to Know - Times of India." The Times of India, TOI, timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/events/when-in-diwali-in-2019-history-significance-importance-story-and-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/71723775.cms

2. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Navratri". Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 Dec. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navratri>. Accessed 12 December 2023.

3. Sindianeagle. "Importance of Dandiya Ras & Garba in Navratri Celebrations." Travel to India, Cheap Flights to India, Aviation News, India Travel Tips, 31 Aug. 2016, [www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/navratri-9-days-of-dandiya-ras-and-garba/](http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/navratri-9-days-of-dandiya-ras-and-garba/).

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BY ESA CHEN '25

## 2024 TAIWAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CRUCIAL AMIDST REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS

The upcoming Taiwanese presidential election, scheduled for January 13, 2024, is set to be one of the most significant political events in the region's recent history. As the Republic of China (Taiwan) prepares for this democratic exercise, the election holds substantial implications for the island's future, both domestically and internationally.





## WHERE IS TAIWAN?

Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), located in East Asia, is an island situated off the southeastern coast of China, separated from the mainland by the Taiwan Strait. Geographically, it lies to the northeast of Hong Kong and Macau, and north of the Philippines, with the East China Sea to its north, and

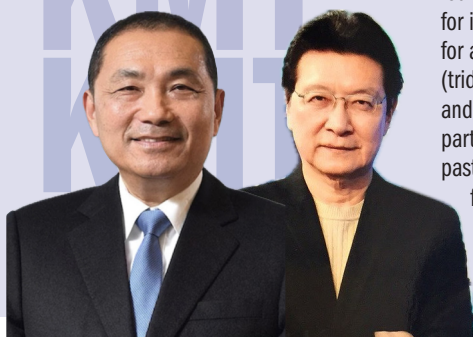
the Philippine Sea to its east. Taiwan's strategic location along key shipping lanes in the Asia-Pacific region gives it considerable economic and geopolitical significance. Despite its contested political status, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) claiming sovereignty over the island, Taiwan operates as a separate entity with its

own government, economy, and democratic system. This unique political situation often places Taiwan at the center of complex international relations, especially with major global powers like the United States and regional neighbors in the Asia-Pacific.

This election cycle is notable for the absence of the incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen, who, having served two terms, is constitutionally barred from seeking re-election. The torch has been passed within the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to Vice President Lai Ching-te, with Hsiao Bi-khim, the Representative to the US, as his running mate. Founded in 1986, the DPP emerged from the opposition to the then-authoritarian KMT regime. The DPP is a staunch advocate for Taiwanese

nationalism and human rights and has been associated with socially liberal policies. Internationally, the DPP seeks to fortify Taiwan's defenses and strengthen ties with democratic nations, advocating for Taiwan's right to self-determination and a distinct identity separate from the People's Republic of China. Vice President Lai Ching-te, the DPP's presidential candidate, known for his pro-independence stance, has advocated for progressive social policies and has been vocal about maintaining

Taiwan's autonomy against Chinese influence. Their campaign aims to position Taiwan as an Asian hub for financial technology development, with policies to boost sustainable and inclusive finance. Their housing policies include adding 300,000 social housing units over eight years, expanding youth housing loans, and introducing a "hoarding tax 2.0", which is a tax in Taiwan levied on non-self-use residential properties to discourage real estate hoarding and promote efficient use of housing.



Facing the DPP is the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's historic ruling party, which leans towards the center-right and has played a central role in Taiwan's political landscape since its foundation in 1919. The KMT is known for its conservative ideology, support for a tripartite government system (tridemism), and Chinese nationalism, and has been the historical ruling party for much of Taiwan's recent past. The KMT traditionally advocates for closer ties with China, favoring a more conciliatory approach to cross-strait relations compared to the DPP. The KMT has

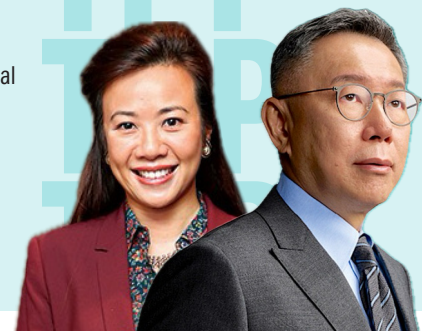
nominated Hou Yu-ih, the popular Mayor of New Taipei City, with former Legislative Yuan member Jaw Shaw-kong as the vice-presidential candidate. Their campaign proposes financial reforms with a wealth tax and incentives for small to medium enterprises to increase wages, along with tax reforms and amendments to the Fiscal Planning Law. Their housing justice plan includes a "555 Plan" for youth homeownership, offering loans up to NT\$15 million, potentially at full value without down payments, diversification of public housing, and incentives for private investment

in social housing. In addition, they advocate for the revival of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), which is a part of the broader Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) between Taiwan and Mainland China. This agreement is intended to liberalize trade in services between Taiwan and Mainland China, aiming to expand market access and increase economic integration across the Taiwan Strait. The CSSTA has been a subject of significant political debate in Taiwan, touching on issues of economic benefits versus national security and sovereignty.

