

DRIVER

A FILM BY NESA AZIMI



POV

DISCUSSION GUIDE



DRIVER

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Film Summary



After losing everything, Desiree Wood takes a second lease on life as a long-haul trucker. Alongside an irreverent group of women drivers, she fights for a life on the road. In a rapidly changing labor landscape, Desiree and her sisterhood of truckers rally against the crushing forces of an industry that is indifferent to their survival.

Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and is designed for people who want to use *DRIVER* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. Be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS

Dear POV Community,

We are so glad you have chosen to facilitate a discussion inspired by the film *DRIVER*. Before you facilitate, please prepare yourself for the conversation, as this film invites you and your community to discuss experiences of women in the trucking industry, gender and labor inequality, activism, mental and emotional health, and U.S. political landscapes. These conversations require learning truths about society, culture, and political motivations that typically have not been taught in schools. We urge you, as a facilitator, to take the necessary steps to ensure that you are prepared to guide a conversation that prioritizes the well-being and safety of women workers, working-class communities, and youth in your community. Importantly, this film shares experiences through a lens of joy and resilience, rather than focusing on trauma, and we hope this guide will aid you in conversations that expand understanding while maximizing care, critical curiosity, transformation, and connection.

Tips and Tools for Facilitators

Here are some supports to help you prepare for facilitating a conversation that inspires curiosity, connection, critical questions, recognition of difference, power, and possibility.

Share Community Agreements

Community Agreements: What Are They? Why Are They Useful?

Community agreements help provide a framework for engaging in dialogue that establishes a shared sense of intention ahead of participating in discussion. Community agreements can be co-constructed and created as an opening activity that your group completes collectively and collaboratively. [Here is a model](#) of community agreements you can review. As the facilitator, you can gauge how long your group should take to form these agreements or whether participants would be amenable to using pre-established community agreements.

Opening Activity (Optional): Establishing Community Agreements for Discussion

Whether you are a group of people coming together once for this screening and discussion or a group whose members know each other well, creating a set of community agreements helps foster clear discussion in a manner that draws in and respects all participants, especially when tackling intimate or complex conversations around identity. These steps will help provide guidelines for the process:

- **Pass around** sample community agreements and take time to read aloud as a group to make sure all participants can both hear and read the text.
- **Allow time** for clarifying questions, make sure all participants understand the necessity for the agreements, and allow time to make sure everyone understands the agreements themselves.
- **Go around in a circle** and have every participant name an agreement they would like to include. Chart this in front of the room where all can see.
- **Go around two to three times** to give participants multiple chances to contribute and also to give a conclusive end to the process.
- **Read the list aloud.**
- **Invite** questions or revisions.
- **Ask** if all are satisfied with the list.

COMMON CONCEPTS & LANGUAGE

Deregulation and Surveillance

When trucking was deregulated starting in the 1970s, what actually happened was a shift in the vector of regulations. Previously, freight and shipping were regulated. In the new model, individual workers were micromanaged via a complex network of regulations called “hours of service.” New rules (such as the Electronic Logging Device Mandate of 2018) get added supposedly to increase road safety, but in practice, to limit drivers’ options and freedom, and to increase the profit that corporations can squeeze out of the workforce.

Sexual Violence in Trucking

During Commercial Drivers License (CDL) training, new truckers and their trainers both sleep in the truck cab. This is a very small, intimate space, often parked far from other people. The relationship between trainer and trainee is fraught from the start: the trainer has the power to

pass or fail the new driver. Trainers often believe that truckers should be men, and that any women trying to make it need to be punished. Traditionally, they say there are three tests: the company test, the road test, and the sleeper test. Though trucking companies say they train against harassment and have round-the-clock support for trainees, in practice, harassment and rape are commonplace and often overlooked. Truckers commit to a training fleet, and since they work “at will,” they can be let go if they complain or cause trouble. Once dismissed, they are typically blacklisted, and no other companies will sign them. And they usually owe the original training fleet for their training, food, and hotel, so they are disincentivized from reporting any problems. There’s a culture of impunity, a “man’s world” work setting, and a lack of accountability. Anything that disrupts the movement of goods is ignored. And new drivers, often without a support system or safety net, are screwed.

