**LYFT “SEXUAL PREDATOR CRISIS”: RIDER FILES LAWSUIT OVER VIOLENT RAPE BY LYFT DRIVER**

***Attack is Latest Instance of Lyft Failing to Keep Passengers Safe from Its Own Drivers; Lyft Aware of Problem Since 2015 As Number of Cases Nationwide Continues to Rise.***

**SAN FRANCISCO – JANUARY 10, 2024 –** A woman who was violently and repeatedly raped by her Lyft driver, which resulted in the birth of a child, filed a major lawsuit against the San Francisco-based rideshare company for failing to protect her. Tabatha Means, of Leesburg, Florida, shared her story publicly for the first time and called on Lyft to finally take action to address the epidemic of sexual assaults perpetrated by its drivers.

From 2017 through 2019, Lyft's Safety Report disclosed 4,158 instances of sexual assault that occurred during trips, although this number only included five subcategories of reported sexual assaults; the total number of sexual assaults perpetrated during this timeframe is much higher. Further, Lyft has yet to disclose any further safety data from 2020 to the present. For more than eight years, Lyft has known of the ongoing sexual assaults and rapes committed by its drivers, but its response has been totally inadequate.

[The lawsuit](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Lyft-Fed-Complaint.1.9.24.pdf) was filed against Lyft in United States District Court, Northern District of California, San Francisco Division by leading ride share sexual assault attorney Rachel Abrams, of the law firm Peiffer Wolf Carr Kane Conway & Wise (Peiffer Wolf).

Rachel Abrams, partner at Peiffer Wolf, said: **“Over the years, Lyft has aggressively marketed itself as a safe alternative to driving while intoxicated, and specifically aimed those messages at young women. Lyft’s driver ‘background checks’ are a joke, it doesn’t monitor rides, and it doesn’t have a mandatory dash camera policy; it’s a perfect recipe for the disaster we’re now facing. The numbers speak for themselves. This is a full-blown sexual predator crisis at Lyft.”**

Tabatha Means, rape survivor, said: **“Every day is a struggle. I’m still working to process this trauma, and at the same time I need to be a mom to my amazing children, including my youngest whose biological father was my Lyft driver-rapist. I love my kids so deeply – but there are a lot of mixed emotions when the biggest blessing in your life can also remind you of your darkest hour.”**

On April 28, 2019, Tabatha took a Lyft back to where she was staying after a night out drinking, expecting a short, safe ride to her destination. But the ride started strangely, with the Lyft driver commanding Tabatha to sit in the front seat. During the ride, the Lyft driver began making inappropriate comments that made Tabatha very uncomfortable.

Upon arrival at the destination, the Lyft driver parked and began touching Tabatha inappropriately. She rejected his advances and got out of the car, but the Lyft driver followed her into her home. Once inside, the Lyft driver violently raped Tabatha repeatedly. She begged him to stop. The Lyft driver responded: “It will be just fine and over before you know it.”

Approximately one month after the Lyft driver raped her, Tabatha suspected that she was pregnant. She then took an at-home pregnancy test which revealed a positive result.

Two weeks later, Tabatha saw her physician, who confirmed that she was pregnant. Tabatha endured three hemorrhage episodes before giving birth to her son. The third time Tabatha hemorrhaged she was rushed to the hospital by ambulance where an emergency C-section was performed. Tabatha delivered her son at 33 weeks, and he was in the NICU for nearly a month due to his premature birth.

**Lyft Misleads About Safety**

In 2015, Lyft’s website announced it had partnered with It’s On Us, an anti-sexual assault initiative, and offered free ride credits for new Lyft passengers during the Spring Break season. In 2016, Lyft’s website posted a blog entitled “Get Home Safely with Lyft,” again touting its partnership with It’s On Us, and offering college students free Lyft rides so that they “don’t need to worry about finding a safe ride after going out.”

The insinuation of this marketing is that Lyft prevents, and does not create, the risk of sexual assault. Nowhere on Lyft’s website does Lyft discuss the occurrence or risk of sexual assault by Lyft’s drivers. As a result, many women enter Lyft cars unaccompanied with the expectation that they will not be harassed, propositioned, kidnapped, attacked, stalked, raped, or worse, by their Lyft drivers.

**Lyft’s Financial Model**

The key to Lyft’s business model is getting as many new Lyft drivers on the road as possible. The more drivers, the more rides, the more money Lyft makes.

Lyft also has a high turnover among its drivers because they are not well paid and often move on to other jobs. As a result, and to keep the number of drivers on the road at a maximum level, Lyft’s business model is designed to accept as many new drivers as possible and to keep as many existing drivers working for Lyft as possible.

**Name-Based Background Checks**

To maximize the number of drivers, Lyft relies on a quick, name-based background check to screen its applicant drivers and has continuously refused to adopt an industry-standard, fingerprint-based background check qualification process.

The difference between name-based background checks and fingerprint-based background checks is significant. While a name-based background check searches the applicant’s reported name against various public databases, a fingerprint-based background check uses the fingerprints of the individual to match against a law enforcement database, comparing records that have the same print, even if the names are different.

Taxi drivers are required by taxicab companies to undergo criminal background checks that require the driver to submit fingerprints through a technology called “Live Scan.” The fingerprint images are used to automatically search against all other fingerprint images in government criminal record databases, including databases maintained by state law enforcement and the FBI. The FBI’s database includes criminal record information from all 50 states, including sex offender registries.

Lyft has refused to adopt fingerprint-based biometric checks and has in fact spent millions of dollars lobbying against local regulations requiring these checks.

**The Blind Spot**

Lyft allows a predictably dangerous blind spot by neglecting to monitor rides or adequately investigate passenger complaints of inappropriate behavior or sexual assaults. Shockingly, multiple online chatrooms exist where Lyft drivers openly discuss passengers in a sexual light and brag about the access that they have to “hot” young women.

As a technology company with a state-of-the-art in-app tracking system, as well as a camera within the required mobile device, Lyft could take the following straight-forward, obvious steps towards the elimination of the sexual assaults by Lyft drivers:

• Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for improper conduct and inform all drivers of the policy.

• Maintain a surveillance camera and require its continuing operation during all rides, and have an independent third-party save camera footage.

• Forbid drivers from turning off the surveillance system during a Lyft ride, and from leaving the car to accompany a passenger to any other location outside the vehicle, other than to provide temporary and time-limited assistance to a passenger.

• Modify the functionality of the Lyft app so that Lyft can determine immediately if a driver deviates from these protocols.

• Monitor rides and implement a system requiring passengers to confirm their intention to terminate a ride before reaching their destination or change their destination significantly from the assigned route.

Abrams added: **“Incredibly, as a result of Lyft’s failures, there have been passengers who reported sexual abuse by a driver and later were matched again with the *same* driver. Clearly Lyft’s system is fundamentally broken.”**

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**Peiffer Wolf Carr Kane Conway & Wise** is a national law firm with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Cleveland, Youngstown, St. Louis and Detroit. Visit [www.sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/](http://www.sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/) for more information.