



## Employees learn how to make big decisions

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Rutgers University philosophy professor Ruth Chang speaks to more than 200 NAVAIR employees about how to make hard choices and what constitutes a hard choice. Chang spoke as part of an Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month event in Patuxent River, Md., May 17. (U.S. Navy photo)

HEADQUARTERS, NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. — Making hard choices can help you form your identity and discover who you truly are, Rutgers University philosophy professor Dr. Ruth Chang said at an Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month event held here May 17.

“Through making hard choices, we constitute our identities,” Chang, whose [TED talk on “Making Hard Choices”](#) has had more than 4 million hits, said. “Our pursuit of happiness is not what life is all about. We shouldn’t be spending our lives chasing the path that will make us happy; we should lead our lives to make us as wholehearted as we can be. Use hard choices as a mechanism to commit to the kind of people we want to be.”

Chang told the approximately 275 employees who attended the event that what makes a choice hard is parity — realizing the alternatives are comparable, that neither is better than the other, nor are they equally good. She cited three examples of people having to choose between alternatives such as intellectual satisfaction versus financial security, or staying in an abusive relationship versus leaving the marriage and being forced to leave your children



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behind.

So, how to make these hard choices? Chang uses the acronym "AUTHOR":

- Ascertain what matters in the choice.
- Understand the metrics with respect to what matters.
- Tally up the pros and cons.
- Hone in on the fact of parity.
- Open yourself to making a commitment.
- Realize yourself through your hard choice.

Sometimes, she explained, what matters in a choice cannot be measured quantitatively, such as choosing between love or loneliness.

"We assume the right model for values is the same for length, width, quantitative measures," she said. "The model for girth is the same for love and beauty. Numbers may not be appropriate for measuring value."

The point is to commit to a choice, and stick with it.

"If you can, commit to one of the alternatives, instead of letting yourself *drift* into one of them," she said. "In an institutional setting [such as NAVAIR], it's all about the leadership. Set the agenda for commitment. What is it this institution should be committed to when it faces hard choices?"

The event, with a theme of "Walk Together, Embrace Differences, Build Legacies," was co-sponsored by NAVAIR's Asian-American and Pacific Islander diversity advisory team and Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Division.

The purpose of the team, according to Stu Young, one of the executive champions and NAVAIR's director of systems engineering, is to help remove "inherent biases and prejudices," as well as help Asian-American and Pacific Islander employees through recruitment, retention, and career development tools and processes. As of May 2016, Asian-Americans make up 7.4 percent of NAVAIR's workforce, while native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders comprise 0.4 percent.

Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, celebrated each May, recognizes the cultural traditions, ancestry, native languages and experiences represented by the more than 56 ethnic groups (speaking more than 100 languages) from Asia and the Pacific Islands who live in the U.S. For more information, visit <http://asianpacificheritage.gov/>.

"Today, we celebrate the accomplishments and work they do," said Thomas Dowd, one of the team's executive champions and director of the Range Department at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division. "The diversity of thought that we all bring each day



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contributes to NAVAIR's innovation and agility. The professional hard choices we make contribute to the success of our warfighter.”