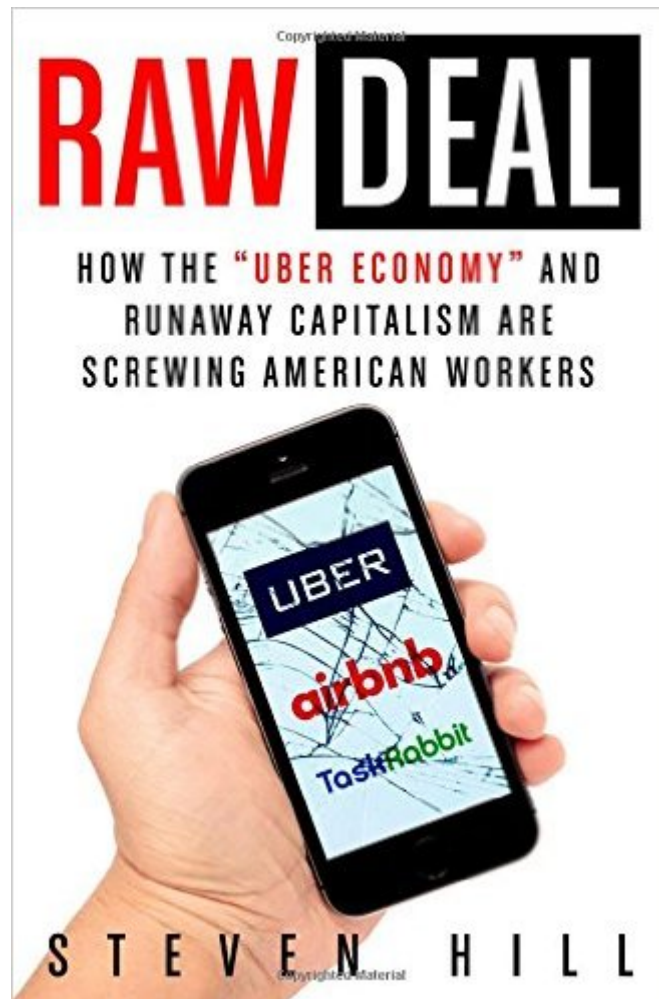


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Raw Deal: How The "Uber Economy" And Runaway Capitalism Are Screwing American Workers



Synopsis

"What's going to happen to my job?" That's what an increasing number of anxious Americans are asking themselves. The US workforce, which has been one of the most productive and wealthiest in the world, is undergoing an alarming transformation. Increasing numbers of workers find themselves on shaky ground, turned into freelancers, temps and contractors. Even many full-time and professional jobs are experiencing this precarious shift. Within a decade, a near-majority of the 145 million employed Americans will be impacted. Add to that the steamroller of automation, robots and artificial intelligence already replacing millions of workers and projected to "obsolesce" millions more, and the jobs picture starts looking grim. Now a weird yet historic mash-up of Silicon Valley technology and Wall Street greed is thrusting upon us the latest economic fraud: the so-called "sharing economy," with companies like Uber, Airbnb and TaskRabbit allegedly "liberating workers" to become "independent" and "their own CEOs," hiring themselves out for ever-smaller jobs and wages while the companies profit. But this "share the crumbs" economy is just the tip of a looming iceberg that the middle class is drifting toward. *Raw Deal: How the "Uber Economy" and Runaway Capitalism Are Screwing American Workers*, by veteran journalist Steven Hill, is an exposé that challenges conventional thinking, and the hype celebrating this new economy, by showing why the vision of the "techno sapien" leaders and their Ayn Rand libertarianism is a dead end. In *Raw Deal*, Steven Hill proposes pragmatic policy solutions to transform the US economy and its safety net and social contract, launching a new kind of deal to restore power back into the hands of American workers.

