

Senator Cory A. Booker
Statement for the Record
Senate Judiciary Committee Oversight Hearing
Immigration Enforcement and Family Reunification
August 7, 2018

During last week's oversight hearing, I challenged the Trump administration's ICE representative regarding the agency's so-called priorities in allocating enforcement and asylum resources, and why people and families attempting to claim asylum are increasingly being turned away – often with nowhere to go but back to dangerous places on the other side of the border.

Our immigration officials have claimed there isn't enough room to process asylum-seekers – they must be turned away because, these officials say, there aren't enough beds. But we don't need more beds for detaining people.

We need capacity to offer refuge to asylum-seekers so they aren't left standing on a bridge, in the scorching heat, often with young kids. We need resources to process asylum-seekers as quickly and fairly as possible so they aren't held indefinitely in detention. While asylum-seekers are waiting to be processed, we need to provide them shelter and somewhere safe to sleep.

We need immigration policies that better reflect our values. Right now we're violating the fundamental human dignity of people who are fleeing violence and seeking safe refuge for themselves and their families.

The administration's fear-mongering rhetoric, demonizing immigrants as violent criminals, is just a tactic to mask what they are really doing: ramping up enforcement on non-violent, otherwise law-abiding and longstanding members of American immigrant communities, while at the same time severely limiting asylum programs designed to protect the world's most vulnerable populations. Those priorities could not be more backward.