

Thank you, Madame Chair, distinguished guests, and comrades. My name is Abena Abraham I am the co-founder and co-director of the Black Immigrant Collective. We are a Minnesota based organization that works at the intersection of Blackness and Immigration. We serve the upper Midwest area of the United States.

Today, I'm going to highlight what it is like when Black people arrive at the US border to seek asylum. They are met with hostility, violence, intimidation and an intentional lack of resources. Instead of being welcomed and their asylum claims listened to, folks are thrown into detention centers, their belongings are destroyed, and families are separated.

The hardships Black immigrants experience in their home countries are seen as false, exaggerated and they have to spend many years trying to convince the powers that be that their experiences are valid.

In Minnesota and our region, 1 in every 10 asylum applications is approved, which means countless folks are denied. Many people don't think of Minnesota as a border state, but the northern part of our state shares a border with Canada. We've seen a huge influx of migrants coming to our state for several reasons.

We also join others in demanding that immigration be decriminalized. Most of the people we work with are in detention because of previous criminal records. There is absolutely no reason why someone should be locked up because they are undocumented.

Our recommendation is that member states call on the United States to end the discriminatory practice of detaining asylum seekers and honor its commitments to asylum rights; and member states discontinue entering into agreements with the United States that make it difficult for asylum seekers to reach the border to seek asylum.