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VALENTINE'S DAY
party

FEBRUARY 7TH, 2025
 4:30 - 6:30 PM


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Opening Sunday Feb 2 2 p.m.
"WOMEN of MARIUPOL"
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Rendezvous Fiber Arts Show
 &
 Artists' Studios DeStash Sale

February 1 and 2, 2025
 Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM
 Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM

St. John's United Methodist Church
 1200 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87505

Sponsored by Art Through The Loom
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Year of the Snake

For many years before I moved to the U.S., home was Hong Kong. It's where I learned to celebrate the Lunar New Year and celebrated it for the last time, too, in 2019.

Every year, I'd leave my Christmas decorations up, the way most people in Hong Kong would. Then I would add red lanterns and even more lights, buy a new set of clothes, deep-clean my small flat, purchase tangerines by the bucket at the local wet market, and travel to Hong Kong's main flower market in Mong Kok to buy a potted kumquat tree or two to adorn my narrow balcony.

I lived off the main island, on the continent, in a small village called Ho Chung, by the only road that leads to the fishing town of Sai Kung and Hong Kong's wildest beaches that you can reach by renting a small boat at the fishing pier.

The village I lived in was founded in the mid-16th century at the banks of the Ho Chung River with its gigantic koi fish. The village temple, Che Kung Temple, stands near the river, surrounded on three sides by feng shui woods. It's one of the oldest temples in Hong Kong and one of two dedicated to the military commander Che Kung (1235-1330), of the Southern Song dynasty. Che Kung protected people from the plague and ensured their health and happiness.

Every winter, I'd join other villagers and visitors to ring in the new year by burning incense at Che Kung Temple, and on the second day of the festivities, to celebrate Che Kung's birthday. On the remaining days, I'd go on day hikes, usually through the terraced valley beyond the Ho Chung river, where not that long ago villagers farmed rice.

The trail that crosses the valley passes allotment farms, a beekeeper's hut with honey-for-sale signs, and a wild banana grove. The trail picks up altitude as it becomes surrounded by the rainforest and becomes steep as it approaches the nearest mountain peak. The vistas from the top of the mountain are of the turquoise South China Sea to the south and east, and in the distance to the north, tiny red flags that mark the border with the People's Republic of China.

The last time I celebrated the Lunar New Year in Hong Kong, things were already stirring, politically speaking. A few weeks after the celebrations ended, in March 2019, the government of Hong Kong proposed a bill to allow extraditions to mainland China — there, beyond the red flags I'd spot from my mountain spot, where for years already Hong Kongese booksellers and publishers had been disappearing.

In the spring of 2019, some two million people, many of them high school and university students, took to the streets in response to the government's proposed bill, and continued protesting for months.

In mid-June, just before I left, Hong Kong's police started using excessive force on protesters, deploying tear gas, batons, rubber bullets, pepper spray, and water cannons. They arrested journalists and publishers, activists, and university professors, and anyone who dared oppose Carrie Lam's Hong Kong government, and by proxy, Beijing's.

Then came the imposition of a national security law, the COVID-19 pandemic that nearly silenced the protests, and Article 23 that allowed for closed-door trials.

The year Hong Kong lost its freedom, 2019, was the year of the pig. How fitting, if only in English.

This year is the year of the snake. Maybe we should take that as an omen.

Gong Hei Fat Choi (恭喜發財), Santa Fe. Here's to a blessed new year. Let's keep screaming. And as Bruce Lee taught us, let's be water.

Ania Hull, Staff Writer
ahull@sfnewmexican.com



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