**LYFT SUED BY 13 SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS, 4 PHYSICAL ASSAULT VICTIMS FOR COMPANY’S FAILURE TO PROTECT PASSENGERS AND DRIVERS**

***Attorneys Sound the Alarm on “Nationwide Crisis” Over Lyft’s Systemic Failure; Legal Actions Filed By Plaintiffs from Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.***

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA///AUGUST 31, 2022///**The San Francisco-based rideshare company Lyft faces 17 major new lawsuits filed by passengers and drivers, who are survivors of sexual assault or victims of physical assault that occurred while using Lyft. Three of the sexual assault survivors and two of the physical assault victims shared their stories publicly during a video-based news conference, ranging from sexual assault and false imprisonment to assault with a deadly weapon.

Adam Wolf, partner at Peiffer Wolf Carr Kane Conway & Wise (“Peiffer Wolf”), said: **“This is a nationwide crisis. It’s unconscionable that Lyft was aware of the ongoing problem for years and did virtually nothing. Lyft spends massive amounts of money on woke marketing messages and lobbying, but it refuses to protect its drivers and passengers. In reality, the only thing Lyft is concerned about protecting is its own profit margins.”**

Tracey Cowan, partner at Peiffer Wolf, said: **“Lyft has a responsibility to protect its passengers and drivers. Its refusal to do so has resulted in acts of violence that left our clients with disabilities, permanent deformities, and lifelong trauma. Nothing can undo the pain and suffering they endured, but it’s their hope that by sharing their stories, they can make Lyft hear them, force Lyft to protect its users, and drastically reduce the number of violent acts during Lyft rides in the future.”**

The five plaintiffs who spoke out publicly included: Katherine Rasta, a Lyft passenger and sexual assault survivor from Phoenix, AZ; Amy Collins, a Lyft driver and sexual assault survivor from Napa, CA; Erika Garcia-Galicia, a Lyft driver and sexual assault survivor from Wilmington, CA; Stella Grant, a Lyft driver and physical assault victim from Chicago, IL, and Stuart Berman, a Lyft driver and physical assault victim from Wilton, CT. Court filings and additional information are available at <https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/>.

In addition to the victims who spoke out publicly, 12 additional survivors and victims filed lawsuits and arbitration demands but wished to keep their stories private. The 12 additional plaintiffs include: 10 passengers who were sexually assaulted in California, Ohio, Kentucky, Oregon, Virginia, Texas and Wisconsin; a passenger who was physically assaulted in Michigan; and a driver who was physically assaulted in Illinois.

Katherine Rasta, a Lyft passenger and sexual assault survivor from Phoenix, AZ, [filed her complaint](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Katherin-Rasta-JCCP-.pdf) in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco. After a night she went out with friends and ordered a ride home using the Lyft app. Within five minutes of the ride beginning, the driver started making inappropriate comments and said he wanted to get a hotel room to smoke methamphetamine and have sex. He continued to make sexual advances throughout the entire ride, and upon reaching the destination, he locked the doors, grabbed the phone out of her hand, and sexually assaulted her. He also threatened her, saying “don’t tell anyone, remember I know where you live and where your friend lives now.”

**“When I got home, I ran to the bathroom and threw up because I was having a severe anxiety attack. I immediately got into the shower because I felt defiled,”** Rasta said. **“I kept thinking about what he said. If I said anything he would come find me. I changed my number, and I wanted to make sure he wouldn’t try to come find me. When I contacted Lyft and reported the assault, they didn’t care about what happened to me. They didn’t even follow up with me about it. I hope I can use this horrific experience to make Lyft realize anything can happen during a Lyft ride. They need to invest in more safety features like dash cams to record the rides. Sexual abuse in Lyft rides needs to stop. We all deserve a safe ride experience. Nobody should go through the trauma that still haunts me today.”**

Amy Collins, a Lyft driver and sexual assault survivor from Napa, CA, [filed her complaint](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Amy-Collins-Complaint-Driver-SA.pdf) in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco. On the evening of March 1, 2020, she picked up an intoxicated male who made inappropriate comments while inching toward her seat and rubbing her arms. Collins attempted to both verbally and physically get him to return to his seat, but the passenger pressed himself against her seat from behind, reached around her with both arms, and began groping her. When she attempted to push him away, the passenger wrapped his hands around her neck, choking her and resumed groping her, pinning her to her seat, which continued until they reached the destination. Collins was paralyzed by fear, unable to reach for her phone to contact the police due to the passenger pinning her to her seat as she drove down the highway.