Health and Physical Toll

When Desiree left trucking and lived in a tent in Florida, it was due to sciatica and damage to her knee caused by trucking. She needed surgery before she could return, and she wore a boot for several years. Truck driving is brutal work. Repetitive motion, sedentary work, limited food choices, diesel exhaust, stress, road accidents, environmental cancers, obesity, lack of access to regular medical care or health insurance, intermittent sleep, and substance abuse contribute to high morbidity and mortality rates among truck drivers. The job can be done by people of any size (as Michelle, at 5’2”, proves), but throwing chains, wrangling hoses, or simply opening the trailer doors requires significant exertion. Due to these conditions, the occurrence of truckers dying on the job is common.

Lifestyle, Loneliness, and “Windshield Time”

Truckers routinely say that theirs is not a job, but a lifestyle. They are constantly leaving everything and spending the majority of their time alone. “Trucking work is bound up in cultural constructs of manhood and virility, performed through displays of physical and mental stamina . . . Trucking is an *identity*.” (Levy 9). Though lonely, many people enjoy the solitude provided by “windshield time.” For some truckers, this time to think and to see the country, this lack of co-workers to interact with, these daily physical and mental challenges, and this chance to keep moving are an ideal fit for their personalities.

Recruitment and Turnover

There is almost 100% turnover annually in trucking (Viscelli 7), causing a constant demand for new workers. The industry conditions generate the “truck driver shortage” it complains of by fueling worker churn, from which it profits. Workforce Train-

ing programs (which are required for people collecting unemployment insurance) feed workers into trucker training programs, and the megacarriers who take them on get compensation from the state. Training programs recruit among people leaving incarceration and the armed forces, and many target particular immigrant communities and homeless shelters. Given these demographics, many people getting this training are vulnerable and out of options, and thus less likely to complain or resist harmful conditions. The training provided is often slapdash at best, so people are assigned to trucks (often in pairs) without the skills they need to succeed. They are thus prone to make errors, which give the companies grounds to fire them: grounds that they only employ if the trucker is generally challenging or pushing back on harmful conditions or treatment.

Wages and Exploitation

The average annual trucker wage falls somewhere between \$50-60,000, and truckers are paid by the

mile. While that might seem high, remember that truckers work a minimum of 60-hour weeks and must meet their daily needs out on the road. Food and laundry are very expensive. Further, an average conceals as much as it reveals. During the first year, truckers are lucky to clear \$25,000 (Viscelli 35). Once a trucker completes their first, incredibly challenging year, they have better options to choose from. Additionally, good trucking jobs require a year of accident-free driving experience, since the insurance for an untested driver is cost-prohibitive for only the largest corporations.

Brokers are the middlemen between shippers/receivers and drivers/companies. A driver has no access to what the freight pays, so there’s a race to the bottom of what brokers can get drivers to agree to. While truckers demand greater transparency from brokers, there are no mechanisms to enforce that, leaving them at the whim of brokers who profit from their labor.

Dispatchers control the freight distribution for megacarriers, so a company driver depends on their relationship with a dispatcher to get assigned freight that pays well, and takes them somewhere that they can then find a good load out of.

Community Organizing and Solidarity

Smartphones and their networks have impacted trucking directly. Truckers once relied on each other for news about roads, routes, police, and parking. They met in truckers' lounges and diners and waited in line to use pay phones to talk to dispatch. Now, most of this is done by phone, often while driving. With wages dropping, truckers are pushed to drive farther and faster, and the time spent in the community is time off the clock, so most truckers pass in and out of truck stops as quickly as possible. Few truckers are unionized, and most truckers are misclassified as 1099 independent contractors, and thus denied the basic safety net that

a full-time worker has access to, though they are working full time. Truckers are put in positions to be their own advocates on top of this demanding job.

