



NYETA Blasts Uber's Rampant Discrimination

New Yorkers for Equal Transportation Access, a coalition of taxi medallion owners and advocates for the disabled, joins with disability advocate Dustin Jones in calling on the city to hold an emergency hearing on the well-publicized reports about Uber's rampant discrimination against-well, almost everyone. (<http://nyeta.org/>)

A recently released study (<http://papers.nber.org/tmp/967-w22776.pdf>) done under the auspices of MIT, has found that Uber-a company that came into NYC touting its support from and for people of color-actually engages in blatant discrimination against African-Americans, Hispanics and even women:

"Uber, Lyft, and other ride-sharing services were supposed to be a more egalitarian transportation option than a traditional cab service. There's a mountain of data that shows how difficult and dangerous something as simple as finding a cab ride home can be, particularly for women and black people. Ride-hailing apps were expected to help fix that....At the end of the trials, the economists found "significant evidence of racial discrimination," meaning that black riders faced longer wait times and more frequent cancellations than white riders.

(<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/uber-lyft-and-the-false-promise-of-fair-rides/506000/>)

For women-who have experienced some very troubling harassment from Uber drivers-the study pointed to systematic discrimination (<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/uber-driver-sued-woman-allegedly-jumped-moving-car-article-1.2820441>):

"The additional travel that female riders are exposed to appears to be a combination of profiteering and flirting to a captive audience," the authors find. That's especially troubling given reports of [sexual misconduct and harassment](#) on the part of drivers in the past."

From NYETA's perspective, this is what happens when initial bad conduct goes unpunished. As spokesperson Brad Gerstman points out:

"NYC-and the Taxi and Limousine Commission in particular-allowed Uber to enter into the city and ignore the rights of people with disabilities; permitting them to flood the city with cars, not one of which is wheelchair accessible. We now see how impunity emboldens bad actors. The only question left unanswered is: Who doesn't Uber discriminate against?"

It is past time for both the city and the state to act. We endorse the call of Dustin Jones to the city council to hold an emergency hearing on the charges against Uber. As Jones says:

“As a wheelchair user in the Bronx and the leader of United for Equal Access New York, I often speak out against Uber and Lyft’s refusal to provide wheelchair-accessible vehicles in our city. But I am also a person of color. I am outraged that Uber and Lyft are apparently perpetuating a shameful legacy of racial discrimination while claiming to help end it.”

(<http://www.politico.com/states/f/?id=00000158-263d-d8dc-ab5c-ff3d2b5c0000>)

NYETA also is calling on the governor to end the MTA’s collaboration with Uber on a pilot program to reform the Access-a-Ride service, established under the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide transportation for people with disabilities. As Gerstman makes clear:

“To allow a company that discriminates against the disabled to work with the state’s transportation agency in the attempt to improve transportation services for people with disabilities is the height of chutzpah-and very poor judgment. That the same company also discriminates against an array of various minority groups only underscores the poor decision making.”

Council Speaker Mark-Viverito says that they will be reviewing the Jones letter, but little review is needed to see that there is a serious problem with both of the dominant ride share programs in the city. We call on the Speaker and Transportation Chair Ydanis Rodriguez to hold a hearing on these indefensible practices. The decision to do so is a no-brainer.

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