

Billionaire investor Leon Black accused of rape in new Adult Survivor's Act lawsuit

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New York

By Leonard Greene

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A billionaire investor with ties to the late pedophile Jeffrey Epstein has been accused of raping a young mother at Epstein's Upper East Side mansion under New York's new Adult Survivor's Act.

Epstein's estate was also named as a defendant.

The alleged victim claimed that Leon Black, once one of the most powerful men on Wall Street, sexually assaulted her during a violent attack Epstein helped orchestrate in his opulent Manhattan home in 2002.

According to the lawsuit, the woman was raped in a third-floor secluded room at the mansion, where she had agreed to give Black a message in exchange for \$300 upfront.



NEW YORK, NY - NOVEMBER 19: Leon Black speaks onstage at The Museum Of Modern Art Film Benefit Presented By CHANEL: A Tribute To Martin Scorsese on November 19, 2018 in New York City. (Photo by Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for Museum of Modern Art) (Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for Museum of Moder)

Although the plaintiff, Cheri Pierson, kept quiet about the alleged attack for nearly two decades, she filed the suit under a new law that creates a one-year window to bring civil cases alleging abuse and rape committed in New York State against people 18 years old or older.

The window opened Thursday and suspends the statute of limitations on most sexual assaults until Nov. 24, 2023.

“Thanks to the passage of the Adult Survivor’s Act, survivors of sexual violence like our client Ms. Pierson can seek the justice they deserve no matter how many years ago their trauma was suffered,” said the plaintiff’s attorney, Jeanne Christensen, a partner at Widgor, LLP.

“We look forward to holding Black and Epstein’s estate accountable for their appalling unlawful conduct as alleged in the complaint by our client.”

Epstein introduced Pierson to Black, the founder of Apollo Global Management, convincing her that the wealthy investor could help her with a business venture, the suit said. In the meantime, Epstein convinced her that a bikini-clad massage was a good way for her to earn some quick cash, the lawsuit added.

But the session quickly turned to something sinister after Black pinned her to the massage table and sexually assaulted her, according to the suit.

Pierson had been given massages to Epstein, session set up by Ghislane Maxwell, Epstein's former lover, the lawsuit said.

Maxwell was convicted last year on sex trafficking charges for enabling Jeffrey Epstein's sexual exploitation of teen girls, and sentenced to 20 years in jail.

Epstein hanged himself in 2019 in a Manhattan federal detention center, where he was awaiting trial on new sexual assault charges.

A representative for Black called the lawsuit an extortion bid.

"These latest allegations from the Wigdor firm are categorically false and part of a scheme to extort money from Mr. Black by threatening to destroy his reputation," an attorney representing Black said in a statement.

Black is also being sued by another woman, Guzel Ganieva, for sexual assault and defamation.

Among the lawyers representing Black in that lawsuit is Joan Illuzzi-Orbon, a former Manhattan prosecutor who once investigated Black.

Despite objections from Ganieva's attorney's, a New York state judge declined to disqualify the lawyer.
