

LICENSEE LEADERS

JULY 2023

**AYO OGBEIDE | QIAN TU CHEN | SAMIR ELDRISSI
BOB BEDFORD | DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH**

Community

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission's (TLC) Licensee Leaders is a media program that highlights the stories and voices of TLC's community of drivers and other licensees, amplifying leadership in accessibility, customer service, and safe driving.



Licensee Leaders' monthly program engages the TLC community through long and short-form features. The series also recognizes citywide and national awareness months while celebrating the viewpoints of our licensees as they relate to culture and heritage, industry, and safety.

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TLC's Licensee Leaders programming for July 2023 includes a variety of perspectives on safe driving and what makes the New York City taxi and for-hire vehicle industry unique. From TLC-licensed drivers, bases, fleets, and medallion agents to its approved driver education providers and the riding public at large it serves, the taxi and for-hire vehicle community in NYC is one of the most diverse in the country and world.

In this issue we spend time with for-hire vehicle drivers Ayo Ogbeide and Qian Tu Chen, recognized as two of TLC's "Safest Drivers" at the ninth annual Vision Zero Honor Roll. Ogbeide, who originally came to New York City from Benin City, Nigeria, discusses his multifaceted engagements with passengers and skilled navigation of an ever-changing urban landscape.



Chen, a NYC transplant from Fuzhou, China, shares his views on community safety, how we can share the streets, and how he joined the industry on the recommendation of a friend. We also spoke with Samir El-drissi, instructor of the 24-Hour, Renewal, and Wheelchair Accessibility Vehicle (WAV) Training courses at Kingsborough Community College, a TLC-approved driver education provider based in Brooklyn. To conclude the voices that make up July 2023's licensee leadership, we engaged Big Apple Taxi Management's General Counsel Robert "Bob" Bedford on his enthusiasm for the yellow taxi and its lasting iconicity across NYC and beyond.

INTRODUCTION



Driver Spotlight

Ayo Ogbeide

Ayo Ogbeide is a Nigerian-born New Yorker who moved to the city in 2017 and became licensed just two years later. Ogbeide, a high-volume FHV driver honored as a “Safest Driver” at TLC’s 9th annual Honor Roll, talks with TLC’s External Affairs about the diversity in opportunity found across NYC and its taxi/FHV industry, navigating an ever-evolving urban landscape, and how keeping the streets safe is his “number one priority.”

TLC: You were honored as one of the “Safest Drivers” at the TLC’s 9th annual Honor Roll. What does that recognition mean to you?

Ayo Ogbeide: It means a lot to me because I’ve been honored for driving safe in the streets of New York. And it makes me want to keep driving as safely as possible.

TLC: Why it is important to recognize driver leadership in safe driving?

AO: I think we should do that more often. From my own perspective, it’s not all about celebrating the leadership in safety but saving more lives and keeping people safer in the streets. That’s how I see it.

TLC: What is one way to go about doing so?

AO: The more we give the Honor Roll, the more drivers will want to drive safe. A lot of us are happy getting the Honor Roll, being that TLC recognizes our effort to keep the streets safe. So, we want to do more, every night and day.

TLC: Where are you from originally and what first brought you to New York?

AO: Nigeria. My family lives here. So, I came to New York in 2017. Coming here, I loved the place because it was welcoming and diverse. It’s a beautiful place, and with more opportunities as well. I came here knowing that I wanted to move here, right away.



Nigerian-born Ogbeide talks first few years in the city

My dad already lived here for over 33 years. And I was waiting to come here so bad before I moved here.

TLC: How long did it take for you to get used to NYC? What was most difficult about moving here?

AO: I would say the more difficult part about coming to New York was not really being able to communicate with people. Sometimes I wanted to say something, and say it in a certain way, [where it came across as] something I did not mean to say. So, sometimes, I preferred to stay mute than saying [something I don’t mean to]. For me, I always said that English is not my first language.

For instance, I was working in a restaurant in Lower Manhattan and my manager said to me, “Oh, you are doing [it] wrong.” Instead of me asking him, “How do you want me to do it?” I asked him “What do you want me to do?” So, he was upset. And he said, “That’s not what you should have asked. You should have asked me, ‘How do you want me to do it?’” So, I started learning to use the right words at the right time. Though I’m still not perfect, I try my best.

TLC: That’s a wonderful example. By contrast, was anything the easiest?

AO: The easiest thing in New York is that there is 24-hour transportation, easy access to the stores, and easy access to everything. And they say, “If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere,” and I agree with that. I totally agree with that.

TLC: What first influenced you to drive professionally?

AO: I knew that driving professionally would keep me out of trouble. And most of the time, it’s not all about making the money. The money is good. But getting in trouble, it’s 100% not making the money.

TLC: How does that mentality guide you?

AO: Crashing means losing your license. That I have at the back of my mind, that keeping the streets safe should be my number one priority. And whenever I drive in New York City, I put it at the front of my mind to watch out for someone who might just walk right in front of [my vehicle]. So, I’m already prepared to stop at any given point in time, because I know that people on bicycles, pedestrians, another car... everything wants to get in front of you. So, I wake up every morning knowing that someone wants to get in front of me, so I’m already prepared to apply the brakes. And I keep a safe speed limit at all times.

TLC: How did you first learn about the job and what made you want to apply for a TLC license?

AO: So, I had a previous job I loved.

But it was kind of boring because I sat in the office from morning till night, and I’m really not that kind of person who wants to sit in one place and circle around that place. I want to see places, see stuff happening in the street, in new places, and learn a lot of stuff.

So, [before being a licensed driver with] TLC, I’ve never been to Delaware. [Being a driver licensed by] TLC took me to Delaware. It took me to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and places I’ve never even dreamt of going before now. And so, that was one of the reasons I wanted to have a TLC license so that I could see places.

Because even my own fellow immigrants I came to the United States together with – we came at the same time. Sometimes I want to say, “You know, Brooklyn Bridge...” They say, “Brooklyn Bridge? I’ve never been there.” And they’ve been here for, like, six years. What have you been doing? [They say,] “We take the train to work, to the store, and whatever... We are not able to see places you are able to see.”

So, it makes me really see everywhere and learn a lot of stuff as well. It’s not just about seeing. I learn about my community and environment as well.



Ogbeide expresses the importance of communication

TLC: What was it like for you at the beginning as a driver? Was it difficult to learn how to drive in NYC?

