



# Transcript – Good Work in the Gig Economy: Building a Sustainable App-based Economy

Hosted by the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, August 8, 2023

## Description

App-based short-term work, often called gig work, has been around for more than a decade. As use of app-based services has grown and become part of many people's daily lives, so has awareness of the risks and challenges it presents to workers. During the pandemic, attention on gig work surged as thousands of unemployed service workers turned to apps for an income, and millions relied on these workers to deliver food and other essentials to their homes. Coming out of the pandemic, what is the status of gig work today, and what does the future hold? While many problems with the most widely used apps persist, new models have emerged as platform-based work has become an established part of the labor market.

Join as we explore how people are challenging the status quo of gig work and reimagining platform-based jobs to be good jobs that can sustain workers. We will hear about alternative models of platform-based work, including cooperatives and public options, about policies being introduced to improve gig workers' lives, and about research showing us what's ahead.

For more information about this event — including video, audio, transcript, speaker bios, and additional resources — visit [as.in/goodwork](https://as.in/goodwork).

## Speakers

### Will Coleman

CEO and Co-Founder, Alto

Will is the co-founder and CEO of Alto, an affordable premium rideshare service headquartered in Dallas. Alto elevates the experience for passengers and drivers by providing unmatched safety, hospitality, and consistency in every ride and delivery. Will is a former partner at McKinsey & Company, where he led the consumer air and travel practice and helped some of the world's largest travel brands build disruptive strategies for growth. Will graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and is a Dallas native.

### **Lexi Gervis**

VP of Impact, Steady

Lexi Gervis, PhD, is an economic sociologist who has conducted extensive research on benefits for nonstandard workers, low-wage work, income volatility, and the institutional transmission of inequality. Since completing her doctoral work on portable benefits, Lexi has turned her attention to the private sector, working with tech startups focused on improving financial outcomes for nonstandard workers.

Formerly the head of policy at Catch, a portable benefits platform, she is currently the vice president of impact at Steady, a platform designed to improve the earnings potential and income stability of its six million members. At Steady, Lexi coordinates efforts with state and federal leaders on benefits access, leads the platform's impact work on direct cash assistance and guaranteed income, and manages collaborations with think tanks and research institutes on Steady's broader policy goals.

### **Ligia Gualpa**

Executive Director, Worker's Justice Project

Ligia is the co-founder and executive director of the Worker's Justice Project (WJP) and Los Deliveristas Unidos. For more than twelve years, she has been organizing gig workers to build a government and economy that works for all workers. Under her leadership, WJP launched Los Deliveristas Unidos, the country's largest workers' collective, which represents 65,000 app-based delivery workers and is organizing to advance the rights of app-based delivery workers in New York City.

Gualpa is currently leading some of the most important issues of our time, including immigration, workers' rights, climate change, and runaway inequality. Gualpa was named as New York City's Labor Power 100 leader by City & State New York for protecting app delivery workers from powerful tech companies.

### **Adrian Haro**

CEO, The Workers Lab

Adrian joined The Workers Lab in 2017, overseeing the formation of The Workers Lab nonprofit corporation, doubling the budget and staff. Before his promotion to CEO, Adrian served as interim leader to oversee a critical transition period. Prior to joining The Workers Lab, Adrian built a career in progressive politics, government, and public affairs. He started as a field organizer on Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, served as a confidential assistant at the US Department of Education, and then served as the speechwriter to US Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. He then spent four years at Civitas Public Affairs Group, a leading national public affairs firm where he worked for a variety of clients developing and implementing strategic plans for a range of issues and serving as a key advisor to top nonprofit executives.

Adrian had a brief but beloved stint in Hollywood working under the mentorship of acclaimed Latino entertainment executive, activist, and entrepreneur Moctesuma Esparza. Adrian holds a degree in rhetorical studies and political science from California State University, Long Beach, and grew up in East Los Angeles.

## **Shelly Steward (Moderator)**

Director, Future of Work Initiative, The Aspen Institute

Shelly serves as director of the Future of Work Initiative, a part of the Economic Opportunities Program. Her team strives to identify challenges faced by workers today and develop policy-based solutions to address those challenges and build a more equitable economy. Shelly is an economic sociologist and applied scholar who has studied the changing nature of work for more than ten years. She is an expert on nonstandard work arrangements and the gig economy and is lead author of the Gig Economy Data Hub in collaboration with Cornell University's ILR School. She is also a research associate with the Fairwork Project based at the Oxford Internet Institute, which assesses the working conditions of gig economy platforms around the world, and teaches courses on technology and tech policy for the University of California's Washington Program.

Her academic interests center on how people understand their position in the labor market and how they navigate increasing insecurity. She has studied work in the tech and oil and gas industries in depth, examining how people make sense of and internalize the rising risk and uncertainty of these sectors. She has written for both academic and popular publications, including the Washington Post, the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, and the Journal of Consumer Culture, and has been quoted in major outlets including the Wall Street Journal, NBC News, and NPR, among others. Shelly received her doctorate in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow. She holds a bachelor's degree with highest honors in sociology from Harvard. Prior to graduate school, she was a middle school science teacher in South Dakota through Teach for America. Outside of work, she volunteers at the National Zoo and enjoys swimming, sewing, and cookies.

## **About**

### **Opportunity in America**

Opportunity in America, an event series hosted by the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, considers the changing landscape of economic opportunity in the US and implications for individuals, families, and communities across the country. The series highlights the ways in which issues of race, gender, and place exacerbate our economic divides, and ideas and innovations with potential to address these challenges and broaden access to quality opportunity. We are grateful to Prudential Financial, Walmart, the Surdna Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Bloomberg, and the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth for their support of this series. Learn more at [aspeninstitute.org/opportunityinamerica](https://aspeninstitute.org/opportunityinamerica).

### **Economic Opportunities Program**

The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program (EOP) advances strategies, policies, and ideas to help low- and moderate-income people thrive in a changing economy. We recognize that race, gender, and place intersect with and intensify the challenge of economic inequality and we address these dynamics by advancing an inclusive vision of economic justice. For over 25 years, EOP has focused on expanding individuals' opportunities to connect to quality work, start businesses, and build economic stability that provides the freedom to pursue opportunity. Learn more at [aspeninstitute.org/eop](https://aspeninstitute.org/eop).

## The Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

## Transcript

### Shelly Steward (00:00:00)

Good afternoon everyone. I'm Shelly Steward, director of the Future of Work Initiative at the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to today's conversation, "Good Work in the Gig Economy: Building a Sustainable App-based Economy." This conversation is part of the Economic Opportunities Program's ongoing "Opportunity in America" discussion series in which we explore the changing state of economic opportunity in the US, what it means for workers, businesses and communities, and ideas for creating change that promote shared prosperity and race and gender equity. Today we'll be talking about the gig economy, what it is, who works in it, and what it tells us about the economy and the labor market today.