The Taiwan People's Party (TPP), a relative newcomer established in 2019, has put forward its founder, Ko Wen-je, the former Mayor of Taipei, with Legislative Yuan member Cynthia Wu as his running mate. Ko Wen-je, leading the TPP, is recognized for his non-partisan and pragmatic policies during his tenure as Taipei Mayor. The TPP, being a relatively new political

force, aims to break the longstanding DPP-KMT duopoly and appeals to younger voters and those seeking a middle ground in Taiwan's polarized political landscape. It emphasizes social liberalism, civic nationalism, and fiscal conservatism, seeking to provide a third-party perspective in Taiwan's political dialogue. The TPP focuses on fiscal discipline, calling

for a national tax reform conference to review outdated tax systems, and amending the Fiscal Planning Law. Their housing strategy prioritizes social housing construction, reducing land sales until quotas are met, lowering taxes for self-occupied homes, and increasing taxes to discourage hoarding.



## WHY THIS ELECTION MATTERS

The 2024 election is particularly important for several reasons. Firstly, it's a litmus test for Taiwan's young democracy, showcasing the robustness of its democratic institutions and the electorate's commitment to self-governance. Secondly, Taiwan's strategic geopolitical position and its relationship with China make this election crucial for regional security. The elected leader's approach to cross-strait relations will influence not only Taiwan's own security but also the broader dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, the election will reflect the public's stance on critical domestic issues, such as national defense, energy policy, and economic development. With the world still reeling from global challenges, Taiwan's choices will have a ripple effect on its international standing, particularly in its relations with major powers like the United States. Internationally, the election is being closely monitored. Taiwan's steadfastness in its democratic process and its handling of external pressures, especially from China, are of immense interest to global stakeholders.

The outcome of the 2024 election could

significantly impact Taiwan's international relations. A DPP victory would likely continue the current trajectory of seeking stronger international partnerships, especially with the United States, while maintaining a firm stance against Chinese pressures. This could lead to heightened tensions with China and influence U.S.-China relations, as the U.S. has significant strategic interests in Taiwan. On the other hand, a KMT victory might lead to warmer relations with China, potentially easing cross-strait tensions. However, this could also create complexities in Taiwan's relationship with the U.S. and other countries that support its democratic values and autonomy.

People's Party (TPP) also retains a meaningful level of support among voters. However, a significant portion of the electorate remains undecided, indicating that the final outcome could hinge on these voters' decisions as the campaign unfolds and election day draws nearer.

## CONCLUSION

The 2024 Taiwanese presidential election is more than a political contest; it's a celebration of democratic principles and the unyielding spirit of the Taiwanese people. As the candidates articulate their visions for Taiwan's future, the election emerges as a pivotal

## The current public opinion regarding Taiwan's 2024 presidential election presents a fluid and closely contested scenario.

According to recent polling data gathered from seven media outlets, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) currently holds a leading position in the polls, with the Kuomintang (KMT) trailing closely behind. The Taiwan

moment for Asian democracy, promising to leave an indelible mark on the region's history and its collective memory.

BY HONGLI ZENG '24

## CC WELCOMES NEW CPC FROM CHINA

MEET YUE XING AND LEARN ABOUT HER PASSIONS AND VISIONS AT CC



### NAME

Yue Xing

### HOBBIES

Communicating with others and playing the drums.

### OFFICE HOURS

By appointment,  
Armstrong 323

### LIFE MOTTO

读万卷书，行万里路。  
Read a myriad of books, walk a  
myriad of miles.

Yue Xing 邢岳, the Chinese Cultural Program Coordinator of 2023-2024, hails from Harbin in northeast China. She completed her undergraduate and master's degrees at Fudan University in Shanghai before arriving at Colorado College through her department's international exchange program.

Yue has dedicated her past academic journey to the study of "Ancient Chinese Literature and Critics" focusing on folkloric and popular cultures that connect people through diverse mediums such as novels and traditional Chinese operas. When reading the Chinese classic *Water Margin*, for instance, she draws both inspiration and joy from its depiction of "eating", where she finds resonance between Chinese people's everyday lives hundreds of years ago and the present. Her experience of close reading and studying ancient Chinese literature instills in her a sense of "cultural belongingness;" she reads as if she lives with the past.

The complexity of contemporary society, from intricate transnational relations to debated technology-human dynamics, prompted Yue to shift her recent academic interests from antiquity to modernity. She now focuses on mass media in 20th century China aiming to understand the fast-changing world we live in and answer the challenges we face today. Yue considers the study of modern history even more rewarding. "I want to contemplate along with the ancients as their contemplations are hardly out of date," she says as a conclusive remark.