Fortunately, social networks provided by the internet make different types of connections possible. Queer, trans, Black, or Sikh truckers can find each other and communicate easily. Desiree uses social media to connect with other women truckers, and on the cruises, she trained us all on how to use platforms to increase our reach. She knows how important it is for women in trouble to be able to reach an informed, sympathetic audience. Like any organizer, Desiree gets frustrated with how hard it is to collect a team of people motivated to take up the work of organizing and moving it forward. A few reliable volunteers are available whenever she asks, but Desiree wishes she didn't have to specifically ask, and that more people stepped up to do this crucial work. The reality of burnout for truckers who are working to create

solidarity networks, like Desiree, is high.

Megacarrier

This term generally refers to a trucking company with a fleet of over 100 trucks that offers regional and national coverage and a variety of hauling services (i.e., van, flatbed, refrigerated).

Leasing and Debt Bondage

Given how challenging working for a megacarrier is, and how low the pay remains, many truckers imagine that owning or leasing their own rig will be better. But the information that truckers get about leasing or owning a truck is deceptive at best (Viscelli 112), and Desiree's experience is tragically common. Drivers are sold the myth of independence, but breakdowns, diesel costs, low freight rates, high truck payments, and ruinous interest rates mean that the bank typically gets its truck back along with a large portion of the trucker's earned wages.

Invisibility

So much surveillance and micromanagement cluster around trucking that they might be and feel central to civil society, but instead, trucks and truckers are persistently not seen or valued. This invisibility enables a variety of harmful working conditions, from rape to accidents to opaque freight rates. Truckers' "invisibility and isolation – the way that trucks are huge and everywhere and indispensable, yet simply not seen – causes resentment" (Balay 98) and leads to trauma for drivers.

Discrimination

The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories. In the United States, the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. Additionally, the law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person com-

plained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. Furthermore, law also requires that an employer reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

Equity

In basic terms, to achieve equity is to treat everyone fairly. An equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harm other social groups/communities. Sometimes, for the purpose of equity, justice demands an unequal response.

Intersectionality

People belong to various groups and are pulled in conflicting directions by these allegiances. To understand an individual or a community, we need to

see them as belonging to, and being excluded from, multiple categories and collections of other people and ways of being.

LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER

Dear Reader,

My journey making this film began in 2018. While working as a journalist, I heard a story about sexual assault in the trucking industry. I went deep into the online world of women truck drivers and found Desiree. One month later, I quit my job in TV and was riding with her in the cab of her truck. I spent the next six years making this film with Desiree and her surrogate family of women long-haul truck drivers, building relationships based on friendship, trust, and commonality.

Desiree was my entry point into this story, and yet the particularities of her experience were by no means the film's final destination. In some ways, *DRIVER* is character-driven, and Desiree's story is its heart, but the ambition for the film—like Desiree's work—is far more universal. It was through Desiree that I initially gained the trust of Michelle and other drivers. While solitary and skeptical of outsiders, they welcomed me into their world with a warmth and openness that took me off guard. The deeper emotional connections that we formed together developed over the years.

Sharing the cab of an 18-wheeler with Desiree is like going to the movies—you buckle in and everything else falls away. There's nothing like the drama of the road—the intensity, movement, and sound: it's a whole body experience. Being invited into the rumbling cab of Desiree's truck is to look at the road, the beauty and the vastness of the country, and the labor of driving through her eyes, while suspended 12 feet up above the world of four-wheelers. Under the surface of the sheer excitement is the constant tension of the outside world intruding upon the interior of the cab, threatening to take it all away. I wanted to make *DRIVER* in order to tell a universal story about labor through the women who are living it every day. While the film deals with the idiosyncrasies of the profession and the trucking industry at large, above all, we prioritize the human spirit: how it expands and invigorates even in the most challenging of circumstances.

Using an intimate and observational lens, *DRIVER* captures the experience of Desiree and her fellow drivers within a system that routinely promises and denies them the safety and autonomy that they desire.

