TRANSCRIPT

Source: [Louv2.01x] Profiling and Stereotyping

Now, in this subsection of the course, we are going to examine the issues of profiling and stereotyping. And the reason why these issues are looked at together is because they present one common challenge, one common characteristic. That is that both profiling and stereotyping essentially consist in public authorities or private agents basing their decisions on certain generalizations about individuals based on the fact that these individuals present certain group characteristics.

So for example, public authorities may, at airports, screen people of a particular religion based on the belief that people from that particular religion are potentially terrorists. Or maybe they will screen people from one particular ethnicity because they believe that these people from that ethnicity are more likely to file a claim to asylum in the country of destination. Or employers may, for example, believe that women, more than men, shall interrupt their careers in order to take care of their family and to have children, and this is a generalization about women's careers that may discourage them from recruiting women in their workforce.

Now, what is important to understand is that even if these statements about certain ethnic groups or about women turn out to be right in certain contexts and turn out to be statistically indeed proven, that would not allow the behavior that is based on these stereotypes or generalizations, essentially because the individual has a right to be treated as an individual on the basis of his or her individual behavior and not to be treated as simply a representative sample, if you wish, of the group to which he or she belongs. In other terms, what is prohibited is the generalization, whether or not there is some statistical foundation to the behavior that would make it rational to screen people on the basis of their group membership. And this is what, for example, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women sought to discourage when it very specifically condemns stereotypes against women based on the traditional division of gender roles. And this is one of the issues we'll discuss in this subsection of the course.