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Customer Reviews

Our model we have built our world on seems to be broken. Book offers a good rundown how our world as we know it may be headed off a cliff. No pensions, fewer jobs with benefits. Gigs, freelancing and winging it are the future. Hill outlines the issue as a growing army of "freelancers, temps, contractors, part-timers, day laborers, micro-entrepreneurs, gigpreneurs, solopreneurs, contingent labor, perma-lancers and perma-temps." Even if the job offers benefits, the high cost deductible for med care is prohibitive. Hill warns that many of our future jobs will be taken by robots. The young workforce that is coming up are overloaded with college loans that they can hardly pay off. I don't pretend to have a crystal ball, but with an ever growing population, higher living expenses and less jobs...something has to give. The Uber / freelance economy is either good or bad depending on how you look at it. One side says it offers money to a wide group of people willing to share. It offers jobs to people that a company could not afford to offer unless it could hire independent contractors. The other side of the coin says it takes away traditional jobs and replaces them with part time gigs that offer no security or benefits while cutting into established businesses profits. Businesses hiring independent contractors is not new. With or without the Uber economy the trend has been to offer less and less full time jobs so the employer does not have to offer benefits. I don't have any perfect answers to the problems that face us in the future, it is just how things have worked out. The book does not give magic bullet answers to the problem either. It does a great job in outlining the issues, but some problems society make are not easily fixable. Really, it is the American way...

Having worked as a cross-country truck driver for the last decade or so, I've observed several trends adverse to the 'little guy' (drivers). One exception is that a number of companies are switching from paying on a 1099 (driver is an 'independent contractor,' responsible for paying self-employment taxes, and receiving no benefits - overtime, disability, paid sick, holiday or vacation leave, retirement, unemployment insurance) to a W-2 basis, so at least the driver isn't hit so hard by the self-employment tax; some are even providing a semblance of benefits (vacation, subsidized health care). On the other hand, there has been an increase in 'owner-operators,' who by virtue of owning/leasing their own truck become responsible for maintenance (an encouragement to take better care of the truck, and improve fuel economy), as well as keeping the truck moving so as to cover lease/purchase requirements. Another problem for most drivers - they're paid by the mile,

regardless of road conditions, or delays due to poor maintenance. One of the latest - Uber and Lyft, which by their very nature mostly charge less than taxis, while once again making the driver responsible for fuel, capital investment, and maintenance. The result - implied claims of driver net income that can't possibly be true. And there are now more and more independent contractors delivering packages to people's doors - what little I know about what they're paid suggests that like Uber/Lyft, those involved are responsible for buying/maintaining/fueling their own vehicle - and undoubtedly not netting nearly as much as they were probably led to believe.

As Bill Steigerwald wrote in the April edition of Reason magazine, I've worked for Travis Kalanick for more than a year, but I've never met him. Technically, he's not my boss and I'm not his employee. I'm one of North America's 400,000 independent "1099" contractors with Uber, the company Kalanick co-founded and runs. In 2015, working in Pittsburgh three or four nights a week, I made nearly 2,200 Uber trips, carried more than 4,500 passengers, and put about 20,000 scratch-free Uber miles on my wife's 2013 Honda CRV. Subtracting expenses for gas and wear and tear on Pittsburgh's infamously pot-holed roads, I netted about \$15,000 for the year. This is the best part-time job I've had in a career of them. I have no bosses, I have no schedule, and I work when, where, and how long I choose. It's the perfect gig for an ex-newspaperman who's writing a book and whose income streams also include Social Security, a pension, and freelance writing. Every time I go to work, I know I'll pick up about 25 random, mostly under-30 people from Pittsburgh and around the globe who, sober or drunk, are happy to see me and, when asked, invariably express unconditional love for Uber. Here in Pittsburgh, Uber is destroying the local Yellow Cab monopoly, one of the worst taxi companies in the country. It's getting drunk drivers off the roads in unknown numbers. It's energizing the city's nightlife. It has clearly been a boon for the city's young women, allowing them to move around safely, reliably, and affordably at night, alone or in packs of three and four. It has also created hundreds of part-or full-time jobs for Pittsburghers. Steven Hill hates it.

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