Amongst a variety of exchange programs, Yue eventually chose to come to CC for the work-study opportunity the CPC position offered, allowing her to enroll in block classes while fulfilling her job commitment. With no prior language teaching experience, it was only after she arrived here that she felt a stronger sense of mission and responsibility to promote the diversity and charms of Chinese culture and present "what contemporary China looks like" to the CC community. In the past semester, Yue has organized four Chinese Language Tables, including the Mid-autumn Festival Celebration with activities like "lantern-riddle guessing"(猜灯谜), eating mooncake, learning Chinese poetry; Tai Chi practice; Chinese-Opera-Facial-Mask Painting(画脸谱); and Chinese Paper-Cut Art(剪纸).

Yue expresses her gratitude towards Professor John Williams and the Block 3 class 20th Century China. She values her initial block plan experience as "a class of rigorous liberal arts spirit that approaches Chinese modern history through a critical lens, understanding the historical complexity while avoiding presumption and stereotypes."

Looking ahead to the Spring Semester, Yue encourages the campus community to anticipate one of CC's most elaborate annual cultural events in Block 5, the Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration, which she has been preparing for and organizing as the "executive director".

## AS THE SEMESTER COMES TO A CLOSE, HERE ARE NEXT SEMESTER'S ASIAN STUDY COURSES:

### BLOCK 5

#### COURSES IN ASIAN STUDIES:

PA170/RE170 **Buddhism**  
 PA208/DS229 **Asian Dance Forms I: Balinese Dance**  
 PA250/RE200/AN208 **Colonialism and Religion**  
 PA250/JA250 **Telling the Tale of Heike: From Medieval Minstrels to Modern Screens**

#### LANGUAGE COURSES:

PA201/CN201 **Intermediate Chinese I**  
 PA404.2/CN401.2 **Chinese Language and Culture**  
 PA206/CN206 **Chinese Skills Maintenance**  
 PA114/CN104 **Chinese Skills Maintenance**  
 PA221/JA201 **Intermediate Japanese I**  
 PA303/JA302 **Advanced Japanese Language**  
 PA106/JA104 **Japanese Skills Maintenance**  
 PA216/JA206 **Japanese Skills Maintenance**

### BLOCK 6

#### COURSES IN ASIAN STUDIES:

PA290 **Studying Asia**  
 PA250/HY200 **Modern Southeast Asia**  
 PA250/RM200/EN296 **Intro to Asian American Literature**  
 PA250/PY178 **From Pearl Harbor to Honolulu**  
 PA261/RE261/FG206 **Women and Goddesses in Hinduism**  
 PA250/HY200/RM200 **Caste: Histories and Theories of Exclusion, Stigma, and Discrimination**

#### LANGUAGE COURSES:

PA202/CN202 **Intermediate Chinese II**

### BLOCK 7

#### COURSES IN ASIAN STUDIES:

PA263/PH286 **Classical Chinese Philosophy**  
 PA250/RE200 **The Minority Question in Asia**  
 PA250/JA250 **Text and the City: Japanese Fiction from Meiji to the Allied Occupation**  
 PA350/HY304 **Print & Popular Culture in 20th Century East Asia**

#### LANGUAGE COURSES:

PA101/CN101 **Elementary Chinese (ABROAD)**  
 PA201/CN201 **Intermediate Chinese Language I (ABROAD)**  
 PA304/CN302 **Advanced Chinese Language II**  
 PA102/JA101 **Elementary Japanese**

### BLOCK 8

#### COURSES IN ASIAN STUDIES:

PA160/RE160 **Hinduism**  
 PA230/HY226 **20th Century Japan**  
 PA250/MU222 **Music and Dance in Bali**  
 PA255/AH255 **The Art of Japan**  
 PA281/RE281 **Religious Poetry in Asia**  
 PA350/CN350 **Advanced Topics in Chinese Literature and Culture**

#### LANGUAGE COURSES:

PA202/CN202 **Intermediate Chinese II**  
 PA222/JA202 **Intermediate Japanese II**

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## Call for Contributors Contribute to *The Lotus*!

**The Lotus is a student-run publication of the Asian Studies Program at Colorado College.** Our goal is to help the community gain new perspectives on Asia and the Asian diaspora, as well as share information related to Asian Studies programming and activities on our campus.

We are also excited to make The Lotus a platform for showcasing the works and talents of our student body. We are now accepting contributions from our fellow students related to the study, appreciation, and celebration of Asian and Asian diasporic cultures, identities, and experiences.

We will consider the following contributions for publication in our future issues:

- Your travel stories and experiences of work and study abroad in Asia!
- Your creative works, including creative writing (poems, short stories, essays) and artwork (photographs, illustrations) related to or about the cultures, identities, and experiences of Asia and the Asian diaspora!
- Your reviews of books, films, television, and music related to Asia and the Asian diaspora!

Send your contributions for consideration to [thelotuscc@gmail.com](mailto:thelotuscc@gmail.com) with the subject **"Student Contribution."** Please include your name, year, and a short (no more than 100 words) bio about yourself along with your submission. We encourage contributions from all student backgrounds and perspectives!

Selected contributions will be featured in our student newsletter, and selected contributors will receive a small gift of appreciation.