

Racial Justice and Defunding the Police in Massachusetts - Planning for POST: Peace, Officers, Standards for Training Bill - February 2, 2021

Event Recap Written by [Robert Turner, Research Fellow](#)

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In working to counter systemic racism, says state Representative Nika Elugardo, "training is only a beginning." In addition, she said, it is necessary to de-politicize issues and make them human.

And, when trying to craft legislation that can win enactment and be effective, that human perspective must be combined with much more mundane legislative skills - - "understanding the geeky stuff."

Elugardo was the featured speaker at a forum on Feb. 2 sponsored by MRET -- the McCormack Racial Equality Taskforce, co-chaired by Dean David Cash and Associate Dean and Professor Rita Kiki Edozie.

Elugardo told her virtual audience of 52 that "democracy is really inconvenient" because it requires building trust with people who are not natural allies. There are "many purple districts" in Massachusetts, she said, and even in heavily-Democratic districts "30 or 35 percent voted for [Donald]Trump." She noted that she is the only House member of color who represents a majority-white district.

There is also an obligation on the general public, she said, to take a long view and insist on the same from lawmakers. "We need to hold legislators accountable for things that outlive their terms."

The event's moderator, Rita Kiki Edozie, McCormack's Associate Dean, and a panel consisting of associate professor, Darren Kew, and students, Jarling Ho and Esther Rogers, all tasked Elugardo with an array of pertinent questions that she engaged excellently. She was asked about current racial justice police reform policies, including qualified immunity, no-knock warrants, choke holds, and racial profiling.