With the growth of app-based delivery and driving like Uber and DoorDash through the early 2010s, we heard much about the so-called gig economy in the media, in different news outlets, and we learned a lot about the instability and lack of benefits experienced by so many of these workers. Then during the COVID-19 pandemic over the last few years, app-based gig workers delivered food and groceries to so many people quarantining around the country and drew attention to the lack of sick leave, health insurance and other benefits for these workers.

Today we're asking what's going on with gig work now, what has developed in the last few years and what stayed the same? We have a great panel today to discuss these issues and I'll introduce them in just a second. But first, a quick review of our technology. All attendees are muted. We welcome your questions. Please use the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen to submit questions and upvote other questions. We also encourage you to share your perspective. If you have ideas, examples or resources related to today's topics, please share those in the chat as well.

We also always appreciate your feedback, so please take a moment to respond to a quick survey, which will open in your browser when you leave this webinar, and we encourage you to tweet about this conversation and share on social channels. Our hashtag is #talkopportunity. If you have any technical issues during this webinar, please message us in the chat or email us at [eop.program@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:eop.program@aspeninstitute.org). This event is being recorded and will be shared via email and posted on our website. Lastly, closed captions are available for this discussion, and you can click the CC button at the bottom of your screen to activate those.

We're going to start today's conversation with a chat about some of the research The Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative has been doing on gig work with our colleagues at The Workers Lab. Joining me is Adrian Haro, CEO of The Workers Lab. Before Adrian and I have a short conversation, I want to briefly introduce our other speakers that we'll be hearing from. It is such an honor and privilege to have this panel join us today, and just to put names to faces quickly, I'm going to introduce everyone, but you can find full bios on our webpage and learn more about all these fabulous folks.

So we have Lexi Gervis, the vice president of Impact at Steady. We'll also be having folks introduce their organization so you get more familiarity in a little bit. We have Ligia Guallpa, the executive director of the Worker's Justice Project, and Will Coleman, the co-founder and CEO of Alto. So I'm looking forward to engaging with all of you very soon. But to get started, Adrian, let's talk about our Gig Worker Learning Project a bit. I've been so excited about this work and also learning so much about gig work from this project, and I'm excited to share some of that with our viewers. How about you?

**Adrian Haro (00:04:27)**

Ditto.

**Shelly Steward (00:04:27)**

Excellent.

**Adrian Haro (00:04:29)**

Ditto.

**Shelly Steward (00:04:34)**

So we dove into this project a while ago wondering what is going on with gig work. We have all of these categories and data from a lot of different sources, but a lot of it was designed a long time ago before app-based gig work existed, before we had an understanding of all the different ways that people are working. So a lot of the questions were built around a standard 9 to 5 type long-term employment, and people don't always work that way. They never have. All people have never worked that way. Then we have all these different sources about gig work. Some of them say, "This is everything. This is the way of the future." Others say "What? This is nothing."

So we figured why rely on these measures and tools that have been around for decades and designed by people in academic offices and government institutions? There's a lot of real value in that data, but why don't we just go straight to the workers and ask, what type of work are you doing? Do you think of it as gig work? What are the challenges you face? What sorts of solutions do you imagine? So Adrian, I'm hoping that you could share a little bit about why we're doing this work.

**Adrian Haro (00:05:55)**

Yes. Hi everybody. Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. Why are we doing this work? First and foremost, to learn. Like Shelly said, there's a bunch of open questions about what gig work even is. We should be doing air quotes when we say gig work because who knows? But that's the whole crux of the project is who knows, and you know who knows these workers? Gig workers, people who are actually doing this work every day. So the reason why we're doing it is to learn more about gig work and the gig economy directly from gig workers themselves. Well, for those of you who don't know what The Workers Lab does, sometimes we give out money when we can afford it, and over the last few years, more and more of the investments that we've been making have been coming from the so-called gig economy, right?

As the leader, I was like, "God, I got to bone up on what this is, what people are doing, why, all the politics on it, the policy and everything." That's when I met Shelly, who was also looking for some sort of

participatory research project to do, and I said, "Well, let's go because we're ready to learn." Shelly wanted to do it in partnership with workers through something called 'participatory research.' I'm not a researcher, never had anything to do with it, but now I love it because it makes sense to me, participatory research, and I think it's the right way to do it.

So over the last few months, my God, to get a baseline of what is out there, the gaps, what we know, really to do our own homework, we partnered with a bunch of academic researchers, government leaders, business leaders, Ligia, Lexi, other folks in the space to help us put out some knowledge, some literature about what existed out there so we can get our ducks in a row. Then over the last I'd say four or five months we've been engaged, as Shelly knows, in the heart and soul of this project, and as Ligia knows and as Lexi knows, who have all been partners with us in helping us do focus groups and do listening sessions with gig workers themselves across every sector, industry, and geography.

Because for me, my working definition of a gig worker is super broad. So I'm talking about everything from an Uber driver to a farm worker, to a sex worker, to a burlesque performer. We've talked to all of them pretty much, and we're not done yet. We're right at the end. We've done about 16 or 17 of these, probably going to do about four or five more. It has been probably the most rewarding work I've done at The Workers Lab and I'm excited to keep going.

### **Shelly Steward (00:08:43)**

Yeah. As Adrian's describing, we're still very much engaging in these conversations. Then in line with participatory methods, which really take the steering wheel of the research and give it to the participants, allow them, the people who are the source of knowledge, the source of understanding here to drive the project, not us. We are not experts in so many of these types of work. I've been a gig worker now and again. I know about that experience, but I don't know about all of the other folks that we're learning from. They should be the ones developing the questions, identifying the themes, and coding those transcripts. So we'll be re-engaging with those folks and giving them control of this work.

So I'm going to mention a couple things that I've heard, but these are not findings. The findings will come after the next step of analysis. That again is in the hands of our participants. But one thing I've heard a lot about in these conversations is how hard it is to deal with the near constant instability of a lot of this work, instability of wages, of when work is available, and of how external factors, things like the weather, impact work in a very real way. Another thing that's stood out to me is how much folks want to connect with other people. I find this really relatable to my own work, whether it's about coming together to work for change or to share experiences or build a vision of something different.

These connections are really important to people no matter how and where they're working. But they can also be really difficult when work is dispersed, happening in people's cars, in people's homes, on computers, and so that's a challenge that we're hearing a lot about. So I'm excited to really continue to learn from this work, see where we go, see what we're able to learn, see how big we can make this. On that note, Adrian, I'm hoping you can share with folks a little bit about where we see this headed.

### **Adrian Haro (00:10:54)**

Shelly, you're so smart. This point that you're making about, yeah, it's true. When we do these focus groups, folks are really excited to get together. I don't know how that lends itself to participatory research, but it lends itself to feeling happy, I think, because the workers are disaggregated in nature for the most part. So when they come together, it's a pretty amazing feeling. But now I'll talk about what

we're going to do. So as Ligia and Lexi know, we're going to wrap up these focus groups, right? Shelly and the people who are really smart at this stuff are going to do some analysis on their own first.

