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From: **Zeman, Olivia** <olzeman@students.natickps.org>

Date: Wed, Jun 2, 2021 at 8:03 AM

Subject: Natick Post Office Mural

To: <kadelman-foster@natickma.org>

Dear Chairperson Adelman-Foster,

I am writing to you about the importance of the mural *John Eliot Speaks to the Natick Indians* that is presented in the Natick Post Office. My name is Olivia Zeman, and as a citizen of Natick, I ask that the Selectboard releases a public statement condemning this harmful mural and showing support for the removal of it.

The mural painted by Hollis H. Holbrook in 1937 depicts John Eliot speaking to the Natick Praying Indian community before they were forcibly removed from their homes to internment camps on Deer Island during King Philip's War. There on Deer Island, many of the Praying Indians died from starvation, exposure to the elements, and disease. This mural simplifies such a painful and complex moment in Natick's history without offering context of the horrors of colonization or the hard decisions the Native American tribes had to make surrounding religious conversion. This mural's historical inaccuracy perpetuates racist tropes and misleads many others who don't understand the historical background of the event this mural depicts. The painting shows John Eliot in the center of the mural preaching to and enlightening/rescuing the Praying Indians, who are shown as being vulnerable, weak, and in need of saving. This is called the white savior trope, which exists solely to validate the privilege that white people have and sanctions white supremacy. Since this mural was painted through the eyes of a white man, it erases so much of the history that the mural depicts and creates a racially insensitive piece of art that simplifies the horrors that the Praying Indians faced. For this mural to be showcased in such a public and casual setting like the post office, is appalling.

A statement condemning the mural and supporting the removal of it will influence decision makers to make the choice to remove "John Eliot Speaks to the Natick Indians" so that this town can reflect on our history and ourselves in accurate and non racist ways and make the town safer for local indigenous tribes.

Thank you for your service for Natick,
Olivia Zeman

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