

Private equity giant Leon Black accused of sexual assault

[A axios.com/leon-black-sexual-misconduct-755f0541-c74c-444f-ae02-5d3d0248e472.html](https://www.axios.com/leon-black-sexual-misconduct-755f0541-c74c-444f-ae02-5d3d0248e472.html)

Private equity titan Leon Black — who earlier this year left Apollo Global Management, the alternative investing giant he co-founded and led — has been sued in New York State Supreme Court for sexual assault and defamation.

Driving the news: Guzel Ganieva, the woman with whom Black claims he had a "consensual affair," sued Black for allegedly lying about the nature of their relationship and for engaging in "forced sexual misconduct."

[Read the complaint.](#)

Why it matters: Black stepped down after at first ignoring questions about his dealings with Jeffrey Epstein, and then agreeing to an independent investigation that found no business relationship between the Apollo CEO and Epstein. There were no public allegations at the time that Black had personally engaged in sexual abuse.

- If even half of what's alleged in this lawsuit is true, then Epstein is the least of Black's legal and reputational concerns.
- Ganieva, a Russian immigrant and mother of one, claims that Black made her finally indebted to him, in part via a pair of \$480,000 loans (with interest), and that he used that financial power for personal gratification. One alleged sexual episode is particularly gruesome.
- She also claims to have signed an NDA with Black — of which she doesn't have a copy — in exchange for more payments, but chose to go public after Black stated that he "did not engage in any wrongdoing or inappropriate conduct" and his reference to their relationship as "consensual."

What Ganieva's lawyer is saying: "This case is the epitome of why #MeToo exists. In textbook fashion, men with wealth, power and an army of elite lawyers continue to escape accountability for their heinous acts by twisting the legal system to penalize their victims for speaking up."

What Black's spokesperson is saying:

"Ms. Ganieva's allegations of harassment and other inappropriate behavior are categorically untrue. This frivolous lawsuit is riddled with lies, and is nothing more than a wholesale fiction. The truth is that Leon Black had a wholly consensual relationship with Ms. Ganieva for six years, and then, as we have previously advised the criminal authorities, Mr. Black was subsequently extorted by Ms. Ganieva for many years and made substantial monetary payments to her based on her threats to go public about their relationship and cause him reputational risk and harm to his family. Mr. Black emphatically denies each and every spurious allegation put forth in this lawsuit and looks forward to disproving them in court."

The bottom line: For years, this narrative has been largely controlled by Black and Apollo. That's no longer the case.