Then keeping in line with this pattern of participation and bringing people together, the hope and expectation, if we can get the money, is to bring everybody back together. So Ligia, all the workers that Ligia is working with that we spoke to, all the people from the Freelancers Union that we spoke to, all the people from Unemployed Workers United that we spoke to . . . God, I'd love to bring these folks together and have them help us make sense of what we heard. Was it right? Did we get it wrong? Did we get it right? Then I'd like to bring that same group back together and have them help us design some policy. What is something we can all agree on that applies to all of us despite sector, industry, geography?

Then I think we've got to build something, I don't know what that is. Ligia is going to help us figure out what some sort of national infrastructure looks like for these workers that was built by them, informed them, designed by them. I'm just really excited. It's going to take a little while and it's going to take a lot of money. So if you've got any, we'll take it. Thanks, Shelly.

**Shelly Steward (00:12:49)**

Yeah, well, thank you. That's a really exciting note to kind of wrap up our conversation about this research project on. I've never been so excited to be in the backseat of a project as I have been for the last couple of years that we've been taking this on. Another thing that this project really points to is how many questions still exist about this type of work? There are things we do know right now about how to make it better and there's a lot we don't know. To build on both of those conversations, what we can do, what is happening and what we still need to know, let's bring in the rest of our colleagues to this conversation and start the panel discussion.

So to start things off, as a way of getting to know everyone a bit, this is a question I like to ask folks working in this space, have you yourself ever done gig work? What did you do? Tell us a little bit about it. I'm purposely leaving that as a vague term. You can define it however you would like. So let's just go around, and Lexi, I'm going to go ahead and start with you.

**Lexi Gervis (00:13:59)**

Thanks, Shelly, and thank you so much for having me today. Really excited to share this panel. So yes, I've done gig work. I've not done app-based gig work specifically, but during my academic career when I was doing my PhD, many of you probably know how small the living stipends are to live on when you're doing academic work, so I did a lot of project-based freelance gig work to sustain myself during my academic career. So I had a really good front seat into all the issues that come with doing that kind of work, including paying your own taxes, figuring out how much taxes, not having health insurance, all of that stuff. So not app-based gig work, but some exposure for sure.

**Shelly Steward (00:14:39)**

Yeah. Thanks for sharing. Ligia, let's go to you.

**Ligia Gualpa (00:14:44)**

Yeah. Well, thank you for having me. As I think the same experience as Lexi, I haven't done app-based gig work, but throughout my career, whether it was in college or just in other non-traditional jobs, it's very common to do gig work, especially among communities who have to rely on multiple jobs while trying to - whether it's going to college or just trying to make ends meet at the end of the day. So ... very familiar with different types of gig work that you do, whether it's in low wage sectors particularly.

**Shelly Steward (00:15:28)**

Yeah, thanks so much. Will, let's go to you.

**Will Coleman (00:15:31)**

Hey, Shelly. Yeah, Will Coleman. I'm the, as you mentioned, founder and CEO of Alto. I'm a five star Uber driver, so I can say that I've been not only an app-based gig worker, but I think I'm pretty good at it.

**Shelly Steward (00:15:50)**

Great. That's excellent. We have some firsthand app-based driver experience on our panel. Last, but certainly not least, Adrian.

**Adrian Haro (00:16:00)**

I haven't, but my parents did. My mom was a seamstress and a dry cleaner, and my dad was a janitor. So while I don't have firsthand experience, I understand it well because I grew up around it and understand both its joys and its limitations, but no, haven't done it myself, Shelly.

**Shelly Steward (00:16:23)**

Yeah. Building on this wide variety of experiences, I've also done a few different types of gig work. Something probably a lot of my colleagues don't even know is that I play the accordion, and for several years bounced around and in evenings would pick up gigs, which I mentioned partially because it's interesting and fun, but also it reminds us that this term gig has been around a lot longer than apps. These ways of working are not new. Uber did not invent them. But the apps have sort of brought them literally into the hands of so many folks. So now we're going to dive a little bit more deeply into what all of our panelists are doing now and the folks and workers that you work with on a daily basis. So now Ligia, let's start with you and tell us a bit about Worker's Defense Project and who are the workers that you represent?

**Ligia Gualpa (00:17:21)**

Yeah, so with Worker's Justice Project, I've been with the organization since 2010, particularly organizing gig workers, those that were in the construction industry as day laborers, or domestic workers, which traditionally happens to be gig work as well. So the Worker's Justice Project has been organizing through different organizing strategies with the mission to really transform the industries into jobs that are dignified, are protected, and workers have worker representation. Since 2010, we've been organizing gig workers from construction to, most recently in the past three years, app delivery workers. We have



been doing this through workplace organizing policy innovation as well, and thinking also about how we build interconnection with other issues that are front and center of the workers' rights movement.

I think one of the most beautiful things about organizing or my history of organizing is realizing that workers' rights are so interconnected with everything, right? Workers' rights is environmental justice, workers' rights is health justice, workers' rights, it is human rights justice as well. I think we have done incredible work about making sure that workers across many industries that are low wage and that have gig work, are at the front and center on building an economy that is just and dignified for all workers. We are here, I think, in this new era not only fighting for worker's justice, but I would say also defending the rights that historically the labor movement has been able to secure for all workers, right? So we are in the front lines defending decades of historic labor protections that have existed and continue to exist in the country. But right now, I think we're facing a crisis moment where we find a new era of gig work where workers are completely being excluded from basic labor protections. I'm excited to do this with incredible people like all of you who are thinking about how we transform, and make sure gig work is a job that is dignified for all workers.

**Shelly Steward (00:20:00)**

Yeah, thanks so much for telling us about Worker's Justice Project, and also for grounding this whole conversation in something bigger than gig work. This is about human rights, this is about how people live and exist in our economy. Will, let's go to you next. You lead a company called Alto. Could you tell us a bit about your company and what inspired you to start it?

**Will Coleman (00:20:27)**

Yeah, thanks, Shelly. I started Alto back in 2018, and we started the company to really redefine ride hailing. We wanted to create an opportunity that was better for drivers and better for passengers. In doing so, we really turned the traditional ride hail model on its head. We do not use independent contractors at Alto. All of our drivers are W-2 employees that work for our company, and we provide all of those drivers with a company owned vehicle that we keep clean, safe, and well-maintained. So our drivers show up every day with one mission, which is to drive safely and provide great customer service to our customers.

