

THE JUDICIARIZATION OF THE HOMELESS IN MONTRÉAL: A CASE OF SOCIAL PROFILING

FACT SHEET 1: SOCIAL PROFILING - DEFINITION

The notion of social profiling, which constitutes a form of discrimination within the meaning of section 10 of the Québec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* is derived from the notion of racial profiling.

If, in the case of racial profiling, skin colour is the factor that triggers police intervention, in the case of social profiling, the trigger is more likely to be visible signs of poverty or marginality.

For social profiling to occur, a person in a situation of authority must have assigned a “homeless” identity to an individual on the basis of visible signs such as physical appearance, behaviour, attitude and clothing.

For example, a dishevelled or unkempt appearance, worn-out clothing, and poor personal hygiene or body odour, are all signs that can be enough for a police officer to treat an individual differently when applying municipal by-laws.

Similarly, the unconventional look of some young people can make them appear suspect in the eyes of police officers who, as a result, may tend to monitor them more closely and subject them to a more stringent enforcement of the law.

November 6, 2009