

NAVSUP Headquarters Celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

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MECHANICSBURG, Pa. (NNS) -- Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) hosted an Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month program for employees aboard Naval Support Activity Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, May 26.

The program featured performers from the Korean Performing Arts Academy of America, and Chairman and Co-founder of the Philippine American Heritage Council Emy Delgaudio.

NAVSUP Commander and Chief of Supply Corps Rear Adm. Jonathan A. Yuen explained how diversity is the heart of our nation. "I was thinking about some thoughts to share today, I think some of the highlights I have spoken about before are my kids. I have two of them, and they are in their 20s, and I talked to them about AAPI, and they said, 'What's that?' I think that's very telling," Yuen explained. "They don't know what AAPI is as an acronym, and I think that's very telling of how our country has evolved. Today, we get to hear Ms. Delgaudio share her story, her legacy, and that is what this is all about. We are one big happy family, and we are going to learn from each other."

Lila Howell, program analyst, Enterprise Supply Chains Division at NAVSUP Headquarters, served as the program emcee, and began the ceremony by inviting the Korean Performing Arts Academy of America up to the stage. After several pieces, Howell then invited Delgaudio to the lectern. "On behalf of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community, I want to thank those who authorized today's event to focus on our special month and theme, 'Many cultures, one voice: Promote equality and inclusion,'" Delgaudio said. "Most Americans know about Dec. 7, 1941, the day that will forever live in infamy. Few know that the next day marked the Japanese invasion of the Philippines."

"My uncle, Sgt. Javier Ranin, was one of those captured. He learned an important lesson that you of the United States Naval Supply Systems Command, the Supply Corps of the United States Navy, already know," she explained. "If you do not have an advance plan in place with contingencies mapped out, then when American military forces and their allies suddenly come under attack, it could be too late. It was too late for my Uncle Javier and the American and Filipino forces in Bataan and Corregidor in 1941."

"Thankfully, my Uncle Javier survived his captivity to become an attorney. With my uncle captured, other Filipinos, inspired by America's promise to return, took to the jungles to fight on," Delgaudio explained. "I thank you and I salute you, on behalf of my father, my uncle and all Filipinos whose freedom and independence you helped secure. Papa passed away in 2013."

"American is the light of the world," she added. "You, who support its military, keep that torch burning."

She also said that her husband told her eight years ago that he was learning or being reminded more and more about what is truly wonderful about America. "He said, those like me, made a big sacrifice to come to America. We left behind our family and our birthplace and the familiar towns, stores, churches, everything and everyone we had become familiar with in our life."

"For the past four years I have grappled with the idea of balancing freedom and diversity after having co-founded the Philippine American Heritage Council," Delgaudio said. "On the one hand, our council fosters a better understanding of freedom, American exceptionalism, and individual responsibility, especially for first generation Americans such as those from the Philippines."

In closing, Delgaudio said, "In our zeal to make sure that conformity does not crush diversity, we must never forget these three short Latin words, E pluribus unum - Out of the many, one. We of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community thank you for this assembly and ask that God bless each of you, the United States of America, and our countries of origin."

NAVSUP provides U.S. naval forces with quality supplies and services. With headquarters in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and employing a diverse, worldwide workforce of more than 22,500 military and civilian personnel, NAVSUP oversees logistics programs in the areas of supply operations, conventional ordnance, contracting, resale, fuel, transportation, and security assistance. In addition, NAVSUP is responsible for quality-of-life issues for our naval forces, including food service, postal services, Navy Exchanges, and movement of household goods.