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Uber drivers say they were fired for no reason — but now they're fighting back.

By Troy Wolverton | Examiner staff writer Sep 29, 2026



Former Uber driver Sifiso Majola, who said he was deactivated by the company in 2024 and is now working as a big-rig driver, is seen at a truck stop in Ripon on Sept. 24. "Even to this day ... I'm still kind of catching up with a lot of stuff," he said.

Craig Lee/The Examiner

Sifiso Majola said that after driving for Uber for nine years, the company deactivated his account — effectively firing him — in 2024 after the facial-recognition software built into its app didn't recognize him.

Pablo Bender Martins said something similar happened to him. After getting his new driver's license in March, he tried to upload it to Uber. Instead, the company rejected it, accusing him of submitting a fake document, and dropped him as an Uber Eats driver, he said.

Zeid Khleifat said Uber permanently deactivated him in December 2023 soon after he refused to pick up a party of eight people. Despite the company's rules specifying he couldn't accommodate more than six in his vehicle, the company terminated him, pointing to a "safety issue," without offering any further explanation.

Bobby Brown said Uber fired him as a driver out of the blue in April, citing an unspecified incident that happened nearly four years earlier that he didn't recall. He said the company hadn't flagged the incident at the time — and because the incident had happened so far in the past, Uber said he couldn't appeal its decision.

"I never received any notification. I can't even appeal for it," said Brown, a resident of Marino Valley in Riverside County who had driven for Uber's ride-hailing service since early 2022 in the Los Angeles and Palm Springs areas. "It just didn't make any sense."

All four drivers said they tried to contact Uber to get the company to reconsider their cases and reinstate them. None had any success. All say they remain banned from driving for the service — and Brown said he can't even use Uber to hail a ride as a passenger.

"I'm penalized for that as well," he said.

Now all four — and hundreds of other Uber drivers — are making formal challenges to their terminations through the arbitration process.

As part of its terms of service, Uber requires passengers and drivers to agree to take any disputes to arbitration individually, rather than to the justice system via standalone or class-action lawsuits.

That can be a challenge, because few attorneys want to handle such cases, said Nicole Moore, president of the driver-advocacy group Rideshare Drivers United.

But Shannon Liss-Riordan, an attorney whose Boston-based firm specializes in filing mass arbitration claims, is stepping into the breach. She said her firm already represents thousands of drivers around the nation — including some 20,000 in California — in arbitration claims, and it's increasingly focusing on pursuing claims by drivers who have been deactivated.

Lichten & Liss-Riordan now represents hundreds of such drivers in the state, Liss-Riordan said, including Majola, Martins, Khleifat and Brown.

Liss-Riordan said many of the drivers her firm represents have been working for Uber for years and have "excellent" ratings. Many support their families with their earnings, she said, and some of the drivers have become homeless in the wake of their dismissals from the company.

"It's just horrific the way they've been treated," Liss-Riordan said.

Martins said his firing happened at a particularly bad moment for his family. He's a part-time musician, but he had been getting fewer gigs, so when his wife lost her job in January, he started driving more for Uber Eats.

He said he figured he could use the extra money he made from the service to make up for what his wife had been earning. But then Martins — who lives and works in Los Angeles — lost his job too. And while he tried driving for Amazon and Instacart, neither offered as "solid" an option as Uber Eats, he said.

"I was really stressed out," Martins said.

His family tapped its savings until his wife found another job at the end of July, he said. They basically exhausted all the money they had set aside, but they feel fortunate they had it, he said.

"Otherwise, it'd be a disaster," he said.

Majola said his deactivation was also life-changing. The San Francisco resident said driving for Uber had been his full-time job. He said he typically drove seven days per week and about 10 hours each day, although he would break that up into three different shifts with breaks in between.

He said that since Uber dropped him as a driver in May 2024, he's had to scramble to support himself and his two kids. He first tried to do deliveries for DoorDash, but that didn't make up for his lost Uber income. He ended up going back to school to get his commercial driver's license and now drives big rigs and other commercial vehicles.

But Majola said he's still struggling financially.

"Even to this day ... I'm still kind of catching up with a lot of stuff," he said.

Uber spokesman Zahid Arab declined to comment on the mass arbitration effort against the company led by Liss-Riordan's firm. He did not respond to an email seeking comment on Majola, Martins, Khleifat and Brown's individual cases.

Liss-Riordan said her firm recently hired 20 new legal fellows to help out with its arbitration claims against Uber. Earlier this month, it held an orientation for the fellows — credentialed lawyers who are typically new to the career or new to working on workers rights cases — in downtown San Francisco. It has begun training them to handle the claims.

"We're really excited to be growing our army to be able to take them on and fight for these workers," Liss-Riordan said.