Through that, we're able to offer the safest, most consistent and highest quality experience for drivers and passengers. We believe that that is a huge differentiator in this space, something that creates better outcomes for both sides and ultimately a better outcome for our business. So we're really excited to continue to grow. We now employ almost 2,000 people across the United States. We operate in five cities, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and Washington, D.S., and we're growing really quickly and really excited to be part of this conversation as well as many others about how alternative models can and will work to drive great outcomes for everyone involved.

**Shelly Steward (00:21:59)**

Yeah, thanks so much. Excited to continue to hear more through this conversation. Adrian, we'll go to you next to tell us a bit about The Workers Lab and what draws you to thinking about gig work.

**Adrian Haro (00:22:12)**

So I'm just reading all these wonderful comments in the comments section, The Workers Lab. I need to see you play that accordion one day. The Workers Lab, for those of you who don't know, was founded a little while ago out of SEIU. The big idea was - let's throw money at something that could serve as both a hub and an engine for innovation in the labor movement, right? I wasn't there right at the beginning, but the way that I have interpreted that purpose and ran with it is understanding that it's a very radical purpose. Our job at The Workers Lab is to question everything in the labor movement, everything in the power structures of the labor movement, to experiment, to be open to both success and to failure. I think we all share that sort of ethos here on this call.

Our job is to demonstrate to the powers that be in this country that there is another way, better ways to take care of every worker in this country, not just the ones on a W-2. Everybody deserves to feel safe, healthy and secure, and have power in this country, and we can do that. What draws me to gig workers? I don't have a fancy answer to this. I think as I was preparing for this, I think what it is I have always been an underdog. I'm an underdog, that's it. I've always been on the outside trying to poke in my whole life. If you think about how this thing is structured, there are two major federal labor laws. The smartest people in the country admit that those labor laws are weak, that they are weak laws and that they are exclusive laws, right? There's millions of people who exist on the outside of them.

I identify with that. We've got to fix that. Folks need help and I'm here to help people. That's all I'm doing. I have some money and some friends, and my job is to help. I identify with that feeling of being right on the outside, but not being let in. I think I want to let everybody in. I certainly want to try. So that's what draws me, and I like solving problems. Boy, oh boy, are there problems to solve in this part of the economy? By the way, I think the more that I learn about the gig economy, a lot of the problems that we're trying to solve with regard to benefits access and administration, verifying income, Lexi in Steady, organizing technology. So much of what we can learn in the gig economy applies to the economy more broadly, to jobs on the W-2 side of things, right? I just think it's rich, rich, rich, rich with learning. That's what takes me there.

**Shelly Steward (00:25:12)**

Yeah, thank you so much for that. Adrian made brief mention of Steady. So Lexi, that's the company you're currently at. Can you tell us a bit about what Steady does and the workers who use it?

**Lexi Gervis (00:25:26)**

Yeah. Thank you Adrian for the pre intro. Steady is a mission-driven FinTech that helps gig workers access public benefits through simplifying the process to verify their income. So we really started in 2017 as a consumer app that was intended to help gig workers better work and earn by accessing community data around better shifts or work opportunities. Then in 2020, as we all know, the pandemic hit and we really saw a fundamental pain point for gig workers emerge. So specifically at the onset of the pandemic, these workers were eligible for unemployment for the first time, right? Typically gig workers are left out of unemployment because they don't have a named employer.

In the CARES package, specifically pandemic unemployment assistance, these workers were actually included for the first time, which was a remarkable policy movement. But the problem was in its implementation, right? So the policy was passed, but gig workers were struggling to actually access unemployment benefits. We ran an analysis with Andy Stettner, who's now at the DOL. He used data

from our platform and he found that workers were waiting upwards of 16 weeks or more to actually access the pandemic unemployment benefits that they should have received. So this was a real pain point that became clear, and as we saw it, the issue was really around proving or showing their income in order to be able to receive this benefit.

This is something that gig workers hadn't applied for before, and traditionally income verification is done through a W-2 pay stub or a tax statement. By law, 1099, our gig workers are not required to actually receive a pay stub. With really volatile and inconsistent earnings, their tax returns from last year are often out of date. So really they were struggling to show their income and they were cobbling together screenshots of receipts and rides done and bank statements and putting together ad hoc profits and loss statements to be able to show their income. That's what workers were doing.

On the other side, caseworkers were really struggling too because they had no systematized way to understand this kind of income. They were used to looking at a standardized pay stub or a tax return, and they were also struggling to understand this income to verify it to be able to give benefits out. So as Adrian mentioned, we partnered with The Workers Lab with our friends at The Workers Lab to develop something called the Income Passport, which is a user directed, user permission solution that helps gig workers show their income just like a W-2 worker would.

They actually connect their bank accounts or work platforms, show the income for the reporting period and can submit that directly to the state caseworker. We did some work in Alabama and Louisiana during the pandemic specifically with this, and it helped lessen the time to receive benefits from three weeks to one day. So we're really proud of that work and I think that's the crucial way that we're supporting gig workers.

**Shelly Steward (00:28:16)**

Thank you so much for that. That really is a great transition to kind of the next set of questions around what some of the challenges that gig workers face are. In our intros, both our personal intros and intro to organizations, we have a huge range of types of work that kind of fall under this broad umbrella, and with that are a lot of different challenges. So Ligia, I'm hoping that you can build on what Lexi shared. Think about the workers in New York that you work with and could you share more about some of the experiences that you hear about?

**Ligia Gualpa (00:28:56)**

Yeah. We particularly organize gig workers in the app delivery industry. When we talk about gig work, I just wanted to emphasize that we're talking about workers in many industries and their working conditions and their experiences. They are different depending not only on the cities or states where they're located, but also based on the industries that they're working in. There are some common factors and common experiences that they shared. I can share a little bit about the experience in New York particularly where we organize.

We're organizing app delivery workers specifically in New York City, we're talking about 65,000 app delivery workers who do app-based delivery work throughout the Five Boroughs all the way from the Bronx all the way down to Brooklyn. We define them as deliveristas, as a combination of the work that they do, some of the deliveristas... actually, just to highlight, New York City is probably one of the largest cities in the country where most delivery workers do this work on e-micro mobility devices. Most of the work is done on e-bikes, e-scooters especially. I think we are one of the cities leading that future and

showing to the world how it is possible to build a new future where workers can do and work using e-micro mobility devices.

So going back, 65,000 deliveristas across New York City. We recently did research with Cornell University and the Worker's Justice Program, where we found out that most of the deliveristas or app delivery workers that we interview, about 85%, reported that they were working full-time. That just tells a story that this is, for many delivery workers in New York — this is not just gig work! It's sometimes and majority of the time, happens to be full-time work. The second thing that I want to share about the people we organize, the majority are immigrant workers in New York City who come from all over the world and happen to be from Latin America, South Africa, East Africa, South Asia, East Asia. It's a huge immigrant community.