Through Desiree's community, I found an advisor and friend in Anne Balay, labor organizer, former truck driver, and author of *SEMI QUEER*, an oral history of queer and women drivers. With her perspective on labor, gender, and class, she has deeply informed the filmmaking process and how I approach the power imbalances inherent to documentary filmmaking, between filmmaker and protagonists. More than characters defined by plight and circumstances, the film shows Desiree and her friends as the tough, hilarious, multifaceted women that they are—formidable people whose lives are imperiled by corporate and public indifference, but who live through it with dignity and strength.

There are parallels to be drawn between how *DRIVER* was made and the work that is collectively undertaken by the women at the center of the film—even if the participant and filmmaker are positioned somewhat differently. Labor is the unifying force, and this idea is central to the work that Desiree and her group, REAL Women in Trucking, undertake. Our shared identity as workers cuts across so many categories and hierarchies—class, race, gender, geography, and more. Working on *DRIVER* has sensitized me to this fact, and I have been so fortunate to have learned and grown alongside Desiree and her group—to both understand and reflect upon our differences, but more importantly, to find commonality and shared purpose in how we carry out the different types of work that we all do.

-Nesa Azimi

Participants

Desiree Wood

Desiree Wood was a long-haul truck driver and the founder of REAL Women in Trucking. Raised in Mexican and Indigenous communities in southern California, she tells stories about her childhood, about becoming a young single mother, about her work in adult entertainment, and about coming from houselessness to trucking. When she faced sexual assault during training with Covenant Transport, she sought support. Finding none, she organized other women truckers and persistently reached out to media outlets until they responded, all while she continued to drive. In an industry with very little representation for working drivers, Desiree lobbies at all levels of government against sexual assault in training fleets, for safe parking, and against predatory truck leasing programs.

Michelle Kitchin

Michelle Kitchin has been on the road working as a long-haul truck driver for over x years. She prides herself on having run over x safe miles. She started out in 1988 driving for ComTrans, and she has run more than 4 million miles accident-free. She now works as a company driver

for a family-run trucking fleet hauling office furniture from Michigan to California. She calls herself a “produce chaser,” hauling fresh produce from California back east. She rides with her dog and traveling companion, Atlas, and before that, spent nearly a decade riding alongside her beloved dog Caper.

Idella Hansen

A Grande Dame of the industry, Idella learned trucking from her dad as a pre-teen, and has been a professional driver for more than fifty years. When few women did this work, she was known as “Mama Choo Choo,” did all her own repairs, and took no nonsense. Beloved by her fellow drivers, a living legend, she has a truck stop in her name.

Jess Graham

Jess began trucking with a megacarrier, homeschooling her daughter in the truck. When she learned of REAL Women in Trucking and was active in its petition drive around rape in truck driver training fleets, her own company dismissed her. Not deterred, she became an owner-operator and does most of her own truck repairs.

Key Issues

DRIVER is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Labor organizing and solidarity
- Women's rights and struggles for safety in a male-dominated industry
- Mutual Aid and community support
- Economic interdependence and long-haul trucking
- Industry and Exploitation
- Long-haul truck driving
- Institutionalized precarity
- Race, class, gender

Background Information

Shifting Regulations in Trucking

Though truckers are often viewed as independent loners free to roam the nation's highways, their work and life typically don't fit this "cowboy" mythology. Since as early as 1970, trucking has been limited by a series of regulatory changes that are ironically called deregulation. Trucking work imposes "a myriad of controls on truckers' day-to-day activities. . . from strict training and licensure requirements and screenings, to restrictions on the hours a trucker can drive and the paperwork he must keep as evidence of his compliance. . . . Some of the rules pertain intimately to the driver's body" (Levy 33), including drug and health and fitness screenings.