AO: It was difficult. And I would say it's still difficult. Because every day we wake up and we see a one-way or a two-way street, like in Brooklyn with two-way traffic – you wake up the next day and it's like a one-way street and you see a sign that reads: "DO NOT ENTER."

So, I wouldn't say I know everywhere, because today we might see [a street sign indicating] two left turns, and tomorrow they wipe it off and it's just one. And the day after tomorrow, you see a sign that says, "NO LEFT TURN." So, it was really difficult for me to learn. And if one is not careful, they could make a lot of mistakes driving in New York City.

TLC: How would you say one can be flexible in navigating a changing environment like NYC?

AO: I would say that, for me, I always make sure to look at the road signs. I would say that 900 feet, 700 feet, before an intersection, the [New York City Department of Transportation] DOT always puts a sign like, "NO LEFT TURN." So, it is difficult for anyone to make that mistake. But if someone is not looking, he or she could still make that mistake. And sometimes when I see a tree, I try to scan behind, just to make sure there's nothing like a "STOP" sign, or "DO NOT ENTER" behind the tree.

TLC: Do you remember what your first trips were like?

AO: The first trip was from Manhattan Avenue in Harlem to Columbus Avenue, but I'm not sure the address from and to. But, my first trip, was driving for Via [Transportation & Leasing, Inc.].

TLC: And what was that like?

AO: It was interesting because I said to myself, "Is

“New York drivers are actually the best drivers I have ever seen.”



Ogbeide sits outside of the TLC Commission Hearing Room

this all I need to do? Like, accept the ride and just drive and take them places?" It was kind of new and at the same time interesting to me. And each time I accepted a passenger, I started learning more and more.

And more people would come in the car and ask me, "Are you new here?" I would say yes, so they'd say, "Oh, because your driving is not aggressive. With New York drivers, driving is always aggressive." That was when I was new to driving.

TLC: How long was it until passengers stopped asking you that?

AO: Ah, they still say it. Sometimes they say it like, "Are you from New York?" And I say, "Yes." Then, some of them say, "Oh, you're too slow." Some [passengers] are going to say, "Oh! I'm running late for my flight. Do you think you can make a 'U-y'?" And I act like I don't hear them. And they ask me one more time, and I say, "Oh, there's a sign there that says "NO U TURN." And they just let it go. Some of them don't even see the sign.

Some of them, sometimes, want to [push] like, "Why are you not making a left on 42nd?" Let's say, from 6th Avenue. "Why are you not making a left on 42nd Street?" So, I then point out the sign to them and say, "Oh, see the sign for "NO TURNS" at the light."

And they say, "Oh, that's true..."

The thing is, I don't mind if they are paying attention [to signage] or not, because they are paying me to take them safely. So, I should be the one who is more focused, and not me wanting them to tell me, like, "Oh, you can make a left turn here." That is something where I might have said, "Oh, you're not supposed to do that."

TLC: Is there anything interesting you have learned from passenger interactions?

AO: A lot, a lot. Some of them even tell me the history of my own country – stuff I don't even know. How we used to drive on the left side of the road but now on the right side, and on the right side of the car but now on the left side.

They tell me about my home a lot. And not just my home, but about New York City – about how this new building was erected, renovation of LaGuardia [Airport], and all of that. A lot of history I learn from them.

TLC: That's interesting. What is something about Nigeria that your passengers get excited to share about?

AO: Oh! Some of them told me about a place in Lagos

where you go to get the best food. And trust me, I'm from Nigeria, but I've not ever been there. And some of them know about how many languages are spoken in my home country. When they say it, it's strange! Like, how do you know more about where I come from, rather than me who was brought up in that place? They tell me more about the politicians, about the cities, about a lot of stuff going on there.

TLC: What vehicle do you have and how long have you been driving it?

AO: At this particular point in time, I have a 2021 Toyota Corolla. And I've been driving it since December 2022. It's still pretty young. I lease a new vehicle every year just to make it fresh. So that there isn't any problem on the roadside.

TLC: What vehicles are you interested in driving in the future, if different from your current vehicle?

AO: If any, something like that wouldn't be bad! [Ogbeide points to a photograph in the room of a historic yellow Checker cab from the 1970s]. I see that and I wish I drove in something like that. Because that's iconic. I've never been in something like that and realistically have never seen something like that in real life. So, yeah, I wouldn't mind driving something like that.



Pointing out the importance of mindfulness for cyclists on the road, Ogbeide previously used a bicycle as a part of his work

TLC: What are your thoughts on battery-powered electric vehicles? Do any interest you in general?

AO: Oh, okay... for electric vehicles, I wouldn't mind the EQS, the Mercedes. It's an electrified Mercedes. It's like a hatchback, but at the same time, an SUV.

TLC: Are there any near-future or long-term goals you have, as a licensee or otherwise?

AO: I want to go into becoming an aviation mechanic and I am working seriously toward that.

TLC: Are you studying right now? If so, how do you balance studying and your driving schedule?

AO: Yeah, I'm studying. I would say I'm a very boring person. I don't have a social life. So, if I'm not working, I'm reading. And if I'm not reading, I'm working. That's how I'm able to balance it. Most of the time, I wake up early, work early, finish early, go to my books early, sleep early... It's the same thing, of my life, every day.

TLC: What does your timeline look like for that?

AO: It's a one-year program. And I study up to 3-5 hours every day. So, once I get home at about 7:00



Ogbeide reflects on his experiences as a TLC licensee and FHV driver

p.m., I'm able to study till about 12:00 a.m., and sleep, wake up early, and then the next day. But my time changes every day. So, I might get home early to sleep early to wake up early, but whatever happens, I still have that time to study and do all that stuff.

TLC: What general time frames do you tend to prefer working?

AO: Early morning is my best shot. If I'm not able to wake up in the morning to start driving at least at 7:00 a.m., I'm not going to drive for the rest of the day. Because once it's 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 a.m., I feel bored, and I don't want to do anything for the rest of the day. Otherwise, I'll start doing something, but won't be able to work for that day. If I don't get stuff done in the morning, like early, early – even if I have to read a book or have a medical appointment – if I don't do it in the morning, the rest of the day I'm not able to do it. So, it's like, my energy comes in the morning.

TLC: And how many days a week do you typically work?

AO: I would say I work seven days in a week. But it might look like, I work in the morning, then take a break and go eat, then come back. How I do this is, let's say I work from seven in the morning till about ten in the morning. Then I take a break for about two, three hours. Then I start about 1:00 p.m. and end at about 5:00 p.m.

TLC: What do you tend to do on your break?