The other one is we're talking about immigrants who just are not single individuals, but we're talking about working families who do this work. It happens to be one of those industries where most delivery workers rely on, and during the pandemic specifically, started relying to actually bring a main source of income, but it brings different challenges. Some of the experiences of deliveristas in New York City happens to be that about half of that industry have experienced accidents or injuries without having health insurance. We're talking about deliveristas that about 69% of those have reported that they have experienced some sort of punishment or lack of transparency working with the companies, one of them including not being paid on time.

The other story is that delivery workers in New York are making subminimum wages, and are actually making half of New York City's minimum wage. New York City's minimum wage is \$15 an hour. We find out that deliveristas, without including tips, the average the deliverista was making was \$7.87. That's sub-minimum wages for a city where we're dealing with an economic crisis, where housing is limited and there are many other issues. So those are some of those experiences of app delivery workers, earning subminimum wages, and exposed to some of the most dangerous working conditions without access to workers' compensation or healthcare insurance.

Some of these deliveristas happen to be working full-time, and that tells a story that for some, it's not just gig work. This is full-time work for people in an online platform economy that are trying to make ends meet. That's the community that we are organizing in New York City.

**Shelly Steward (00:33:34)**

Thank you so much. Adrian, I'm going to turn to you. Does what Lexi and Ligia describe resonate with our research and what you see across The Workers Lab?

**Adrian Haro (00:33:48)**

Absolutely. Spitting image actually. There are two things actually that I've been really struck by and think about a lot after doing these. I've facilitated a couple of them myself. Well, not by myself, Ligia helped me with the Spanish one because my Spanish isn't what it used to be. But anyway, the two things that I'm coming away from are, one, there's a lot of focus on I think in the labor movement on the challenges inside of this work, which we've talked about a lot here, right? But what we hear also in these focus groups is that when you talk about the work itself, folks like it. Some folks like it and many folks take pride in it.

So I used to work in government a long time ago now, but I just consider my whole job to serve, right? So if that's what we're hearing from people, that they like the work, things need to be better. Then as a

servant of the public, as servants of the public, we have an obligation to get to work and try to help them create that reality. Try and create a kind of gig work that is good, like Will is doing, and we'll talk about it a little bit how we're doing, right? That's the one thing, there's pride, an immense amount of pride in getting on that moto and driving through New York City. They love it. That's something that you don't get in the research. It's not something that you see in the news. But there's something there that we have to respond to!

The other thing that I've been struck by is the weather. You mentioned it at the top. The issue is fraught, let's just say it, in the news everywhere. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, right? But when you talk to them, nobody can agree on anything. I'm telling you, across the board in these focus groups, everybody agrees that the weather is a problem for most gig workers, right? Especially right now. It's hot as hell outside. My God, we need shade. We need water. In the winter, we still need shade, we need a heater.

This is something that we can organize policy around because of all these infrastructure dollars coming down the pike. My God, what a way to bring us together and to work on policy with that as a starting point. I feel it in my gut that we can really design something beautiful with workers on something that affects all of them. Anyway, yes, Shelly, it does resonate with me. It matches. There's a lot for us to do based on what folks are telling us, for sure.

#### **Shelly Steward (00:36:46)**

Thank you. We're about to transition to some of those things that we can do, where our solution's headed. But first Will, I'm going to turn to you in this section about some of the real challenges that we're facing. As a business leader, could you tell us about some of the challenges that you face in offering good jobs through an app-based platform?

#### **Will Coleman (00:37:08)**

Yeah, Shelly. I mean, I know we're a little bit behind time, so I'll try to be quick, but I actually think the good news here is I think we all agree. I agree with Ligia that there are a lot of challenges. I agree with Adrian that there's also a lot of opportunity. I think that the challenge we face is really one of trade-offs. I think the thing that we see in this space is that life is a series of trade-offs, right? You can get one thing, but oftentimes that means giving up something else.

Here in this space in particular, I do hear from our workers, from people that we interview and attempt to hire, "Well, I really love all of the things that you're offering, a steady income, not instability, a certainty of income, not uncertainty, a connection, a team, support, not loneliness. But I also really love the flexibility that I have in this other world, and you can't offer me that or you can't offer me the same level of that because I need to sign up for a schedule because, and if I don't show up for my schedule, you're going to punish me. Or potentially over time, if I'm not reliable enough, I won't have a job anymore."

I believe this is really at the crux of the issue, as I do think we've proven, and also there are real solutions, there are real better ways, but there are also real trade-offs. I think coming to the table and having a more balanced, frankly, discussion about what those trade-offs look like, you can demand this, but reasonably that also requires giving on this. That's what we're trying to do every day, to create the best possible solution while recognizing that perfect probably isn't going to happen. So in order to make my business work, in order to make the solution work for us, for passengers, for drivers, there are trade-offs that I have to make.

It costs me more to employ people than to not. I need to get something for that, or I can't survive in a business context, right? So in exchange for that extra cost, what I need is some level of predictability for us. I need to be able to know that people are going to show up to their shift so that I can count on that so that I can deliver my product to my customer. I'm willing to find ways to create flexibility within some framework, but it can't be I wake up this morning and I decide I'm not going to work for Alto today, or I want to work tomorrow and I didn't tell you about that until this afternoon. They're just our trade-offs. I think that is the challenge that we see every day in this space, which really balances the opportunity that people like this. There are aspects of the work that people like, but there's also real challenges to solve. We need to make decisions, tough ones sometimes about what is the right balance.

**Shelly Steward (00:40:20)**

Yeah. Thank you so much for that perspective and highlighting some of the complexities and nuances of this conversation. We're going to pivot a bit to look forward to thinking about strategies and successes for creating good jobs in the gig economy. Will, I'm going to turn back to you to start us off. Based on what you just shared, what do you think other companies can learn from your experience? What would you like to tell other companies?

**Will Coleman (00:40:52)**

Yeah, I would like to say, look, I mean, I think we're proving that there is a set of trade-offs, a set of decisions that can be made that we believe are better for everyone, and that with that, we can provide better opportunities to workers, in our case employees, better solutions to passengers, in this case, our customers, and better outcomes for the company too, by the way. I mean, what we are trying to do is build a more profitable solution in a space where, let's be honest, our competitors have spent \$37 billion without earning a single dollar of profit, returning a single dollar of profit to their investors. That's just unsustainable. That's unsustainable for everyone.

Certain people have won and certain people have lost. You could say, in many cases, actually consumers have won a lot with very low prices, access to products and services that probably shouldn't be priced in the way that they are. Workers in some cases have won too, have earned more and been given subsidies that otherwise wouldn't have been supported by the revenue that these companies generate. But at the same time, the structure feels broken to us. It feels like at the end of the day, it is unsustainable for everyone. So what we're trying to do is break that cycle and prove that, again, it is possible but there are trade-offs.

