

Former hedge fund titan accused of rape, intimidation, and hush money payments in defamation lawsuit

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by Mike Brest, Breaking News Reporter |

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A New York woman filed a defamation suit against Leon Black, co-founder and former CEO of Apollo Global Management, alleging he raped her and paid her to keep quiet.

The woman, Guzel Ganieva, filed the [lawsuit](#) on Tuesday in [New York](#) State Supreme Court alleging Black's characterization of their relationship as a "consensual affair" and his allegation that he had been "extorted by Ms. Geneva for many years" were defamatory. Rather, Ganieva said he preyed upon her, attacked her, and then attempted to pay her off in exchange for silence.

The impetus for the suit began in October 2020 when Black said on an earnings call, "There has never been an allegation by anyone that I engaged in any wrongdoing because I did not." The lawsuit alleges that "was the tipping point" for Ganieva. She then published her allegations against Black on social media on March 17, 2021.

In an April interview with [Bloomberg News](#), shortly after he stepped down from his CEO role, Black denied the allegations, calling their relationship a "consensual affair." He said she extorted him to make "substantial monetary payments to her, based on her threats to go public concerning our relationship."

Although I am a private person, in light of the recent media coverage, I think I have an obligation to make a statement regarding Apollo Global Management's CEO and Chairman, Leon Black. I was sexually harassed and abused by him for years.

— Guzel Ganieva (@GuzelGanieva3) [March 17, 2021](#)

The lawsuit, based on those comments, alleges Black "used his extreme power and wealth to coerce her into signing a nondisclosure agreement in October 2015 precisely because he knew what he had done to her was shocking, evil and exposed him to potential criminal charges."

Black denies the charges.

"Ms. Ganieva's allegations of [harassment](#) and other inappropriate behavior are categorically untrue," a spokesman for Black said in a statement, according to the [Miami Herald](#). "This frivolous lawsuit is riddled with lies, and is nothing more than wholesale fiction. The truth is that Leon Black had a wholly consensual relationship with Ms. Ganieva for six years."

“Mr. Black emphatically denies each and every spurious allegation put forth in this lawsuit and looks forward to disproving them in court,” the statement added.

It started in 2008 when I met with him to discuss work. While he understood my career aspirations, he could not understand me when I refused his sexual advances. I was bullied, manipulated, threatened, and coerced. Similarly, under duress, I was forced to sign an NDA in 2015.

— Guzel Ganieva (@GuzelGanieva3) [March 17, 2021](#)

The suit alleges Black and Ganieva, a single mother in her early 20s who immigrated to the United States from Russia by herself, met in March 2008 when he struck up a relationship with her.

It added that she believed “Black was not interested in her sexually, simply because she told him that their relationship would not be sexual. Black, however, is a ruthless planner and a man that gets what he wants.”

That year was reportedly the first time he allegedly “forced sadistic sexual acts on her without her consent and despite her saying no.”

“Many of these instances were perpetrated by Black in order for him to indulge in sadistic sexual acts that were physically painful to Ms. Ganieva and to which she never consented. In addition to causing intentional physical pain, Black engaged in these acts because he derived pleasure from humiliating and debasing Ms. Ganieva,” the suit said.

The lawsuit also alleged Black gave her two separate loans of \$480,000 in 2011 and 2013, both with an interest rate of 5% per annum.

In October 2015, he reportedly had her quickly sign a piece of paper that turned out to be a nondisclosure agreement, in which he also agreed to forgive the loans.

The lawsuit does not specify a specific amount the accuser is seeking to win.

“This case is the epitome of why #MeToo exists,” said Jeanne M. Christensen, partner at Wigdor LLP, the firm representing Ganieva, in a statement. “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. Sadly, until prosecutors consistently go after sexual predators that wrongly accuse sexual assault victims of extortion, it is clear that #MeToo has many miles to go.”

Black stepped down as CEO after revelations surfaced between himself and disgraced billionaire pedophile Jeffrey Epstein, though an independent investigation found no business relationship between the two, according to Axios.