AO: Oh, I eat. I talk to my siblings in Africa, I check on people I haven't checked on in a long time. And at the same time, I quickly go through some books, online or in my iPad.

TLC: Why is making sure you have adequate rest important as a professional driver?

AO: It's good to take rest. I don't know how to put this but, if I don't take a rest, I start getting agitated. Any little thing, I might be like, "Why did they go in front of me?" "Why'd they do this, why'd they do that?" So, I always make it important, to take that rest, because even if something happens, I let it go. The rest is always important. It makes me relaxed.

TLC: Do you have a favorite lunch spot in NYC? Even if it's not on your break.

AO: Oh, I do! I have found a few places. But one of my most favorite is called African American Halal Food, between 7th and 8th Avenues on 30th Street. I go there every day. They have a lot of spices. And spices make me happy!

TLC: What is something you feel not many people know about you or would be surprised to learn?

AO: My age. A lot of people look at me and they say, "You're still young." Of course I am young, but a lot of them think I'm 24 [years old] but I'm 36. So, that's one thing I know they don't know about me. They're surprised about it.

A lot of the people who say that tend to be people who I help to pick up their luggage to put in the trunk. They say, "Oh, thank you for helping us pick up our luggage! You're still young. You're 24, right?" I say, "No, I'm 36." They look at me and say, "No, you're lying." There was one who asked me, I was forced, "Can I see your driver's license?" Then he saw and said, "Oh I thought you were lying." That's one thing they argue about with me at all times.

TLC: What passenger feedback do you feel you most value?

AO: Like I said, I learn a lot, every day, from the passengers. Some of them say, "You know, when I was your age, I was able to save my money to do this or that. So, your best shot is right now. If you miss it now, you miss it forever." So, I get encouragement. And I also learn from them.

TLC: As someone who has demonstrated leadership in safety, what would you define as safe driving?

AO: Safe driving is not just keeping the speed limit. Sometimes, the speed limit will tell you 25. But especially on a street like 44th Street, and 7th Avenue, there is a very wide pedestrian crossing. People see that, and then see one person crossing, and just go – they don't look at the traffic. So, it's not [that we should] just go because the light tells me to go because it's my right. Most of the time you just let people do what they want to do in order for them, and me, to be safe.

And taking a lot of rest could make someone drive so safe.

TLC: Comparatively, what is unsafe driving you would describe as avoidable?

AO: Excessive speed and not yielding to other vehicles and other pedestrians or other road users. So, even if, the [GPS] tells me to go, there might be a lot of pedestrians. Just let them go, and everyone is safe.

But I see a lot of people who are like [makes car horn sounds]. And sometimes the people on the other side of that get angry and want to fight. And trust me, fighting in New York City is not a good thing. It leads



Ogbeide stresses the importance of navigating a changing urban landscape safely

to something negative. Let them go and then everyone is fine.

TLC: How do you effectively respond to any challenging situations while driving?

AO: Someone has to be the grownup person out of everybody. So, I try all times to be that person. Although I'm not perfect, I try to be that person.

Like I told you earlier on, I tell myself every day, like, "Someone is going to run or walk in front of [your vehicle]." And that happens every day. So, me waking up every day of my life knowing that someone is going to run or walk in front, I am prepared to stop at any given point in time. But doing beyond 40 miles per hour or 60 miles per hour in the streets is not going to help me save the person.

TLC: In what ways is driving in NYC different from driving somewhere else?

AO: I would say New York drivers are actually the best drivers I have ever seen. And the reason why I say this is because the majority of us know when to maneuver and how to maneuver. I've been to other cities. People just want to go around a double-parked car, like with the [hazard lights] while not driving slowly. But New Yorkers I know would never do that. They take their time, and they go slowly.

TLC: Do you have tips for other drivers?

AO: I would say that one of the things is to check the car regularly. Even though they say to check your car every four months, a lot of drivers are driving around with squeaking brakes. And when the brakes are squeaking, it means the brakes are gone. That is not safe at all.

TLC: Have you taken a taxi, app, or car service trip as a passenger since you started driving?

AO: I took a yellow cab from East Houston to West Houston. The driver wasn't good. The reason why is because he was talking on the phone. And I wouldn't say he wasn't paying attention, but the car was squeaking, like I was hearing noises from all corners of the car. Like that wasn't cool at all for a TLC driver. And I was going to say something, but he was talking on the phone. And that's one thing I don't do while driving. I don't talk on the phone. I just put it on "Do Not Disturb." That makes me safe. And that makes the streets safe as well.

TLC: Since your work might involve using your cell phone at times, such as to accept a trip through an app, does putting your phone on "Do Not Disturb" help prevent other phone use?

AO: It helps a lot because any bad thing could happen within seconds. So, someone calling my phone and me taking my eyes off the street even just for one second could cause a lot of problems. So, I would say, using "Do Not Disturb" every time works perfectly. It works.

TLC: Do you make it a point to remind passengers to wear their seatbelts before starting the trip?

AO: I do. I say, "Oh, could you please put on your seat belt?" And they ask, "Even when I'm sitting behind?" And I say, "Yes, New York City made it mandatory, or else you can get a ticket for not putting your seatbelt on." And the moment you say, "you get a ticket," you hear a click. [Ayo gestures putting on a seatbelt.] Yeah, so, put on the seatbelt at all times.

TLC: Have you ever had an experience as a passenger that encouraged you to always prioritize seatbelts?

AO: I think it was in 2019. When I was still driving with Via. I had about four passengers in the car. And I was trying to navigate an intersection on 6th Avenue and from nowhere this bike rider came and I had to apply the brakes to the fullest. And everyone in the car went [forward], even me too. So, I never forget to put on my seatbelt because of that incident.

You don't have to remind me. The moment I get in the car before I start, I put on my seatbelt.

TLC: Do you think drivers need to be more aware of bike lanes and cyclists on the road?

AO: It's the driver that should be more aware of cyclists. I used to do deliveries as well, in New York City. It's easier for the driver to pay attention to the cyclist than the cyclist to pay attention to the driver because the driver is always in a more relaxed state than the cyclist. So, I would say the driver should pay more attention than the cyclist.

TLC: How long were you using a bicycle as a part of your work?

AO: I did that for about five months. I think because I've been there it makes me pay more attention. And because of that as well, I make sure every time I open the door that I look for them. Because some drivers don't look. They just open the door.