I mean, one way that we like to talk about this, and one big pushback that we get is you're more expensive, and so your product serves a different need, a different customer base. That is true. Our average fare is one and a half times our competitors. A lot of that is driven by the length of our trip and not the actual base pricing. But the impact of that is that we are able to employ people. We're able to offer consistent, competitive, I believe, compelling not only cash compensation, but benefits and 401K matching plan, and obvious things like workers' compensation and sick pay, which are policy driven. But in exchange for that, we have to earn a higher return.

So a lot of times, I think, again, some of these big issues get lost in the discussion because it's, well, we want more. Well, we love this and it's going to have an impact on consumers. The reality is that these problems have been solved in other industries for a long time, and all industries have problems, but we don't typically solve them by totally abandoning the structures that exist and the policy that does exist to support workers and to support consumers. We have food deserts across our country, places where

it's very difficult to get to a grocery store. One way that we could solve that is we could allow Walmart or Safeway, or think of any company you want, to use independent contractors that only get paid when they're actively checking someone out. That would lower their costs. It would lower their cost of entering new places. They would be able to serve more consumers.

I don't think that's the right answer. This needs to be a public and a private solution. We need to allow private companies to do a certain and following a certain structure to compete fairly with the same rules. Then we also need to improve things like public transit, like access to other mobility services to solve for a set of consumers and a set of economic opportunities and economic development that makes sense. The MTA in New York, the Metropolitan Transportation Association, lost \$12 billion a year pre-pandemic. There's a good reason that they do that because it creates economic opportunity for the city. If you actually think about that, it really puts Uber's losses in perspective.

They lost \$4 billion in the same year serving every city across the world. So it actually is quite efficient, and they have improved the performance of historical solutions, but that can't be the way that this works long-term. We're trying to prove that as a private enterprise, we can do it this way. We need to partner with others, public enterprises to solve the other challenges that we won't be able to solve, and we want to create a solution. Again, I mean, circling back to the beginning, that just better we believe for everyone.

**Shelly Steward (00:45:56)**

Yeah. Thank you so much for that. Lots to think about. Ligia, Worker's Justice Project is pursuing a few different strategies to improve gig work from organizing workers to pursuing policy change and more. I'm hoping you can tell us about a recent win or success that you've had that shows a little bit about how we can move forward towards better gig jobs.

**Ligia Gualpa (00:46:22)**

Yeah. Well, in New York, over the past three years, Los Deliveristas Unidos have been organizing to transform the app delivery industry in New York City. In 2020, Los Deliveristas Unidos fought tirelessly to actually secure labor protections, and we were able to win six labor standards that are historic in this app delivery industry. That includes from the right to use the customer bathroom at the restaurants, to setting the limits on delivery distances, to transparency on their tips, to the right to earn a fair pay in the app delivery industry. In addition to setting some basic labor standards, we also have done a groundbreaking partnership with the city to build the first deliverista hubs that we're actually on our way to build up to actually also build the right infrastructures that this new workforce deserves and needs to stay safe in our streets.

Actually, the minimum pay is the current fight that we're having, because it was supposed to be implemented and enacted in early this year, but as you all know, we're touching the pockets of multi-billion dollar corporations who are fighting back using legal strategies and every anti-union organizing tactic to make sure that they don't have to actually pay a livable wage to workers. But we're excited because this is exactly what we're trying to do in New York, making sure that workers who have been completely excluded from basic labor protections, we can expand those basic labor protections to workers who deserve, especially because many of them happen not only to be gig workers, but majority happen to be essential workers, who were essential during the pandemic and continue to be essential through our cities as we continue to experience different crises, from climate change to economic and transportation crisis across the city.

We're excited to be leading that effort from expanding labor protections, building the right infrastructure, but the fight doesn't end there. This is an ongoing fight to make sure that we have full control of the narrative. I just want to end there. I think something that these multi-billion dollar companies have done amazing is about building a narrative on what gig work is and really means for workers in a way that has divided workers and has divided our community about what the fight is really about. Companies have been good about building a narrative that it's false and it's untrue about the reality of workers and what workers really deserve to live in our city. That's what we're fighting too across the city. We're excited to do this with all of you. I think this is why this research is so important because it's about telling the story of workers, it's about actually telling what's actually happening in the industry and what workers really want.

**Shelly Steward (00:49:50)**

Thank you so much. Lexi, I'm going to turn to you. If you can share with us what you've learned from your research at Steady about the types of resources and support that gig workers need.

**Lexi Gervis (00:50:05)**

Yeah, thank you for that, Shelly. I think we can all agree, it sounds like here that one of the big issues with gig work is the lack of benefits that are afforded to this type of work, right? That's a big part of what makes it precarious. I think sometimes my previous research during my dissertation was on portable benefits specifically. I think portable benefits is a big part of the conversation, but it means that a lot of the focus goes to benefits that are work type dependent, right? So you require an employer to pay in on your behalf, like unemployment, retirement, workers' comp, all of that. But I think what my work at Steady has shown me is that there are a series of public benefits that are not work type dependent like SNAP and Medicaid and TANF are some really well-known ones.

There's smaller ones like LIHEAP, the Low Income... I just forgot what the acronym stood for, and ACP, the Affordable Connectivity That Never Happens Program. Those are some of the smaller benefits. Thank you. Thank you, Laura, for helping me out in the chat. Low Income Home Energy Assistance program. These are benefits for which gig workers currently are eligible for, right? They're not dependent on an employer paying in on your behalf, but I think the issue is awareness, first of all, and barriers to access and actually doing the application. So I think some of the work that Ligia is talking about where you're organizing workers and centralizing them, that's one of the things that can be done with organizing is helping to make workers aware of the full suite of public benefits that they're actually eligible for if their incomes qualify them.

Then I think the second thing is actually helping with benefit applications. So interventions like I was talking about, the Income Passport is intended to make it easier for workers to prove their income. There might even be more needed one-on-one support that's been proven really successful. I think a huge part of this aggregated workforce who doesn't have access to a central system that is helping them understand what's out there, that's a crucial thing that can be done with organizing, and there is this large set of public benefits that these workers are currently eligible for and should be receiving if their income qualifies them for, that I think the conversation, while work type dependent benefits are incredibly important, I think that's a big part of the conversation that's missing and we should do everything we can to make sure that gig workers know about these benefits and have an easy time accessing them.



**Shelly Steward (00:52:30)**

Yeah. Thank you so much for that, Lexi. Then Adrian, we're going to turn to you. A lot of this conversation has focused on private sector employers and what their role is in this whole conversation. Workers Lab is looking also at the public sector as having a role in creating and maintaining good gig jobs. So can you tell us a bit more about your work there and what you're learning?

**Adrian Haro (00:53:01)**

I can try. It's going to be hard, but I'll do it. No, I'm just kidding. Okay, so here's what we're doing. So if you've ever used, anybody watching has ever used a TaskRabbit thing to get a TV mounted or whatever in your home.

