

To Phi Gamma Delta @ UCI, UCI Interfraternity Council, UCI Panhellenic Association, UCI Multicultural Greek Council, UCI undergraduate communities, UCI faculty, staff, and administration:

The Asian Pacific Student Association (APSA) at the University of California, Irvine condemns the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity for hosting another iteration of its annual "FIJI Islander" themed party on May 15th, 2014.

We, the Asian Pacific Student Association Executive Board, echo and fully support Save Gasawai's statement (attached below) regarding the Phi Gamma Delta event.

Save, in his statement, brings up important issues that are lived realities for Fijian communities. We are disappointed by the extensiveness of cultural stereotyping/appropriation as it continues to pervade people of color communities. These issues greatly concern APSA at UCI and should concern UCI communities as well.

We strongly urge you all to read Save's statement as he articulates concerns regarding the problematics of the event theme and Phi Gamma Delta's nickname:

*"I raised my concerns about the internationally recognized Greek fraternity Phi Gamma Delta which uses the nickname "Fiji" (and apparently has been known by that name since 1894) about their use of cultural caricatures and props of Fijians and Islanders in general. According to them, the reason they require a nickname is because they hold their Greek name to the utmost respect and deem it as a sacred thing, so "Fiji" was adopted as their organization's pseudonym to preserve the sacredness of their fraternity.*

*They've been conducting an annual philanthropy event that's called "Fiji Islander" which is a party where they raise funds for several causes and these events usually consists of "large festivities with tropical themes often using banana and palm trees as decoration, although they can vary widely from chapter to chapter." I saw pictures of their past events where attendees were wearing traditional/cultural Fijian attires and just Islander attire in general with stereotypical props and caricatures of Islanders.*

*I usually do not get up in arms with these sorts of things but the fact that an institution of learning and an organization that claims to promote " high ethical standards and values" is tacitly committing an act of cultural appropriation and publicly projecting their ethnographic ignorance should be a cause for concern for everyone. This is not any different from other cultural appropriation incidents that have occurred in other university campuses across the nation and right here at UCI. This brings up another related issue of the grave need for more ethnic studies classes and group/cultural consciousness to prevent people from blatantly using insensitive themes that is of paramount importance to other people."*

It is too often that fraternities and sororities choose racist themes for their parties and events. APSA at UCI will not tolerate, be silent, nor be complicit in acts of cultural appropriation that hurt marginalized People of Color communities because they maintain and fortify white male hegemonic structures.

APSA at UCI is extremely disappointed in Justin's lackluster response and in intoxicated fraternity members' explicitly racist, ignorant, and rude reactions to peaceful confrontations regarding their offensive behaviors, attire, and accessories.

We also fully support Save's demands that were sent to the Phi Gamma Delta President Justin Huang more than 24 hours before the "FIJI Islander" event took place. The demands were as follows:

- 1) Take off the name "FIJI Islander" from your event*
- 2) Stop using coconut trees and other stereotypical displays of Fiji Islanders and Islanders in general*
- 3) Do some extensive research before you conduct these sorts of events especially when doing it under the banner of "FIJI Islander"*
- 4) Tell members of your organization to stop wearing our traditional/cultural attires, they don't know jack shit about its cultural significance*

In addition to these demands from prior to the event, APSA also urges the following steps:

- 1) Phi Gamma Delta at UCI end the use of "FIJI" as a name for their fraternity
- 2) Phi Gamma Delta end the annual "FIJI Islander" social and philanthropic events so as they are not to be "Fiji" or "tropical" themed. It is possible to host social and philanthropic events without appropriating a people's name and culture
- 3) Phi Gamma Delta issue a public apology demonstrating that they acknowledge the racist nature of both their appropriation of the "Fiji" name and their conduct at the "FIJI Islander" party

Signed,

Asian Pacific Student Association at the University of California, Irvine

The following UCI campus student organizations have signed on in support of this statement:

*Hmong Student Association*

*DREAMS @ UCI*

An extended statement by Save Gasaiwai may be found on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/save-gasaiwai/phi-gamma-delta-appropriation-of-fijian-culture-please-share/797035360320210>