Riding as a cyclist I've been doored more than once or twice. And the only thing I heard was, "Ooh, sorry." I mean, I wasn't expecting anything more than that, but it could have been worse than that. If the driver was looking out for passengers before opening the door, who doored me, I don't think I would have had that experience. So, it's our duty to look out for the [bike] riders most of the time.

TLC: Have you heard about the "New York Twist"?

AO: No, I haven't.

TLC: It's a public service announcement comprised of a partnership between TLC and DOT, featuring music by the rock musician Chubby Checker. It encourages drivers to use the "Twist" motion to watch out for cyclists when exiting their vehicle. Maybe you would like to recommend it to others.

AO: Oh, okay!

TLC: What are you most excited about for the NYC taxi and FHV industry?

AO: The regulations. I would say that the regulations are so good and favorable to the drivers. I think if there was no TLC, I don't think the drivers would have been happy.

TLC: Are there any individual or personal goals you have, as a professional driver?

AO: Like I said, I'm really studying to become an



Ogbeide bids farewell outside of the New York Stock Exchange building in downtown Manhattan

Being a TLC driver is a great job. And it gives you the opportunity to do whatever you want to do. Working for yourself and going to school at the same time.

I'm happy to be in New York and chasing my dream, and it's going to come, too. Because if I can make it here, I can make it anywhere. And I believe in that.

TLC: What is something you hope always remains a part of NYC's taxi and FHV industries?

AO: The strict regulation from TLC. I hope it remains like that in the industry. The reason why I'm saying that... it doesn't just have to be regulations for the driver. But what about the pedestrians?

I'm in a group on Facebook called TLC New York City. And I see some people upload their ticket like, "Oh, I got a summons from TLC." And people start commenting. "What did you do?" "Oh, I made a left turn, and I didn't wait for the pedestrian." You don't want to do that. If TLC wasn't there, I think a lot of drivers wouldn't care, like "It doesn't matter. No one is going to come and ask us." But since TLC is there, everybody wants to save their license and do the right thing.

So, I would say one hundred percent, all day, all night, I support TLC in whatever the agency is doing. It doesn't have to be in our favor all the time. Everyone has to be safe.

TLC: Any essential parting advice for other drivers, based on your experience?

AO: Yeah, I would say, take it slow and easy. And if you want to make your goal to make a certain amount, yes, you can. All you have to do is wake up early, and start early, and finish early. Instead of just wanting to work three hours and make all the money in the world - it's not going to happen.

So, wake up early, take your time, and do your work, really gently, and everything is going to be smooth.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Chen meets our External Affairs team at a Taxi and FHV Relief Stand



“This industry is necessary.”

Qian Tu Chen is a TLC Licensee and Bayside, Queens resident who hails from Fuzhou, the capital of China’s Fujian province. As a full-time FHV driver in NYC, Chen speaks with TLC’s External Affairs team on what first brought him to the FHV industry in the city, being mindful of cyclists when exiting a vehicle, how we’re all just “ordinary people,” and tips on safe driving practices.

Qian Tu Chen

Full-Time FHV Driver from Fuzhou, China speaks on how he joined the industry and community safety

TLC: As one of TLC’s “Safest Drivers” for 2022, what does it mean to be honored?

QTC: It means that I can contribute to New York City’s Transportation system and that I can help with the safety of the taxi/FHV drivers as well as the passengers.

TLC: Why is it important to celebrate and uplift safe driving?

QTC: This will inspire NYC taxi/FHV drivers to find importance in safety and to keep in mind that it will help the city pedestrians to be able to feel safe walking in the street at their comfort level. And this also helps contribute to the city’s development.

TLC: Mr. Chen, where are you from?

QTC: I am originally from a city called Fuzhou, China.

TLC: What first brought you to New York City?

QTC: A good, better future.

TLC: How long did it take for you to get used to the city? What were your first impressions?

QTC: When I first came to the U.S., everything seemed fresh to me. I wanted to study and adapt. NYC provided this opportunity for me to strive and motivate myself. NYC is beautiful with endless possibilities, but it is also a stressful city. So, we try our best to adapt to the lifestyle and to put in really hard work to fulfill our dreams.

TLC: Do you take any actions to self-motivate?

QTC: I tell myself, “Tomorrow will be a better day. Tomorrow is always the best.” Every day should be a happy day for me, and I’m not going to think too deeply about happiness.

TLC: What did you do before you started driving professionally?

QTC: Before, when I got here, I worked at a restaurant, in the

kitchen, and after I became the restaurant manager. After that, I worked in a casino. And after that, I found my [current] job driving with Uber.

TLC: Was there something that first influenced you to become a driver? What led to that choice?

QTC: I worked at the restaurant, and then the casino, and since we work with people, both good and bad daily, I learned a lot about service and how to respect people.

The casino job can be boring and redundant after a while, since every day you see the same people. Then, you have some people that are not very nice. Even if people win money at the casino, they still get mad at the staff. So, one day, my friend told me, “Hey why don’t you try moving to New York?”

I asked him, “To work in what industry?” He replied, “Drive for Uber, in the city.” So, I said, “Hey, that’s a good idea.”



Chen shares his views on creating safer communities across NYC

Then, I got licensed by the TLC in November 2016 by passing the TLC exam, background check, drug test, and obtained my license and plates.

TLC: Were there any early challenges you had to overcome when you first started driving professionally?

QTC: Not very much, in terms of challenges. But now, I worry that in the city, I think that scooters are very dangerous.

TLC: Are there any extra precautions you take when exiting your vehicle, considering cyclists, scooters, and other road users?

QTC: I always come to a complete stop and don't open the door immediately. Also, I get out of the car to open the door for passengers and help them get out of the vehicle. If I see passengers opening the door very fast, I tell them, "Stop! Let me open the door for you." I insist and tell them, "Let me open the door, for your safety, and God forbid anything happens. We cannot afford it."

TLC: Do you remember what your first trips were like at the beginning?

QTC: First time, I was terrified. It was my first time for everything in NYC, so I wasn't very comfortable. But afterwards, I got used to it and had really good communication with my passengers.

TLC: Was there any learning curve in interacting with passengers?

QTC: Of course, because when you see a passenger for the first time, you do not know if they are happy or not. There are some people that don't want to talk, and some people are happy to talk with you. So, you have to look and assess how to handle each customer.

And there's some that want to be left alone and prefer a quiet ride, so you turn off the music. And you just keep on going and then you say, "Thank you, see you next time," when they leave. It's easy.

TLC: Why do you think it's so important to provide great customer service for your passengers?