**Will Coleman (00:53:19)**

Why does everybody use TaskRabbit to get a TV mounted?

**Adrian Haro (00:53:22)**

Whatever-

**Will Coleman (00:53:24)**

Is that the number one job on TaskRabbit?

**Adrian Haro (00:53:26)**

To assemble your, I don't know, your stool for, whatever, the bar that you have in your home. So think about that for a second. Bear with me here. Think about the kind of technology that is essentially a scheduling technology housed inside a pro worker entity, like one of America's fabulous job centers, which I believe in deeply, able to be regulated by folks who live in the community. That's what we're trying to create, by and large. We have invested in a piece of technology that is British, out of a British nonprofit called Modern Markets For All, that is a version of that technology. Nobody owns it. There are no shareholders, nothing, completely worker centered and continues to be now that The Workers Lab has sort of brought it into its existence and has wrapped workers' arms around it, frankly, to help us break it, make it better, build it again, whatever.

We've got the technology. We are now about to launch pilots in the fall in Chicago, Portland, and Oakland with a bunch of really amazing local community leaders, mostly public sector leaders and CBOs. Some of them will serve as the house, the entity that houses that technology, right? They become the defacto employer of record, which is how this becomes quality flexible work or good gig work because it's actually W-2 work, right? The technology is fine. TaskRabbit's is probably better, to be honest with you, but ours is fine and good enough. It works, right? The innovation really is on getting local government, getting community-based organizations to innovate around the way that we pass out W-2 work in this country. All that's happening is we're passing it out in smaller slices, also known as gigs, right?

We can do it. They're going to do it in Chicago, in Portland and Oakland. Of course, you have to create a market. On one side, you have to market that opportunity for good gig work to workers who either want it for whatever reason, none of our business, or need it because they have other responsibilities like caretaking, right? They should have the option to either use it as a temporary solution while they find

longer term employment or whatever. On the other side, you need to build a body of trusted employers in the region who say, "Okay, I'm going to agree to pay a slightly higher premium for this pool of workers to do flexible work that I know and I know these Worker's have been vetted by the job center or the workforce board." I'm going to reduce turnover because if anybody on this call knows gig workers are notoriously prone to moving, doing other jobs, whatever, right? That's just part of the gig.

So what we are trying to do here, and I'll stop talking when I say this, is demonstrate with partners in the public sector and in community-based organizations in these three regions a public option for what we're calling good gig work as an alternative, as another option to the options that are out there now, which are largely private. I don't know what's going to happen here other than we're going to learn a lot and we're going to help people and we're doing that in partnership with Shelly and a bunch of local leaders all over the country. Be on the lookout for an announcement about that. If you want to donate, again, hit me up.

### **Shelly Steward (00:57:17)**

Thanks so much for that, Adrian. One of the real themes of this whole conversation has been that all gig work is not the same. Not only in different types of work, whether it's playing musical gigs versus delivery via an app versus other types of work, but also within each of those sectors, there's a huge range. I do want to let everyone know that actually tomorrow there'll be some ratings of a lot of different gig companies released by Fair Work, which is a global organization that looks at working conditions in the app-based economy and how fair they are based on pretty high standards of working conditions. So the first set of ratings for apps in the US, again, being released tomorrow. I believe they're having a launch event and we can put that in the chat for folks to tune in and learn more about that and get a deeper understanding of some of these differences within this world.

So we've talked about a whole range of things. Really want to thank our panelists. We're going to now shift to some audience questions. We really appreciate how many of you have tuned in and also offered thoughts and raised some questions. So we're not going to have time for all of them, but I'm going to try to prioritize those that have been upvoted or that variations of the same question have been asked. One that has come up quite a few times is this question around benefits for gig workers. What can we do or what successful models exist for offering benefits to these workers? So are there any of our panelists who want to jump in first for this one?

### **Will Coleman (00:59:06)**

Yeah, I think I'll jump in there quickly. I mean, I kind of return back to some of the comments I made earlier. I think we at Alto really have what we believe to be a robust, competitive, compelling, complete compensation package that includes benefits to our people, I think it all translates to sustainability and trade-offs again, right? I mean, Lexi mentioned some public programs that help, but the reality is in many gig work scenarios, the lack of things like workers' compensation, of sick pay, of unemployment, I mean, we talked about the pandemic assistance, but nobody paid for that. The government printed money to make it happen. It's not sustainable. I think this is at the core of how we need to solve this problem is thinking about sustainable solutions.

When a current gig worker is injured on the job, they're in an accident, they're bitten by a dog, they fall, they're receiving public assistance. They're going to a public hospital. We, everyone in the United States, is paying for that. What's not paying for that is people that are using the product or running the company. So you're getting a cheaper delivery. You're getting a cheaper ride because a lot of these

costs that are real and that need to be covered are not today. What that means, just on the other side of it is the prices need to go up. There will be fewer jobs because there will be fewer customers because the products will be more expensive. So we also need to just have realistic expectations that really good jobs mean also, a total of less work.

It's basic economics, elasticity of price. So we need to then solve for other solutions for paying for that, which might be things like Adrian just talked about in a public scenario. But I think that's where I really think this conversation, the most complex part of it is that it's actually easy to say, "Well, we need to solve benefits or we need to solve access." But the hard part is how do you pay for it all? From a company perspective, from a sustainability perspective, I think that is actually what has a lot of trade-offs and is something that I'm not sure has been fully solved or a great solution has been put on the table by anyone just yet.

**Shelly Steward (01:01:48)**

Yeah. Thanks, Will. Lexi, I just saw you go off mute. So do you want to add something about benefits access?

**Lexi Gervis (01:01:56)**

Yeah. Just a brief note on what Will said. I just wanted to raise up the black car fund, that model in New York, right? It's small, it's just in New York, but as Will noted, that's a surcharge on every ride. The customers are paying for that, but that's ensuring that drivers in New York for over 30 years, I believe, have access to workers' comp if they get injured on the job. That's industry specific. Obviously, different types of gig work that fall within different industries are going to need a different set of protections, but I think that's a model that was mandated by policy, but is being paid for by people using those services that have functioned really successfully in New York for a lot of years. So I think thinking about those kinds of models on a broader scale is what we need to turn to.

**Shelly Steward (01:02:38)**

Thank you, Ligia.

**Ligia Gualpa (01:02:41)**

Yeah. I think it's important to acknowledge that many states and many cities across the city are testing different things. In this testing process, I think there is a lot to figure out. But I think there's one thing that we have stood by very clearly. We cannot continue to build a gig economy at the expenses of workers, right? It's impossible to think that we can allow gig companies to continue to test their business models by putting the safety of workers at risk without having, and I think the big examples here, in New York, one of the deadliest industries that few people talk about happens to be app delivery workers.