**“This assault was traumatizing to me both mentally and emotionally, something I am still dealing with today,”** said Collins. **“I developed depression after the assault and stopped working for two weeks. All I wanted to do was curl up in bed and stay there because I felt so dirty and ashamed about what had happened. This assault brought up a past trauma from 10 years ago that I thought I had worked through. It reopened my fear, depression, anxiety, and anger once again. I still don’t sleep well at night. When I finally figured out how to speak with a Lyft representative to report the assault, all I received was an email stating that they were very sorry to hear about my story. Yet again, I felt no protection from Lyft whatsoever.”**

Erika Garcia-Galicia, a Lyft driver and sexual assault survivor from Wilmington, CA, [filed her complaint](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Erika-Garcia-Galicia-Complaint-Driver-SA-.pdf)  in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Francisco. On February 7, 2022, she picked up a male passenger who made unsettling comments regarding his recent incarceration, schizophrenia diagnosis, and being molested by a therapist. He also explicitly described his genitals. He refused to get out unless Garcia-Galicia gave him her phone number. She politely declined his advances multiple times, asking him to exit the vehicle. The passenger then lunged forward, groped her, and pulled her head towards him to kiss her. She sprayed hand sanitizer in his face in an attempt to break free. The passenger then exited the vehicle, and Garcia-Galicia was able to drive away and call 911. She then suffered a panic attack and filed a police report that evening. The passenger continued to harass Garcia-Galicia on her cellphone after the ride, even after she reported the incident to Lyft.

**“After the assault I began to experience anxiety and panic attacks,”** said Garcia-Galicia. **“I have trouble sleeping and have been having nightmares. I can no longer go to places on my own, I can’t be around strangers, and I now have PTSD. I’m no longer that person who loves to see new places, and I no longer socialize because there’s just so many untrustworthy people out there. I’m not me anymore, and I absolutely hate how this person just snatched my life and sense of security away from me. I want my life back. Lyft never contacted me to check how I was doing or to see if there was anything they could do to make me feel comfortable. I stopped using Lyft after this happened to me. Lyft needs cameras in the cars and needs to train its staff to know how to deal with survivors of sexual assault. Unfortunately, I’m just one of many victims out there who have been pushed aside and ignored by Lyft as if our lives don’t matter.”**

Stella Grant, a Lyft driver and physical assault victim from Chicago, IL, has [filed legal claims](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Stella-Grant-Arb-Demand.pdf) against Lyft. On August 30, 2021, Grant picked up a passenger whose name was different from the one shown on the ride request. When Grant attempted to confirm the passenger’s identity during the ride, it became clear that she was intoxicated. Then, the passenger started cursing at Grant and began punching her in the head, face, back, and shoulder. Grant called 911, and the passenger lunged forward and grabbed the steering wheel from the backseat while the vehicle was in motion, causing the vehicle to crash. The passenger then struck Grant in the face with a sharp object, cutting a deep gash. Due to her profuse bleeding, Grant went to the emergency room where she was treated for her injuries. Grant was traumatized by the incident and suffers from severe anxiety. The assault left her with terrible back pain, which interfered with her ability to drive, further impacting her ability to provide for herself and her children. Her doctor recommended physical therapy for her back, but she could not afford treatment. Grant’s extremely deep cut left a permanent scar, causing severe anxiety and shame.

**“After losing my job due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a friend told me about driving for Lyft so I could continue to pay my bills and take care of my two sons,”** said Grant. **“On August 30, 2021, I got a ride request, accepted it, and drove to the location. When I arrived, I discovered the person who ordered the ride wasn’t the person I would be driving. The person who got in the car became angry because I was trying to confirm the name of the person who ordered the ride on the app. I had to call the police because she became verbally and physically abusive. She forced her way from the back seat of the car to the front seat, grabbing the steering wheel and causing the car to swerve and hit something, smashing the passenger-side mirror. As I was trying to gain back control of my car, she struck me with a sharp object on my mouth, cutting my lip badly. This whole incident has affected me mentally, financially, and emotionally. I’m scared to look at my mirror because the scar reminds me of being attacked. I’m scared to drive for Lyft because I’m scared of being attacked by a Lyft passenger again.”**

Stuart Berman, a Lyft driver and physical assault victim from Wilton, CT, [filed yet more legal claims](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Stuart-Berman-Arb-Demand.pdf) against Lyft. On September 17, 2021, he picked up the male passenger in Stamford, CT who was having a heated phone conversation. When they were almost to his destination, the rider said, “Pull over, nigger.” This comment confused Mr. Berman, who is white. Out of nowhere, the man started punching Berman in the head and face repeatedly. The passenger then ran out of the car, and Berman called the police. He was taken to the emergency room, where he learned he had a broken nose and a blood vessel in his brain was bleeding. Berman reported the incident to Lyft, who advised him that it would deposit $750 in his bank account. Berman required two surgeries for his brain injury because his brain had shifted in his skull. Berman had to be taken off of blood thinners due to the ruptured blood vessel in his brain, resulting in a blood clot forming in his abdomen. Berman had to undergo physical therapy for walking and balance. To this day, he is unable to walk or climb stairs at a normal speed. Berman also has a large, prominent scar on his head from the surgery that it is a constant reminder of the assault. In addition to the physical injuries and ongoing recovery, Berman suffers from severe anxiety as a result of this assault.