QTC: Because it was a blessing for me to have them ride in my car. "Happy every day" is my motto.

TLC: What vehicle do you have and how long have you been driving it?

QTC: When I first started, I drove a Toyota RAV4. But now I drive a 2017 Toyota Camry. I've been driving it for about six years now. Maybe next time, for the next car, I want to try and get a more expensive car, maybe an SUV, an electric or a hybrid. But right now, it's too expensive... the gas, condo price, etc.

TLC: What interests you most about electric and hybrid vehicles?

QTC: The hybrid or electric vehicles will help improve the air for the city. However, since we're on the road all the time, the charging system/infrastructure will be important.

TLC: What does your schedule look like on an average day?

QTC: Every day, I work about eight to 10 hours a day. Sometimes when there are not too many rides, I just go home. This type of work can be very tiring, so I have to ensure that I have enough sleep and keep my mind sharp for the safety of myself and the passengers.

TLC: Alongside ensuring you're well rested, how else do you practice safety on the road?

QTC: Never, ever speed.

Go slow when you make turns, and always look to your left and right. There's a Chinese saying that goes, "more haste, less speed." It means that if you try to do things too quickly, it will take you longer in the end.

TLC: Do you take breaks? How frequently and what do they include?

QTC: Yes, I do. Sometimes when I park on the side of the street waiting for a ride request, I get off the car and do some exercise. Sometimes I take a small nap as well.

TLC: Is there a go-to lunch spot you have, or do you bring your own food while working?

QTC: Mostly, I bring my own food, eat in the car. Because when you're in the city, you cannot find parking. Even if you find a parking spot, the parking meter is very expensive. Also, after you park, you have to walk to the restaurant and come out. So, it's very tough.

TLC: What is something that you feel not many people know about you or would be surprised to know about you?

QTC: That we're ordinary people.

TLC: As someone who's demonstrated safe practices as a driver, what do you define as safe driving?

QTC: The difference between safe driving and unsafe driving is ensuring that you protect the community. You shouldn't drive too fast and when you make a turn, watch out for the pedestrians.

TLC: In what ways is driving in NYC different from driving somewhere else?

QTC: NYC is a busy city. There are too many people. Other cities are quiet.

So, the big difference is that people in New York City, they like to rush everywhere and always want to go first. That's why I ensure that I'm driving safely and always try to stay happy every single day.

TLC: What neighborhood do you live in and how do you feel about road safety there?

QTC: I live in Bayside, Queens. The people in the neighborhood drive very safely and it is a very quiet place. Bayside is a very good area and quite safe.

TLC: What would you suggest to drivers, professional and otherwise, who wish to prioritize the safety of their communities?

QTC: No speeding, drive slowly, respect the stop signs, let people go first, and no honking.

TLC: Have you taken a taxi/FHV trip as a passenger?

QTC: I think it's only been a few times that I've been a passenger. Because when I go out, I usually drive my own car. Sometimes when the driver appears worried or stressed out, I try to encourage them by saying, "My friend, always be careful when you drive and take your time."

TLC: Is there anything you do to enforce seat-



Taking in the views at NYC's historic South Street Seaport area

belt use in your vehicle?

QTC: Yes, because every time I pick up a passenger, I always tell them, "Please wear your seatbelt or we will be pulled over and you, as the passenger, will receive a ticket for not doing so." Most passengers, about 99% of the time do the right thing, but not everyone.

I try my best in telling them nicely to wear the seatbelt. It's all about mutual respect and how you approach them.

TLC: How do you feel vehicles and cyclists should best interact on the road?

QTC: Bicycles and cars both share the road. And, with most drivers, we usually let the cyclists go first. I believe those that drive scooters should be required to buy insurance. Also, cyclists should have respect for one another on the road.

TLC: How do you manage cell phone usage as a high-volume FHV driver, as it might pertain to your job, such as for accepting trips?

QTC: For safety, my cell phone is attached to a hands-free device in the car, so it's fixed, and I don't have to hold the phone in my hands. And then, for example, when a ride request comes in, I just need to slightly tap it. Also, I don't answer any incoming calls when I'm driving around unless I pull over on the side of the street to answer them.

TLC: Is there something that excites you about this industry?

QTC: I don't know since it is unforeseen. I would like to have a safer driving environment and make more money.

TLC: On an individual level, do you have any personal goals as a driver?

QTC: Make a lot of money and retire earlier.

TLC: Are there any particular retirement plans you are looking forward to?

QTC: I want to tour the world because it's such a small world.

TLC: Lastly, what do you most cherish about our city?

QTC: Our industry, because this industry is *necessary* and a part of the city. Personally, I don't think it's possible for autonomous driving in NYC because of the diversity and complexity of the traffic.

Chen met our External Affairs team at a Taxi and FHV Relief Stand in downtown Manhattan



“

“MORE HASTE, LESS SPEED.”

IF YOU TRY TO DO THINGS TOO QUICKLY, IT WILL TAKE YOU LONGER IN THE END.”

”



Instructor Spotlight

Samir Eldrissi

Samir Eldrissi is a TLC licensee and has been an instructor at the Driver Education provider Kingsborough Community College for the past two and a half years, where he teaches the 24-Hour, Renewal, and WAV classes. Having previously driven for-hire, Eldrissi talks about how his professional driving experience informs his work as a teacher, the importance of learning by doing, and being involved in your community.

TLC: What is your responsibility as an instructor of TLC Driver Education?

Samir Eldrissi: I feel that it's my responsibility to teach drivers the rules and regulations of the TLC, and to make sure they follow the rules. They need to take care of their passengers, to help our communities and treat them right. They also need to follow the rules of the TLC because they have a business to take care of.

We teach drivers all those things. I want them to take care of their business because when they do, it helps the whole industry. That's my thing.

TLC: What brought you to this line of work?

SE: Before, I used to be an Uber driver. Then, I used to work in the office here [at Kingsborough], and later I started teaching, because I used to teach, before, in different languages. That is how I ended up here - a lot of experience as an Uber driver, and I have experience with customer service so why not share my experiences with people? It was a natural progression.

TLC: Do you think your teaching style changes depending on the class, such as the 24-hour or WAV?

SE: There is a difference, especially between Renewal and 24-hour classes.