In the last three years, there have been more than 30 workers that have died doing this work without their families having access to economic relief to being able to bury their families, to workers who got injured, and having to, I think, go to public hospitals to try to get access. I think we need to figure out a solution and something that I agree with Will, we need to bring everybody to the table, businesses, we need to bring government to the table. We need to bring worker advocates to figure out what's the right way to make sure that workers get protected from getting basic leave, from making sure they have access to workers' comp, to health insurance.

We think about sustainability, it's about making sure workers, it's not at the expenses of workers. In New York, we have been very clear, if big delivery companies like GrubHub, DoorDash, Uber, wants to stay in our city, it can't be by paying subminimum wages and it can't be about saying that the solution is to deactivate workers or to lay off workers. What we are asking is let's sit at the table, let's have a conversation. Even deliveristas in New York would say, "We want to talk to the companies. We want the gig economy to thrive, but it can be at the expenses of workers."

Talking about models, it's something we need where... I don't think there has been a lot of effort to try to figure out what's the right model, but there is really good organizing, and really good even I think companies who want to be at the table. We're excited because I think this is a long process and this is about the future of not only gig work, but all workers across the country.

**Will Coleman (01:05:33)**

Ligia, I mean, not to be overly provocative and with all due respect, I think that that is a really hard line to say that we need this and it can't have any impact. The reality is that we instituted, I'll use that broad term, I wasn't part of this minimum wage law for drivers in New York City. The only way that that works from a company perspective is that I can't allow you to work anytime you want if I don't have demand to pay you during that time. So reasonably, the companies that work that have services in New York, when you have a minimum wage, they limit the times in which you can work and you need to sign up for shifts and you can't work in a period of time when there isn't enough demand to support the pay that's required to be paid to meet minimum wage.

Again, I mean that's just a realistic trade-off that we need to, I believe, be more transparent about. Whether that is, if you would consider that an impact on workers or not, I'm not sure, but I think that anything we do will have... in physics, each action has an equal and opposite reaction, and I think that there's just no way to move forward by saying we are not going to move because everybody needs to move. Everybody needs to be willing to be open about the trade-offs and decide what set of trade-offs is best for the collective.

**Shelly Steward (01:07:16)**

Yeah. We've talked a lot about this fact of trade-offs, the reality of trade-offs, and to Ligia's point, workers have been on the losing end of so many trade-offs for a long time.

**Will Coleman (01:07:30)**

Yes. I think that we also can agree, which for a lot of reasons, it is easier for workers to be used in a bad way. What we're doing at Alto, and I think what everybody around this table and the call wants to do is prevent that. But I just want to bring the business perspective of, yeah, we need to improve, we need to force improvement, but it does take compromise ultimately.

**Shelly Steward (01:08:03)**

Yeah. One of the potential models that have come up in the audience questions a few times is worker cooperatives and worker ownership. We're just about time to switch to our conclusion, but I do want to see if any of our panelists have any quick remarks on worker co-ops as a possible path forward.

**Will Coleman (01:08:26)**

I have a strong perspective, but I'm happy to shut up and let others talk.

**Shelly Steward (01:08:30)**

How about Adrian? I saw you go off mute. Do you want to jump in?

**Adrian Haro (01:08:33)**

Yeah. Ligia and I are really good friends with this guy named Erik Forman who started something in New York called The Drivers Co-op. These are drivers in New York working on a 1099, but Will and the workers there have found a way to respect that distinction by also giving folks things like benefits that they pay into as part of their ownership stake, that offer dignity. So it's a really good model. I will say Erik Forman and the workers in New York who are part of this are changing my mind about the scale potential for co-ops, just generally, right? They're so local and so community driven in most cases that it's hard. I know that they're about to expand into Colorado and really... We've been partners with them since they were talking about this as a moonshot, and now I think they may have cracked a nut that I think is going to be really helpful not just in New York, but in Colorado for sure.

**Shelly Steward (01:09:47)**

Thank you, Adrian. Now as a way of closing out and to give everyone one opportunity for a last word, we're going to do a quick lightning round. So stay super quick, 30 seconds or less, preferably less, and we'll all be recognizing Labor Day in just a few weeks, a day not about the end of summer, but to celebrate and recognize contributions of workers to this country. So what is one thing that people can do to recognize gig workers this Labor Day? Will, I'm going to start with you.

**Will Coleman (01:10:25)**

I'll be at the US Open in New York, and we'll be taking care of all the bartenders that are going to be there helping support my participation and celebration of that weekend.

**Shelly Steward (01:10:40)**

Great. Lexi, how about you?

**Lexi Gervis (01:10:43)**

I thought it was going to be a policy question last. This is a pivot. Yeah, I think, yeah, tip any workers that you engage with big tips over the weekend, we know that so little of the fares are often going to workers, so please make that up in tips.

**Shelly Steward (01:10:59)**

If they were going to support a policy idea, what would it be?

**Lexi Gervis (01:11:06)**

My policy thing is that we need a good accounting of this work. We need a way to register and understand this work. So even if employers don't want to be on record, we need a way to actually account for all the work that's happening. I think that's the first policy that leads to policies around benefits, workplace protections, minimum wage, all of that.

**Shelly Steward (01:11:23)**

Thank you. Adrian?

**Adrian Haro (01:11:31)**

I'm going to echo Lexi's and double it. I'm raising the thing here as we're playing cards. Whatever tip you were going to give, double it. I dare everybody on Labor Day.

**Shelly Steward (01:11:43)**

Ligia, last but not least, what can folks do to recognize gig workers this Labor Day?

**Ligia Gualpa (01:11:49)**

Well, I was going to say tip, but also give good ratings. Whether your food comes cold or maybe not on time, it's not the workers fault. Just make sure you give a good rating. The other one is to join our Customers Delivering Justice campaign. I put the link there. Our goal is to build a partnership with consumers who have a lot of power to transform the industry.

**Shelly Steward (01:12:21)**

Thank you again to Adrian, Will, Lexi, and Ligia for a great conversation. Stay tuned for more information on our next event on September 12th, a book talk with Marjorie Kelly on her latest book, "Wealth Supremacy: How the Extractive Economy and the Biased Rules of Capitalism Drive Today's Crises." Thanks very much also to Maureen Conway for her dedicated support and leadership on these conversations, and to all of my colleagues at Aspen's Economic Opportunities Program for their support on this event, including Matt Helmer, Colleen Cunningham, Amanda Fins, Maya Smith, Merrit Stüven, Frances Almodovar, Sinin Young, Bryn Morgan, Tony Mastria, and Nora Heffernan.

Thanks so much to all of our audience for joining and sharing your questions, comments and insights. Please do take a moment to respond to our quick feedback survey. It'll open in your web browser when you leave this event. You can also send us an email at [eop.program@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:eop.program@aspeninstitute.org) to let us know what you think. We love to hear from you and we really hope you'll join us again. Thanks again.