While insurance companies, employers, and governmental agencies claim that these regulations increase highway and trucker safety, data indicates the opposite. Under this "new regulatory regime . . . employees work longer hours for smaller paychecks" (Belzer 77), placing them under pressure to drive tired, in bad weather, and sick. Trucking consistently ranks as one of the deadliest jobs in America. With scant union representation, drivers have few protections and take on enormous risks. The current crisis has highlighted the importance of mutual aid networks that Desiree and others rely on in the absence of any meaningful industry or government interventions.

Who Drives Trucks? Why? Where?

There are more than 3 million truck drivers in the USA today, and the drivers have varying relationships to their work. Most drive long-distance freight involving trips spanning multiple states, commonly referred to as “OverTheRoad” for megacarriers who own their rigs and pay drivers by the mile. Another large group of drivers leases their trucks, while a smaller subset owns the rigs that they drive. Regardless of ownership, most drivers typically sleep in their trucks and schedule their runs (or deliveries) one at a time. Yet another group drives in specific locations (i.e., oil fields, ports) so they may drive a different truck every day and are often in a union.

Despite the reform movement against child labor and brutal industrial work schedules in the early 1900s— which led to the establishment of the 8-hour workday via the Fair Labor Standards Act—several types of labor were excluded from these protections, including domestic work, farm labor, and trucking. These exclusions reflect and reinforce conditions rooted in white supremacist patriarchal logic that continues to shape labor structures in the U.S.

Trucking, long characterized by long hours and minimal supervision, operated with few constraints even before formal deregulation. This deregulation was solidified with the passage of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980, signed into law by President Jimmy Carter, which significantly reduced government oversight of the long-haul trucking industry. However, since the 1970s—and increasingly over time—long-haul truck drivers have earned only modest annual incomes, despite regularly working more than 60 hours per week. According to Belzer, “Long hours of driving, combined with many uncompensated hours spent waiting and performing non-driving tasks, have driven compensation down towards – and in some cases below – the legal minimum wage” (187). The Bureau of Labor Statistics also reports a rise in occupational illness, injury, and fatality rates among truckers during this period (Belzer 189).

“Man Up”: Women in Trucking

Women account for five percent of all truck drivers on the road today. Various interventions have tried to raise that number, but none have been effective. Though increasing numbers of women train and earn their CDL, most don't make it past the first, hard year, due to threatening conditions and few protections meant to keep them safe.

Truck driver training programs are federally funded and incentivized to add new workers to the pool, and also to account for the constant, high turnover rate in the industry. These training programs are problematic. Entry-level driver training fleets require team-driving, where students live on the truck for 30 days or more with their mostly male trainers, who have the power to pass or fail them. Harassment and assault are rampant, yet abusers rarely face consequences. Serial court settlements and non-disclosure agreements shield the trucking industry against accountability and reform. It's this culture of impunity that Desiree and her fellow drivers are fighting to change.

Given all this, and given low pay and long hours, why do the women depicted in *DRIVER* love the work so much? Idella has never had another job and wishes to die behind the wheel – she can imagine no other life. The job and the life are both beautiful and brutal, and “turning to trucking at the end of the road (so to speak) is linked to persistence: salvation through trucking is not easy or pretty, and it takes a tough person to make it work, but these facts somehow add to its appeal, especially for the desperate and culturally marginalized” (Balay 148). People tell these women that trucking is for men, and their joy in proving otherwise gives them confidence and pride.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Starting The Conversation

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner before starting a group discussion.

1. Have you been to a truck stop? Seen and talked to a trucker?
Gotten angry at a truck(er) while driving? Seen a woman driving a truck?
2. Before you watched *DRIVER*, what did you believe was the typical income level for truckers? Has that belief changed? If so, how?
3. Think about the major interstate near you, or one you drive on regularly. Are truckers provided with, or limited to, specific lanes? Why do you think that is?
4. What role do truckers fill in the broader economy?
5. How much solidarity do truckers feel with other truckers? Are there issues that unite all drivers, and what pressures does the industry exert on truckers that limit solidarity? Who do truckers talk to while on a run?

Elise's Call to Desiree

Think back on the part of the film when Desiree takes the call from the woman entering the industry after experiencing domestic violence.