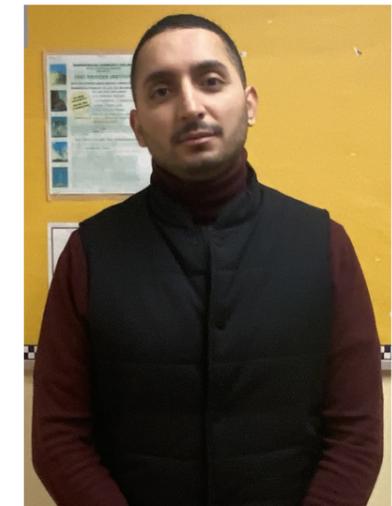
With a new student, they just want to learn. For both [new and experienced], I have to sympathize with them and show them that I'm on their side and let them be aware of the rules outside. You have to respect the rules and regulations.

For the 24-hour class, they just want to learn and to pass the exam so that they have a job. That's the thing. But I also tell them that it is not only about money. You have to focus sometimes on humanity, and you have to help our community. Especially when it comes to WAVs, some drivers do not want to rent those cars because they think it requires a special skill. But once they start learning about WAVs, the drivers are like, "Oh, it just takes an extra five minutes to help your customers."

Each class, I want to make the drivers love it. That's the most important thing. If they love it, they're going to do it. If they don't love it, they're not going to do it. That's what I try to do. I like to show the drivers first that they and the passengers are all human.

TLC: How do you ensure that all students understand the contents of the class?

SE: I ask each of the students [if they understand], especially the map data. Some of them sometimes don't understand. You know, when you're older, might feel shy, and don't want to ask questions... I go and target them. I ask, "Do you understand?" and they respond, "Yeah, yeah," so then I am like, "Good, show me, teach me." That's what I do. That's with all of them. I keep asking them, and asking them, unless they don't want to show me. Most of the time, and especially with WAVs, they must do the training.



Eldrissi shares his appreciation for the diversity of NYC with students

That's why I focus especially on when drivers do the WAV training because it can be a dangerous job. If you don't secure the passenger properly inside, they are going to end up somewhere. You have to do all the securements, one by one. Even if the student doesn't want to, they still have to show me. That's what I do with them, especially for WAVs.

TLC: How do you best encourage a long-term memorization of important class contents?

SE: That is a good question. I always tell them to review and re-watch on YouTube because we have the video about the WAV class there. I tell them, "You have to see this video, here is the link." And we give them what the TLC gives us, like fliers about steps to take and driver manuals. I tell them, "I highly recommend you read them before you take the exam. Don't just think, 'Oh, I'm going to remember everything.' One question, 'What did you eat last night?' Oh, you already forgot. So, you have to remember to review before you take the exam, and you have to practice. That is the only way you are going to remember forever. You have to practice."

That's what I tell them because after they finish the three days [for the 24-hour class], they won't come back or anything. There are few people who want to relearn and to come back.

TLC: When did you first take classes as a driver, and how long have you been in your current position at Kingsborough?

SE: 2015 or 2014, if I remember. And 2 years.

TLC: How do you feel TLC Driver Education has changed since you first took classes as a licensee?

SE: It changed a lot, to be honest. Especially when it comes to understanding the rules on fines. And [rules] are going to keep changing, depending on the social and economic conditions. In terms of learning about WAVs, in the beginning, there were just two small parts about how to secure the wheelchair in the class. TLC helps by giving you the topics to focus on. You have to teach them, show the videos, and go outside to show them, and bring them back afterwards. It is very helpful because even the student in the class might get tired just hearing from you. You keep talking, you explain, you show the videos, and then they practice. They feel alive, you know what I'm saying? And then you finish with learning, and you give them a quiz which is very helpful, for WAV and the 24-hour class.

Now we show them a lot of videos, like the one for Vision Zero from the Department of Transportation. That's very helpful. And what else? Customer service. We help drivers out with them because some people do not speak English. We, at Kingsborough, direct them and help them learn to speak with the customer. Customers have a hard time if there is a language barrier.

TLC: What is something you learned that sticks with you?

SE: The guy who taught me was good and I remember a lot from him, especially the geography and customer service skills.

One thing that I learned, the [students] that want to learn, they learn fast. The ones that don't want to learn are going to give a hard time because they keep talking and are going to disturb the class. That's what I learned. Once you start to pick on them, that's when they want to learn. That's what I started doing. I learned from the teacher and even Sunny [Kingsborough Driver Education's director] helped me understand what it is that you are supposed to do.

TLC: What personal satisfaction do you receive

from doing this work?

SE: When people say thank you and are grateful that they passed the exam... You help someone to learn the rules and regulations and find a job. That is how I see it. And they keep calling to let you know. I feel proud of it. You help people and the community.

Funny thing, I was taking an Uber and the driver turned out to be one of my students. He told me, "Oh no, you're not going to pay." And I was like, "I have to pay!" But he was like "No, I took your class, and you really helped me." It was so crazy.

Some drivers come a long way to come see you to thank you because they passed. Then, they start sending other students, that sometimes come all the way from the Bronx. And I think that is the best compliment.

TLC: Do you further prepare drivers for their engagements with other stakeholders in the industry?

SE: I teach drivers that work with medallion agents, bases, and fleets that the owner needs to trust that the drivers who are leasing or leasing to own are taught everything. I tell the drivers that, yes, you work with the company, but the company might just bring you customers.

You have to take care of yourself and you have to do the job and take care of your customer. If the customer complains to the company, you might have to work with another company. But who's going to need to change? It's the driver. So, I push the drivers to be careful about their behavior.

TLC: What impact do you feel WAVs have made across the Taxi and FHV industry so far?

SE: I mean, it's important. We're getting old, that's one thing. And the population of people with disabilities is growing. The TLC made a smart move by issuing WAV plates to FHV cars. It helps those communities a lot.

We have to help. If we are not going to help when we are young, who's going to help us when we become old? That's how I think. Help the community. They need to have equal and easy access to a cab, subways, and buses.

TLC: It is great you think that WAV service is meaningful for passengers and the licensee community.

SE: It's true.

"I want [drivers] to take care of their business, because when they do, it helps the whole industry. That's my thing."

When I used to be an Uber Driver, I had some customers who used a wheelchair. I remember my first time. The passenger was upset, and I was thinking like, "I have to take care of her." Like that was the feeling inside me. I liked being able to provide help to people.

TLC: Do you encourage teamwork in any way in your classes?

SE: Sometimes I have people who don't speak English. So, I try to put them with students who knows how to speak their language so they can explain to each other. I keep checking on them. And if some students do not understand the way I teach them, I put them next to someone who can help them. Sometimes I make groups. I have students of different cultures from different countries and they sit next to each other and help each other.

