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# Taxi!: Cabs And Capitalism In New York City



## Synopsis

"Mathew, as a member of the Organizing Committee of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, has a unique perspective on the plight of immigrant taxi drivers. . . . Mathew explores the history of New York's taxicab industry, which has been in a cycle of corruption and reform since the Depression. The book culminates in an essay on globalization, immigration, racism, and the false veneer of multiculturalism in neoliberal society." •Booklist"Mathew describes the grim economics of driving the ubiquitous yellow cabsâ •a job where most of the money goes to the cab company owners and where even minor problems, such as a few tickets or a short illness, can spell disaster for drivers." •Financial Times"Jump aboard this fast-paced ride through the ins and outs of the taxi industry in New York City and sit up front with the 40,000 cabbies who are overworked, underpaid, and routinely harassed, but have come together to improve their lot. . . . Fasten your seatbelt, grip the dashboard, and enjoy the trip." •Morning Star (U.K.)"Drivers' narratives in Taxi! can be riveting, inspiring, and upsetting all at the same time. . . . Their tales penetrate deep into the exploitive nature of the taxi industry. . . . In describing precisely how a group of seemingly powerless immigrant workers flexed their muscles, Taxi! critiques the labor movement and the broader movement for social justice." •Left Turn"Driving a cab has long attracted recent immigrants and others at the margins of the economy. In recent years, however, the working conditions and the nature of cab ownership have changed. As Biju Mathew reveals in this lively account of the benefits and hardships in the lives of today's taxi drivers, just about everything has changed dramatically except the yellow paint. At once a passionate declaration of worker solidarity and an ethnography of work, Taxi! is a compelling narrative of the lives of immigrant taxi drivers in New York City. This updated edition covers the formation of the International Taxi Workers Alliance, the unusual collaboration with the Central Labor Council, and 2007 taxi strikes protesting New York City's plan requiring taxicabs to install costly global positioning systems and credit-card machines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mathew, as a member of the Organizing Committee of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, has a unique perspective on the plight of immigrant taxi drivers. Cab drivers pay a leasing fee of \$120 per day to fleet owners, and they make a living only if they can bring in more than that, which is often difficult even in a grueling 12-hour shift. They are thought of as second-class citizens, harassed by police and passengers, and are subject to stiff fines for minor offenses. The system is rigged so that the most vulnerable person, the driver, takes on all of the risk. Yet this diverse workforce that speaks over 80 different languages organized a strike in 1998 in the face of opposition from Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Mathew explores the history of New York's taxicab industry, which has been in a cycle of corruption, reform, and corruption since the Depression. The book culminates in an essay on globalization, immigration, racism, and the false veneer of multiculturalism in neoliberal society. David Siegfried Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"In 1998, as Biju Mathew reminds us in *Taxi*, a group of drivers—24,000 cabbies—staged an inspiring work stoppage in New York City. Theirs lasted only a day but showed that a group of "independent contractors"—the Taxi Workers Alliance—could make gains through lobbying, publicity, and direct action even when deprived of formal collective bargaining rights. As Mathew movingly describes, the New York taxi driving workforce "Thanks to the forces of globalization" has been "structured almost permanently into a culture of masculine bachelorhood" due to the forced separation of so many drivers from wives and families in their country of origin."—Steve Early, *New Labor Forum*, Spring 2008 "A stunning introduction to the lives of New York's taxi drivers. It is destined to become a classic."—Vijay Prashad

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