

Today I would like to issue a statement in regards to Elenita Muniz, coordinator for the Human Rights Commission.

In early December Elenita Muniz was invited to participate in a forum held at Cape Cod Community College as an opportunity to foster dialogue surrounding the events in Ferguson MI and Staten Island NY. Her statements generated much discussion, as evidenced by the numerous letters sent to newspapers, and the many letters received by this office. Many citizens expressed anger, and an equal amount expressed understanding, towards the message as well as the messenger.

On Dec. 17th, Elenita met with the County Commissioners in public session, expressing a sincere apology to the Commissioners, the County, and to all she offended. She acknowledged that her words were poorly chosen and clarified her position and intent. I, for one, accept her apology.

Without question, the topic of race relations is an important one. It also remains an uncomfortable one. Dialogue on this topic can often be emotionally charged under normal circumstances. At this forum, emotions on all sides were heightened. The words reported spoken by Elenita unfortunately overshadowed the substance of what otherwise was a thoughtful conversation.

I think we all have learned lessons from this experience. No matter how important and well intentioned the message, the words we choose matter.

I am hopeful that we can move past this unfortunate incident, and focus instead on both the good work the Human Rights Commission does, as well as the many other important issues facing Barnstable County. Therefore there will be no action taken by this board and no further discussion on the matter.