

Dear Santa Clara Community,

For those of you who don't know, we are Barkada of Santa Clara University. As the Filipina/o/x and Fil-Am student organization on campus, it came to our attention that the term, "Barkada," was recently misused in an email issued to the school by the school radio station, KSCU. Although we may not be in close proximity to each other, we may still come together to address this misuse of language.

We would like to respond to said e-mail and take this opportunity to educate the greater public.

The email opened with the following: "*What's up barkada of Broncos.*" Firstly, we would like to clarify what the term "Barkada" means. For historical context, Barkada was derived from the Spanish word, "Barcada," meaning *shipload*, following Spanish colonization of the Philippines. This word has evolved to translate to a *group of friends* in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines. Although "Barkada" can also be translated as *gang*—and may be viewed as informal—the word "Barkada" still holds a deeper meaning for the Filipina/o/x and Fil-Am community. We as an organization want to express that using the term "Barkada," without acknowledging the history, culture, or presence of the Filipina/o/x and Fil-Am community on campus is a misrepresentation of us. There is power in language, and as one of the nine Chartered Student Organizations, KSCU must not only recognize that principle, but also be held accountable when using terms from a different language— not just Tagalog. Misuse of our language is therefore not preferable, and understandably so.

The KSCU email then followed with, "Can you tell we've been brushing up on our informal word choice?" We weren't really sure what the purpose of this sentence was. To send this statement out in a campus-wide email undermines the power and value that Barkada holds. We would like to reiterate the importance of understanding the historical and cultural contexts of the word. Barkada member Hayley Arima put it best: "On our own campus, for many Filipina/o/x students, the term Barkada represents a family, a feeling, a home— not an 'informal word choice.' I stand in solidarity with Filipina/o/x people, and especially the people at SCU who I consider my Barkada."

This topic is clearly an important one to us because Barkada is our name, and that name is part of our identity. When a name isn't used correctly, spelled correctly, or even said correctly, it isn't properly acknowledging the individuals or group. For an organization that has been on campus since 1983 and with over 100 active members, the term "Barkada" has come to mean so much more than its literal definition; Barkada is a home, a safe haven for minorities, and an inclusive club for a group of tight-knit friends. We would have appreciated a little bit more context as to understand why the word "Barkada" was used.

As an organization, we recognize that there was no harmful intention in the KSCU email, and we wish no further progress in this situation. As one of the founding organizations within the Multicultural Center here at Santa Clara, we will always strive to help educate the larger Santa Clara community, it is however not our responsibility to do so, our first priority is serving as a clearinghouse and safe space for people of color on campus. Had this email been brought to our attention earlier, we would have loved the opportunity to collaborate with KSCU on cultural awareness. Again, we understand the nature of the mistake as well as the intent of the original message, and hold no ill will towards KSCU or anyone in the organization.

Since we believe this subject requires effort from all those involved, we believed it would be best to have this statement include the words of Molly Tucker herself.

*Below is a statement from 2020-2021 KSCU General Manager Molly Tucker:*

After engaging in a heartfelt and progressive conversation with Barkada of SCU co-chairs, I have grown with a strengthened understanding of the argument “appreciation versus appropriation”. Although my use of the Tagalog term “barkada” was well intended with appreciation and solidarity, it was appropriation by nature and definition as it shed an undermining light on the beauty of what “barkada” truly means. I am extremely appreciative of the time taken to further my understanding of how to better and more appropriately show appreciation for any and all aspects of culture and that begins with clearer communication. I would like to communicate my deep and sincere apology for culturally appropriating my use of the word “barkada”. With my use of the word in addressing us as a “barkada of Broncos” and reference to it as “informal word choice”, along with my failure to acknowledge its roots in the Tagalog language and Filipina/o/x culture, I derailed what could have been an opportunity to grow close and learn about one another. What I intended by referring to my diction as “informal” could have been much more clearly communicated as a reference to the Cambridge dictionary definition of “barkada” as “an informal group of friends”, but describing the word itself in that manner downplayed the heart and positive emotion behind how it is significantly used within Filipina/o/x culture and in my sentiments. Even further, my failure to acknowledge the cultural roots of “barkada” turned what would have initially been an exciting appreciation of culture into a disappointing lack of the representation that would have warranted that. This is where appreciation becomes appropriation and harm is done; even a term of endearment such as “barkada” can turn dangerous. In an effort to address you as my strongest friends and in the affections of family, I instead created divisions. I would never intend to harm, offend, or disrespect any form of life; especially when important cultural factors play a role in harmful results. I am grateful for the generosity of the Barkada of SCU in their wholehearted efforts to not only forgive my failed attempt at appreciation, but in helping further my understanding of

what factors within my actions fueled cultural appropriation. I am deeply and truly sorry for the cultural appropriation that has taken place through my address; it is important to remember that just because an action or thought may be “good”, it does not mean that it will have objective positive results or effects for everyone due to the many different perspectives, factors, experiences, backgrounds, and emotions that make us *us*. The community affected by my misaddress has suffered appropriation and subsequent offenses that *none* of them deserved. Whether offense was felt explicitly within Filipina/o/x communities or beyond these communities with respect to the countless lives touched by these communities, it is crucial to understand how not showing appreciation in progressive ways is worse than remaining silent. Engaging with another culture requires invitation and, even with this welcomeness, it is never anyone’s duty to teach us about their culture. Because of this reality, we must be thankful that the Barkada of SCU generously guides us through education in cultural competence. Now more than ever, it is important to educate ourselves in this same way as we seek to create unity, peace, and understanding between and with each other. These values are crucial to KSCU as an organization and must be advocated for in powerful, positive, and progressive ways. As the “Underground Sound”, we are dedicated to giving a platform to those voices and narratives silenced in the world we live in. It is dire that we all continue to correct appropriation where it exists and ceaselessly share love in the most meaningful ways, eradicating those divisions that continue to plague humanity.

With sincerity and great apology,

Molly (“Mo”) Tucker

We all hope for the continued awareness, appreciation, and inclusion of the Filipino language, culture, and presence on campus.

Wishing you health and safety during these unprecedented times,

Barkada of SCU