



## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **University of Guam student project combats racism during COVID-19**

A group of communication majors at the University of Guam has developed an advocacy website to help individuals speak up against racial stigmas related to the coronavirus pandemic and to halt the perpetuation of race-based sentiments, discrimination, and hate crimes.

[CombatingCorona.weebly.com](http://CombatingCorona.weebly.com) is meant to be a resource for individuals who are unsure how to address racial comments and misconceptions that they encounter in conversations and online targeting Asians and Asian-Americans. Likewise, it is a resource for individuals who want to become more personally aware.

“We felt compelled to explore and combat COVID-19 related discrimination after constantly being exposed to news articles about Asian-American individuals being targets of hate crimes, prejudice, and racial discrimination,” said Keanno Fausto, one of the five students who created the site. “The goal of our website is to empower readers in the time of COVID-19 by teaching them how to practice intercultural communicative competence in this time of uncertainty and beyond.”

Along with Fausto, the other students who developed the website are Anthony Dujmovic, Rose Facelo, Ronald Fuellas, and Marilea Torcelino. The project was an assignment for their “Intercultural Communication” class taught by Professor Lilnabeth P. Somera within the Bachelor of Arts in Communication program at the university.

“I follow a lot of Asian-American influencers and entertainers,” Torcelino said, “so it was through those public figures where I found inspiration in starting seemingly

uncomfortable, but necessary, discussions surrounding racism and taking part in some form of activism toward racial discrimination and stigma.”

The website provides a history of racially charged diseases and xenophobic policies in America and also documents real-life incidents and statistics of racism in the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Although the concerns over the coronavirus are understandable, the stereotypes and exclusion are not,” the website states.

As a call to action, the site offers four steps people can take in conversations to help stop unjustified sentiments from perpetuating: 1) Interrupt, 2) Question, 3) Educate, and 4) Echo the voice that speaks up.

By following the four-part method, Dujmovic said he was able to generate a meaningful discussion and help someone improve their intercultural communicative competence.

“Since then, this individual has been active in sharing posts to help interrupt discriminatory remarks and echo the message of fighting against racism,” he said.

### **Platform for discussion**

The site is also a platform for discussion and a place where individuals can make a pledge to practice intercultural communicative competence throughout the pandemic and beyond. It poses discussion questions at the bottom of each page and a field for comments.

### **‘A lifelong effort’**

Though the project was done as an assignment for a class that has now ended, the five students intend to maintain the site as a platform and resource.

“We believe that nurturing our ability for intercultural tolerance is not a one-time project, but a lifelong effort,” Fausto said.

Torcelino added, “The discussion surrounding racial discrimination will need to continue as long as the ignorance, stigma, and racism exist.”

Learn more about racial stigmas and discrimination related to the coronavirus, take the pledge to practice intercultural communicative competence, and engage in the discussion at the Combating Corona website: <https://combatingcorona.weebly.com/>.

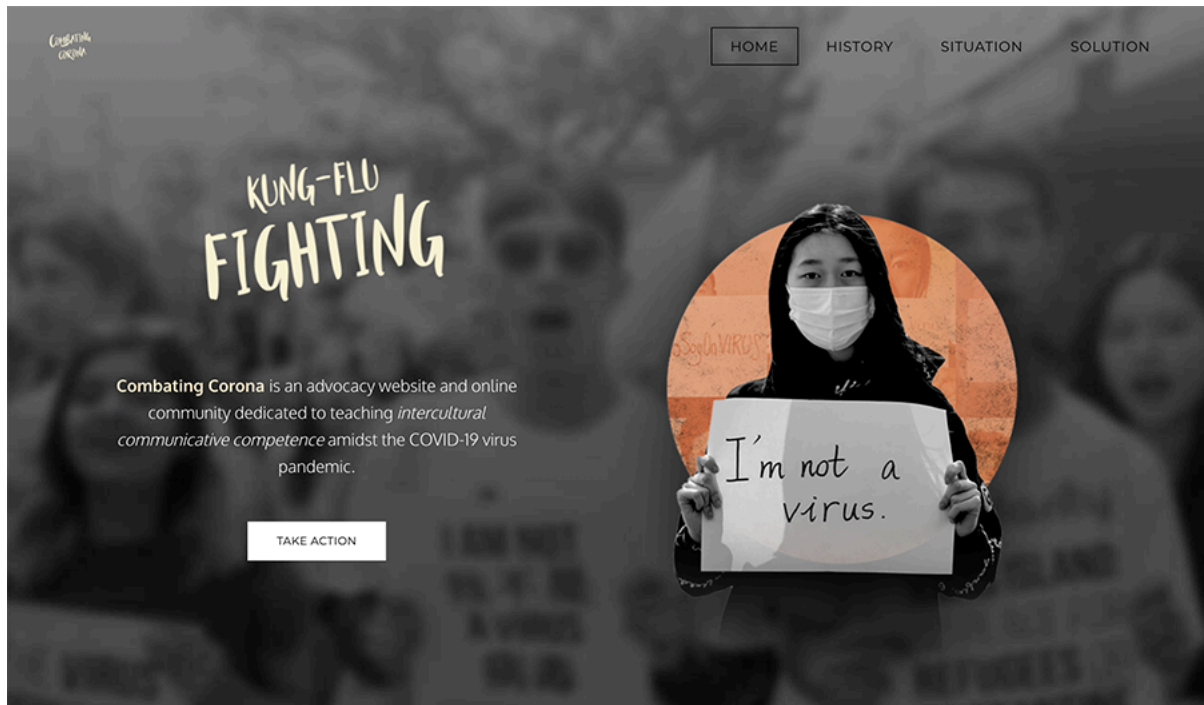
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### **PHOTO CAPTIONS**



*co310-students*

University of Guam communication majors (clockwise from top left) Rose Facelo, Keanno Fausto, Marilea Torcelino, Ronald Fuellas, and Anthony Dujmovic meet over video conference during the coronavirus lockdown to develop a website addressing racial stigmas and discrimination related to the pandemic. The website was an assignment of their “Intercultural Communication” class during the Spring 2020 semester.



*combating-corona-website*

The homepage of the “Combating Corona” website delivers a powerful visual image about combating racism during the coronavirus and drives visitors to action. The website was a project of five communication students at the University of Guam during the Spring 2020 semester.

*Photos courtesy of the University of Guam*