1. How did the new driver, Elise, know to call Desiree? What help does Desiree give her? How might being that listening ear affect Desiree? How might the weight of other people's trauma build up and impact her own life?
2. The caller is seeking safety; she imagines the truck will enclose and protect her. Desiree points out that, to get there, she'll need to "face the monster." How does trucking magnify the tensions and contradictions that women confront? If home is unsafe, will being uprooted and anonymous offer comfort?
3. The filmmaker reached out to the caller for permission to include this call in the documentary. The caller gave permission, thanked Desiree for being real with her and preparing her for trucking life, and shared that she and her daughter were doing well, and that trucking had become a fresh start and a sustainable life. How might being heard and receiving honest, empathetic advice have influenced her path?? What are some of the barriers to remaining in this industry?

After the Cruise

1. Why do the truckers go on a cruise? Does this fit with your sense of what's reasonable expenditure for working-class folks? Why or why not?
2. Think about the scenes with Michelle and Idella on the slide and in the hot tub. How often do you see women of this age, with bodies like this, enjoying being together in public, and on film? Why? How does it feel to observe them?
3. Several truckers describe what brought them to trucking. What circumstances tend to draw people to this lifestyle? What are they hoping to find? Most of the women featured in this doc are white and cisgender; how might the experiences of Black and/or trans women differ within this industry? What unique challenges might they face?

Desiree's Economic Precarity (Greyhound Bus Scene)

1. Michelle says that trucking income is dropping, and wages are unsustainable. Her remedies include broker transparency. Since truckers are paid by the mile, making it one of the last forms of "piece work", do you think they should be paid by the hour instead? Why or why not?
2. Why does Desiree return her truck? Desiree is calling attention to the lies that entrapped her in this contract. She told Idella about the five people who previously drove this truck, and Idella reminded her that she was set up to fail. Like all of us, Desiree has tried to make it within a structural dead end, and she tries not to take personal responsibility for that. Trucking companies profit from this pattern; what can be done to address/remedy it?

3. Trucking lures people in with a promise of independence and financial security, and they often leave within a year more in debt than when they started. Desiree drives four or five trucks during filming. Do other jobs provide this level of physical precarity? Is that increasing? Why?

Enduring Justice and the Fight for Change:

1. Though time has passed, not much has changed about this industry or lifestyle. What allows these women to keep going?
2. At the trucking convention in Dallas, the truckers are getting signatures for a petition. The FMCSA does meet and agree to study the training model that leads to frequent sexual assault, but their “findings” are inconclusive. People who commit assault are not held accountable – they can find work training in different fleets. Women are not protected in this work. How does that compare to the situation women face in your work? Might there be patterns of sexual violence of which you are unaware?
3. Desiree and the filmmakers hoped that this film might increase awareness and thus lead to change. If people know about this pattern, surely it will stop. What might civil society do to address the patterns of low wages, micromanagement, and rape that the doc unpacks?

OPENING/CLOSING ACTIVITY

OPTIONAL

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions:

1. Jobs are sorted in the US by various unwritten "rules." Think about what genders truck driving? What other jobs are gendered? Why? What are the consequences (both economic and social) of this sorting?
2. Desiree felt alone and vulnerable, and she responded by forging a community that endures and has engendered activism and practical support. In your own work or community, are there ways you can bring people together? Have you done so, and if not, what stops you?
3. Often, a community depends on a shared enemy or target. What targets unite truckers? In your workplace or community, are there shared targets? Are there more positive lines along which you could find mutual purpose?
4. *DRIVER* romances physical geography. The road is a potent source of meaning, and truckers love it. Do you have memories of time spent on the road? Truckers appreciate their "windshield time" as an opportunity to think, and often to grow. What physical or emotional freedom do you feel behind the wheel?
5. Would you consider working as a truck driver, knowing what you know now? Why?