**“I am still having physical therapy sessions three times a week but am not fully recovered,”** said Berman. **“I still have trouble going up and down stairs and have issues walking straight. It makes me feel like a child. I also have a huge physical reminder of the attack that I have to see every time I look in the mirror. My brain surgery left a big ridge of scar tissue on my scalp. I am not growing hair there and am very self-conscious about it. Mentally, I haven’t yet returned to normal. Now, in a restaurant or store, I always sit with my back against the wall. I do the same with elevators. If I can’t get into the back and face forward, I wait for the next car. If I see a man walking towards me, I step aside, letting him pass while watching him very carefully. Lyft must do more to prevent these types of incidents from happening and train its drivers. Lyft must protect us.”**

As early as 2015, Lyft became aware that its drivers and passengers were being sexually assaulted, physically attacked, raped, and even murdered while using the application. It knows of countless complaints by passengers who have been attacked by drivers and by drivers who have been attacked by passengers, combined with criminal investigations by law enforcement. Lyft is fully aware of the continuing attacks and dangers posed by its rides.

But Lyft’s response to this crisis has been appalling. Lyft continues to hire drivers without performing adequate background checks and continues to allow culpable drivers to keep driving for Lyft. Most importantly, Lyft has failed to adopt and implement reasonable driver monitoring procedures designed to protect the safety of its passengers. As a consequence, Lyft passengers continue to be victims of sexual assaults and rapes by its drivers.

Even today, Lyft operates without any meaningful screening. Once an applicant becomes a driver, Lyft fails to consistently use its own technology to monitor rides. Lyft fails to consistently make an alert if the driver diverts substantially from the correct route or fails to reach the destination, either of which can be a sign of a physical or sexual assault.

Lyft also does not have a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct and has allowed drivers who have been reported for misconduct to continue driving. There is shockingly little training, and Lyft does not adequately investigate passenger complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior or serious sexual assaults. And appallingly, there are even online forums where rideshare users openly discuss and brag about access to women. Worse, there are open discussions about how to “get laid/get girls interest.”Despite Lyft’s history of hiring sexual predators who have assaulted passengers and open subculture of Lyft drivers who harbor a sexual motivation for driving young female passengers, Lyft has done nothing to warn its female passengers about this very serious and real danger.

At the same time, Lyft has failed to take adequate measures to protect its drivers from carjackings and other physical and sexual assaults by passengers—an occurrence that is frighteningly common. The refusal to institute mandatory dashcam surveillance in all vehicles and real-time tracking of all rides results in drivers being held hostage or worse by their often-intoxicated passengers. Lyft claims that its drivers can decline any ride they like, but Lyft consistently refuses to give drivers the information they need to avoid a dangerous ride. Lyft does nothing to allow the drivers to verify the identity of the riders in the car and allows account holders to arrange trips for acquaintances who have absolutely no information on file in the event of an attack. It also refuses to allow drivers to see prior complaints about specific passengers who they have been assigned to pick up, and even deletes the contents of the driver’s own complaint in subsequent correspondence about a given incident. Lyft also often obstructs law enforcement efforts after an attack has been reported, refusing to cooperate without a court order, despite knowing that many police precincts will drop charges if information is not provided sooner. This allows sexual and violent predators to get away with their crimes and inhibits the survivors from taking legal action to protect themselves.

Lyft has long failed to exhibit transparency about the rate of physical violence on its platform and has spent years inaccurately peddling itself as a safe employment and transportation option. In 2021, Lyft released its “[Community Safety Report](https://sexualassaultvictimadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Community_Safety_Report.pdf)” that purported to provide transparency regarding the prevalence of violence and sexual assault on the platform. Lyft reported 4,158 sexual assaults from 2017-2019, but only included a few subcategories of sexual misconduct and sexual assault. It also indicates that Lyft’s safety policies and procedures are not working, as the report revealed a 65% increase in sexual assault in 2019. The report was woefully inadequate and appears to have been designed to obscure safety issues rather than reveal them. For example, Lyft specifically noted that it had information regarding non-fatal instances of physical violence associated with the use of the platform, yet intentionally failed to quantify and describe the nature of these attacks. Instead, it merely stated that 10 of those attacks resulted in death. Given that Lyft has this information but made the calculated decision not to disclose it, the logical conclusion is that revealing to the public the true prevalence of physical violence during Lyft rides would grievously harm the company’s bottom line.

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