While the chief complaint among California's Uber and Lyft drivers is their low pay and benefits, the No. 2 issue is deactivations, driver advocates say.

About half of all drivers have been deactivated at some point — some permanently, some temporarily — according to Moore, who said Rideshare Drivers United has studied the issue. RDU offers a clinic to help drivers who've been fired or suspended by the companies. Some 450 drivers statewide have sought help in just the past six months, Moore said. Many are dumbfounded when they get deactivated, she said.



A protester drives past Uber headquarters at 1725 3rd St. in San Francisco during a demonstration in February 2024.
Craig Lee/The Examiner

“You’ll just turn on your app, and ... you’re ready, set, go for your shift, and you can’t get on, and you don’t know why, and you have no access,” she said. “It’s a horrible situation.”

Majola, who used to drive for Uber’s ride-hailing and black-car services in the Bay Area, said that’s basically what happened to him. When he got ready to begin his Uber shift on May 11, 2024, it was, as he put it, “like any other day.”

He woke up, took a shower, got coffee and opened up the Uber app, he said. As it had done in the past, the app asked to scan Majola’s face to verify his identity – only this time, it didn’t work.

Instead of logging Majola in, the app said it wasn’t his face being scanned and accused him of trying to fraudulently access his own account.

“I know it was me, of course,” Majola told The Examiner in an interview. “So that was the irony about it: Just like, OK, if it’s not me, then who is it?”



Nicole Moore, center, an organizer with Rideshare Drivers United, meets with the group's organizing committee in Los Angeles in August 2019.

Allison Zaucha © 2019 The New York Times Company

Majola, who said he had been driving for Uber since 2015, said he called the company right away. An Uber representative told him the company would look into his problem. But he soon got a response saying Uber had reviewed the situation and was standing by its decision to deactivate his account.

He said he pleaded with company representatives to take another look, even offering to meet in person to show them his driver's license. But he said he kept getting the same response: The company had reviewed his situation and was standing by its decision to deactivate his account.

Majola said the deactivation didn't make any sense.

He said he didn't have any moving violations, and he hadn't done anything wrong. He'd been a top driver for the company for years.

“This was a surprise,” Majola said.

“It was a slap in the face, to be honest,” he said.

Majola’s experience isn’t unusual, drivers and advocates say. After the ride-hailing companies fire drivers, they don’t offer any kind of real process for challenging those decisions.

Instead, it often seems that drivers are fired by automated systems, and their appeals are determined by similar systems, offering them little or no chance to have their deactivations reviewed by actual human beings.

In its deactivation clinic, RDU tries to help drivers get reinstated, passing along tips and tricks for getting a positive response from the chatbots handling such appeals, Moore said. But many drivers have no luck even then, and the organization has started to refer such drivers to Liss-Riordan’s firm, she said.



Attorney Shannon Liss-Riordan, seen outside a federal courthouse in San Francisco in December 2022: “It’s just horrific the way they’ve been treated.”

Jeff Chiu/Associated Press

RDU, which is a California organization based in Los Angeles, is also taking another tack to fighting back against the deactivations. In April, it sued Uber over the issue.

Under Prop. 22, a ballot measure passed by voters in 2020 after Uber and other companies spent more than $200 million backing it, the ride-hail and delivery businesses were allowed to treat drivers as independent contractors rather than employees. But in return, they were supposed to offer drivers certain services and benefits, including an appeals process for deactivations.

In its lawsuit — which Liss-Riordan filed on its behalf — RDU contends that Uber hasn't actually set up a bona fide appeals process. Because it hasn't, it should have to treat drivers as employees, the suit argues.

Khleifat knows firsthand how futile it can be to try to go through Uber's appeals process. The Fairfield resident said that to this day, nearly three years after the fact, he has never gotten a specific explanation about why he was fired. All of his attempts to get an explanation or appeal his dismissal



Former Uber Black driver Zeid Khleifat, deactivated by Uber in 2023, now a driver of his own limousine service, seen in San Francisco on Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2026.

Craig Lee/The Examiner

have fallen on deaf ears, he said. The deactivation has been life-changing, said Khleifat, who said he drove for Uber in the Bay Area and whose dispute over the excess passengers happened in San Francisco. He paid $96,000 for a Chevrolet Suburban in 2022 specifically to use it to give rides for Uber's black-car service.

Since Uber fired him, he's tried driving for Lyft's comparable service and for private clients, but the money is nowhere near what he was making before, he said. So far this year, he's only made $6,000 driving for Lyft, he said.

He has three kids and a wife to support, and that hangs over his head. He filed his arbitration claim because Uber wasn't listening to him, he said.

"I need someone to hear me, to give me my rights back," Khleifat said.



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