TAKING ACTION

If the group is having trouble generating their own ideas for next steps, these suggestions can help get things started:

- **See** trucks and their drivers. Leave them room on the road. Don't cut into the space they leave on the highway or hover on their right side. Respect the essential work they do.
- Join or donate to REAL Women in Trucking.
- Most truckers don't have health insurance provided by their companies. Supporting single-payer health care would make a difference.

Resources

REAL Women in Trucking

REAL Women in Trucking is a truck driver advocacy group led by Desiree Wood. Run by and for working drivers, RWIT advocates for better wages and working conditions, and seeks to disrupt the status quo around sexual violence in the industry. As one of the few organizations representing driver interests, RWIT regularly calls for accountability around sexual assault in truck driver training fleets, wage reform, oversight of predatory truck leases, better training standards, safe truck parking, and many other issues that impact drivers daily. Perhaps most notably, RWIT serves as a resource to new and old drivers alike, a way that people can swap information and share advice, and a vital social community for drivers who are separated by miles of highway.

LGBTQ+ Truck Driver Network

The LGBTQ+ Truck Driver Network is a driver-led advocacy group for LGBTQ+ drivers. It serves as a resource and social community for truck drivers on the road.

Truckers Emergency Assistance Responders (T.E.A.R.)

T.E.A.R. is a nonprofit that provides emergency aid and financial assistance to truck drivers in crisis due to illness, injury, abandonment,

job loss, or other life-threatening hardships. The organization is driver-founded and committed to supporting those who fall through the cracks of industry safety nets.

Miss Diva Trucker

Miss Diva Trucker is the online persona of Tamara Brock, a motivational speaker and truck driver who shares her experiences in the industry while offering support, mentorship, and humor. She uses her platforms to uplift other women drivers and advocate for equity in trucking.

Ask the Trucker Blog

Ask the Trucker is an information hub and blog started by veteran trucker Allen Smith. It covers industry news, driver rights, safety concerns, training practices, and exposes injustices within trucking, particularly around driver treatment and regulatory issues.

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) 24/7 Hotline

RAINN operates the nation's largest anti-sexual violence hotline. Available 24/7 at 800-656-HOPE and online, it offers confidential support, crisis counseling, and resources for survivors of sexual violence, including truck drivers.

Resources (cont.)

Meals for 18 Wheels

Meals for 18 Wheels is a volunteer-based initiative that delivers hot meals and supplies to truckers who are stranded, sick, or in need—especially during holidays or emergencies. It helps bridge the gap when drivers are far from home and access to food is limited.

their families. They assist with transportation costs, logistical support, and coordination during tragic and often complicated circumstances far from home.

Operation Roger

Operation Roger is a nonprofit that unites pet rescue and trucking. Volunteer drivers help transport adopted or rescued pets across long distances, making use of otherwise-empty truck space to reunite pets with their new homes.

Trucker's Christmas Group

Trucker's Christmas Group is a grassroots effort that raises funds to support trucking families in financial crisis during the holiday season. It's run by and for drivers who want to ensure that no fellow trucker's family goes without during the holidays.

Truckers Final Mile

Truckers' Final Mile is a nonprofit that helps return deceased or severely injured truck drivers to

Credits & Acknowledgments



About the Author,

Anne Balay

Anne is a writer, educator, labor organizer, and former truck driver. She earned a PhD in Literature from the University of Chicago, after which she became a car mechanic. Though she later returned to academia as a professor at the University of Illinois, Indiana University Northwest, and Haverford College, she never lost her interest in blue-collar work environments.

When Balay moved to Gary, Indiana, to teach, she immediately became interested in the steel industry of the region. She subsequently wrote *Steel Closets*, a book that tells the stories of gay, lesbian, and trans workers within the mill community. Anne then attended commercial truck-driving school, got her CDL, and drove over the road. Oral histories of truck drivers she collected in 2016 have led to her book, *Semi Queer*. Anne is now an organizer for SEIU, working with adjunct faculty in Boston. She continues to be a cherished member of the community of truck drivers that's at the center of *DRIVER*.

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