

Karina Tweedell, Ukrainian immigrant whose family had to relocate to Milwaukee after the war in 2014

Hello, everyone. My name is Karina Tweedell and I'm an immigrant from Ukraine. I want to recognize the organization, Wisconsin Ukrainians, for connecting me to Voces de la Frontera. Today especially, I'm acutely aware of my privilege to be in safety, to have my needs met, to speak freely, and to be heard. As we speak, millions of people in my home country are not afforded this opportunity due to unprovoked violence inflicted by Russia. Yet also millions of people here in the US don't have access to healthcare, education, and equal pay.

I grew up in Donetsk, a city I could never imagine back then turning into a hot spot discussed thousands of miles away. My father, born in Uzbekistan but ethnically Tatar, spoke at length on the importance of mastering a dominant language with a proper accent in order to be treated with respect. When I moved here in 2007, I worked really hard to assimilate. I thought if I sound, look, and act like the Americans surrounding me in then small town, Indiana, that would help me succeed in life. Frankly, it did. And that's the problem.

We are all worthy of being treated with dignity regardless of where we came from or who we are.

Instead of adjusting to a system that's broken, we need to adjust the system.

In 2014, my family rushed to relocate to the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, as Russian tanks started rolling down the street with our house on it. Today they are safely here. My shock of seeing Ukrainians as refugees reminds me of how anyone can easily end up in the position of truly needing help. One shouldn't have a certain passport to have access to basic human rights, a certain look for their life to matter.

It's easy to dismiss another human's pain when you think they aren't like you: those people in other countries, those children not in our neighborhoods, those workers speaking a different language. I'm here to say it loudly, people seeking asylum, regardless of where they came from, deserve our protection. Repeal Title 42!