TLC: In what ways do you feel your students might benefit from that interaction in class with people from different cultures?

SE: We live in New York. We're all human beings. Sometimes they come from different countries and think that their country sets the standard and that it is the best. I have them in this class and tell them look, "You live in New York. This is not Paris where you only live with French people. This is not Italy where you live with Italians. You live in New York. Have you been to Times Square? Yes, what did you see there? Uh, advertisements. No, think of all the different people and languages in the crowd that you're going to pick up. You cannot discriminate. You cannot treat them differently. You may see some group that you do not like but still, no discrimination."

This is what I learned from the taxi/FHV business, as a driver. You have to treat people the way you want to be treated. That's very important, no matter where they come from, which ethnicity, which religion. That's the beauty about New York and the taxi/

FHV industry. That's what I share with my students. I go, "Look at our class, look at where everyone comes from." We have our standards, but we have to respect each other.

TLC: What are some of the most common questions in class and how do you address them?

SE: Most questions are about the job. I tell them that you'll have many customers. In my experience, 90-95% are nice people. But you're going to have sometimes rude people. They were rude. They grew up like that. But that's going to be your challenge and you have to handle it. That's what I tell them.

Also, [I tell them] this is your business. It's going to be a 1099 form. You're not going to have a W-2. That's your business. Imagine you open a restaurant. You have to do everything. You have to follow the rules of Consumer Affairs. Same thing. Then they figure it out. It's their business and they have to take care of it. Or you go work for someone who's going to tell you to come to work at 9:00 a.m. and leave at 6:00 p.m. and you follow the rules there.

TLC: Is there anything you didn't learn as a driver, but now know and share with your students?

SE: Well, I share with them many things about my experiences as an Uber driver. Like how to handle customers and how to be polite to the police. They never taught me those things.

Be nice to your police. I share with them those things. I tell my students the best thing to do to avoid tickets is to listen to the rules, because you know the rules.

TLC: Do you think you have inspired any of your student to consider teaching one day?

SE: Many of them. They kind of want to be like you in four years. They say, "Oh, I want to be you, I want to open a business in this industry. And I want to be like you, teaching, or I want to be a manager."

TLC: What is a sign of a very happy customer?

SE: If they want you to be their driver next time, then they feel you treated them good.

In my experience, I had many customers help me. They helped me go to school, they show me how to apply to colleges, how to even find jobs, because I used to work in different jobs. They helped me from the taxi business. But, you know, I was just a driver at the time, and I just treated them nicely and politely. So, they helped me. Honestly, that for me is very important.

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TLC: In what way do you feel like the taxi/FHV industry in New York City creates opportunities for entrepreneurship?

SE: TLC hasn't stopped licensing drivers. They give everyone the opportunity to be a driver and to find a job for their selves. Most of the people, they come and find the industry and it helps them support their families. I mean, I am one of them. I'm not going to lie to you. My friend, he's a doctor now. He used to be a taxi driver and was going to medical school. So, it helps not only to open your business, but support you in whatever career that you are looking for.

TLC: Outside of driver education, how do you feel someone should prepare for this career as

Eldrissi previously worked as an FHV driver and office manager before teaching at Kingsborough

a driver?

SE: When they are new, they are going to be nervous and need to practice. They need to review because it's not just about knowledge for the exam, but how the knowledge is used in reality.

When you are in the field, it is totally different from the exam. That is the reality. I tell them to think and prepare for many situations like with different types of customers or the police and think of what to do when there are issues, like on apps like Uber. They can go on YouTube to prepare.

Customers are king and without customers, you're not going to exist. You need them to get money. Some drivers just have a hard time with customer skills because they come here with their own standards. They think this business is just about driving and forget that they are going to interact with new people from different cultures, backgrounds, and different things.

TLC: What do you think is the essential to providing excellent customer service?

SE: You have to treat people nice. Communicate and ask before you do anything. Always ask if they need help. Some people say no, and you can tell them what you can provide. For example, if they want you to change the radio station, let you know. If the AC is too cold, let you know. That's what drivers can do. I do my best to comply with [their requests] unless it's illegal, of course. Then I deny politely.

TLC: In what other ways do you familiarize licensees with resources they might be engaging with throughout their career?

SE: We show them TLC Up in the Renewal classes and the 24-Hour class because it is basically like their personal portal. They can check if they have any issues or do things like change their address. I show them my TLC Up and Uber app as well.

TLC: What do you feel the future looks like for the New York Taxi and for-hire vehicle industries?

SE: I feel like the yellow cab is going to get stronger, especially [along] with the MTA in Manhattan.

TLC: Thanks for sharing your thoughts today, Samir!

SE: Thank you for having me!

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



Eldrissi's says students of Kingsborough's driver education courses find value in his past experience as a for-hire vehicle driver

General Counsel of Queens-based fleet Big Apple Taxi talks yellow cab iconicity and driving inclusivity forward

Bob Bedford

Join us as we speak with Robert “Bob” Bedford of the Queens-based fleet, Big Apple Taxi Management. Bedford, an attorney by trade who previously served as General Counsel of Nassau County’s own Taxi and Limousine Commission (NCTLC), shares on Big Apple’s operations, industry evolution, and the fleet’s enthusiasm for the iconic yellow taxi.

TLC: When was the business founded, and how would you describe its journey so far?

Bob Bedford: Big Apple Taxi Management was founded in 2021 as a new taxi management company, looking to move the industry forward. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented challenges no one could ever foresee; however, Big Apple has come through the other side, and we are excited about the future of this iconic NYC industry.

TLC: What are the core services of the business?

BB: Big Apple is a full-service taxi management company, leasing and managing NYC taxis. We have a number of different leasing options for those seeking to begin, or further their driving career, including drive-to-own options for taxi vehicles. Big Apple continues to evaluate its operations to see how we can better serve the people of the greatest city in the world.

TLC: How do you see the fleet changing in the future?

BB: Big Apple is continually evaluating options to bring the industry forward, including in our own operations. We believe technology will be an important part of the NYC taxi industry of the future—in the back office, in the vehicle, and in the vehicles themselves. Electric vehicles are a prime example of the industry’s continuing evolution, and it’s an issue Big Apple is watching closely. While there appear to be a number of infrastructure questions that will need to be addressed, including but not limited to charging availability, it’s clearly an important initiative for the city, the TLC, and the industry.

Fleet Spotlight

Left: Bedford stands with Big Apple’s fleet of yellow taxis at the company’s Queens-based lot

TLC: What is your professional background, and how did you first join this industry?

