When your boss is an algorithm

For Uber drivers, the workplace can feel like a world of constant surveillance, automated manipulation and threats of "deactivation."

There are nearly a million active Uber drivers in the United States and Canada, and none of them have human supervisors. It's better than having a real boss, one driver in the Boston area told me, "except when something goes wrong."

When something does go wrong, Uber drivers can't tell the boss or a co-worker. They can call or write to "community support," but the results can be enraging. Cecily McCall, an African-American driver from Pompano Beach, Fla., told me that a passenger once called her "dumb" and "stupid," using a racial epithet, so she ended the trip early…

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