BB: I’m an attorney by trade and have worked in the past as a government attorney, commercial counsel to various entities, and as a litigator. I first entered the industry as GC [General Counsel] for the Nassau County Taxi and Limousine Commission and have continued in the NYC transportation industry since. I recently joined the Big Apple team and am excited to have the opportunity to work for such a great company in the NYC taxi industry, which I feel is truly part of the foundation of NYC.

TLC: Can you remember your first experience with a driver and what you learned from that exchange?

BB: I worked with a driver/medallion owner on completing a loan re-structure for his medallion. I learned about the driver’s care for the taxi industry and the rider, just as much as any medallion owner, manager, or regulator. That has stuck with me, and I’ve tried to remember that through everything I’ve done since.

TLC: What type of feedback have you received from drivers? How, if at all, does that feedback inform what you do?

BB: They truly love what they do and simply want a fair shake at being able to do it. They want to be able to operate a yellow taxi and move NYC in the most efficient manner, for themselves and the rider.



Big Apple Taxi Management takes pride in its fleet of yellow taxis



“AN NYC TAXI IS A PART OF THE HISTORY AND FOUNDATION OF NYC, AND AN ICON LIKE THE YELLOW TAXI NEEDS TO REPRESENT, UPHOLD, AND FOSTER THE VALUES OF THE CITY IT SERVICES – THE GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD.”



TLC: What does Big Apple Taxi Management’s typical business day look like?

BB: Addressing various driver issues at our walk-up window, processing new drivers through our various application routes, evaluating fleet performance and vehicle availability, addressing vehicle issues or other problems. Marketing campaigns, industry analysis, responses to rule changes and other regulatory actions, and the continued evaluation of forms and contracts can also be part of the daily operation.

TLC: What is something not many people might expect to learn about managing a fleet?

BB: I think the level of communication with the drivers, and driver outreach, would surprise.

TLC: Have you taken trips as a passenger in yellow or green cabs, black car services, or other FHV services? Is there anything that stands out to you?

BB: I have tried every form of transportation available in NYC. From green cab, Uber, and subway to CitiBike and scooters, and yellow taxi continues to stand out for me. Even when I left the industry, when I needed a ride, yellow was my first go-to. Driver professionalism, condition of the vehicle, cost, availability of the ride, and efficiency of the ride route all stand out to me as advantages to riding with a taxi.

TLC: What would you say are some of the most crucial skills to have as a safe and successful driver?

BB: Professionalism, awareness, and an understanding of the area beyond just what a map app can tell you.

TLC: What would you like drivers to know before they start working professionally?

BB: That yellow is an opportunity for a career! You can drive-to-own your own vehicle and build your income and skills. You can own your own medallion at some point, and then you’re running a business with other drivers! Yellow is truly an opportunity to build a career and a business, not just a “side-hustle.”

TLC: In your own words, why is providing reliable, accessible, and inclusive service important to the fleet?

BB: Because we are all a part of NYC, and moving NYC means moving all of NYC. We value all of our employees, drivers, and riders equally, and our values need to be evident in the service we provide. An NYC taxi is a part of the history and foundation of NYC, and an icon



Bedford cites WAVs as an impactful addition to the taxi and FHV industries

like the yellow taxi needs to represent, uphold, and foster the values of the city it services—the greatest city in the world.

TLC: What makes the driver-passenger experience so significant and what customer service do you encourage?

BB: The riding public is the reason we get to come to work in the morning, and our passion is to provide that riding public with the best possible experience—one befitting a historic institution like the NYC yellow taxi. We foster this mentality with our drivers and our staff, and we encourage our drivers to remember, that they do better when the rider is a happy customer.

TLC: What notable changes have you observed within the NYC taxi and FHV industries and which have you met with the most enthusiasm?

BB: Technology advances, and inclusivity of all kinds—such as accessible vehicles—continue to be the most impactful changes the industry has seen. We at Big Apple welcome these advances and continue to evaluate our own operations to see how we always can do better. We have to meet the needs of the riding public, and sometimes that means more than just getting from point A to point B.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Disability Pride Month

Disability Pride Month commemorates the July 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To observe and celebrate this landmark event, TLC's External Affairs team met with Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) driver **Wen Lin** and TLC's Accessibility Outreach Coordinator **Yesenia Torres** to talk accessible transportation in the taxi and for-hire vehicle industries.



Lin demonstrates how to secure a passenger's wheelchair in his WAV



“Give everyone the opportunity to be able to do the same thing as everyone else.”

- Wen Lin

TLC: Disability Pride Month celebrates the passing of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and represents a time of empowerment for the disabled community. Why is it important to embrace and celebrate the community's achievements?

Yesenia Torres: It is so important to embrace the ADA, which is a civil rights law. This year, and month, marks 33 years since it passed. Disability Pride Month brings awareness of this and the journey that everyone was a part of. We are altogether in this. Everyone is the same and should have equal rights.

TLC: As a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) driver, why is it important to you to provide accessible service in NYC?

Wen Lin: It's very important. Because if not, there is not really another way to get around.

YT: Why did you choose a WAV over other vehicles?

WL: Because I can help people who need a WAV and it's inclusive and helps equality. Also, there are benefits and the price per mile per trip is more.

TLC: What can we all do to create a more inclusive society for people with disabilities?

WL: Give them more access. And to have more WAVs.

TLC: What does unity mean to you?

WL: Give *everyone* the opportunity to be able to do the same thing as everyone else.



YT: Unity, for me, is working together. It is the driver and passenger connecting, speaking, and being cordial.

TLC: How can drivers participate in Disability Pride Month?

YT: I believe drivers should share their experience. It would help create a society that is compliant with the ADA and makes life easier for people with disabilities.

TLC: In your opinion, why is WAV service necessary?

YT: This is an international city. We get a lot of people who visit. So, we need to provide. There are different types of disabilities, as we know. There are people who use wheelchairs, people who use walkers, canes, those who are blind, and those who are deaf. There are many disabilities in New York and those with disabilities who travel to New York. And they need that chance, the possibility, of getting a vehicle which is accessible for them.

TLC: What would you like others to know about providing this service?

WL: If you are driving in NYC, just be careful, keep your vehicle clean, and be nice!

It takes a lot to be a WAV driver. There is a lot going on. If it is a WAV ride, you have to secure the wheelchair properly, and let your passenger feel safe. When you take the WAV class, they teach you how to use the straps. It's your job to remember how to secure them and to do it right. And then you will be fine.

