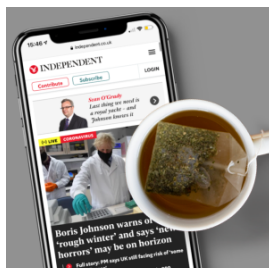


Billionaire Leon Black accused of raping autistic teenager at Epstein townhouse

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Billionaire investor Leon Black was accused of raping an autistic 16-year-old girl at Jeffrey Epstein's Manhattan townhouse in 2002 in a federal lawsuit filed on Tuesday.

Using the pseudonym Jane Doe, the woman claimed she was trafficked and sexually abused by Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, who was convicted of sex offences against young girls in 2021.

Mr Black's lawyer Susan Estrich told Reuters the lawsuit was "frivolous" and that the former Wall Street executive had never even met the plaintiff.

The lawsuit was filed hours after the Senate Finance Committee announced it was investigating payments of \$158m Mr Black made to Epstein between 2012 and 2017.

Family of Bruce Willis announce actor's 'painful' dementia diagnosis

Last week, it was revealed that Mr Black agreed in January to pay \$62.5m to the US Virgin Islands to be released from the territory's investigations into Epstein's sex-trafficking ring.

According to the court filing, Jane Doe was born with mosaic Down syndrome and has a developmental age around 12 years old.

The woman, now in her 30s, alleges she was first trafficked by Epstein and Maxwell in 2001, and was routinely abused by both of them.

The plaintiff claims that Epstein introduced her to Mr Black in the spring or summer of 2002, and instructed her to “give [him] the same kind of ‘massage treatment’ that she gives Epstein – meaning that it would involve sexual intercourse and she was expected to strip naked.”



Ghislaine Maxwell was convicted of procuring and trafficking young girls for Jeffrey Epstein in 2021 (PA)

She alleges that Mr Black led her to a third floor room on the third floor of Epstein’s Upper East Side townhouse, pinned her down and penetrated her with sex toys as she was preparing to give him a massage.

“The violent and sadistic nature of Black’s rape left an indelible mark on her, both physically and psychologically,” the lawsuit, filed by Wigdor Law, alleges.

In a statement, Ms Estrich said: “These vicious and defamatory lies, masquerading as allegations, have been intentionally manufactured by the Wigdor law firm as part of the firm’s vendetta against Mr Black for vigorously and successfully defending himself over the past two years.”

“Wigdor’s prior case against Mr Black was recently thrown out by the Court and this one will be too. These allegations — about an incident that supposedly took place 20 years ago — are totally made up, entirely uncorroborated and, as pleaded, squarely violate the statute of

limitations.”



Leon Black, co-founder of Apollo Global Management, denies meeting the plaintiff
(REUTERS)

Mr Black’s attorneys filed a motion for sanctions against Wigdor Law in December in the New York State Supreme Court over two previous civil sexual abuse lawsuits it brought against the private equity billionaire.

Wigdor Law partner Jeanne Christensen said in a statement Jane Doe’s civil lawsuit was filed after New York passed the Adult Survivors Act, which removed the statute of limitations for sexual misconduct.

“Today, because of legislative initiatives in NYS granting sexual violence victims the right to file claims previously barred by the statute of limitations, we were able to commence a legal action against Leon Black for harms committed years ago against our client Jane Doe when she was a minor,” Ms Christensen said in a statement.

“This is significant for our client and for all sexual assault survivors. It is an honour to represent Jane Doe and we look forward to proceeding to discovery and trial on Jane Doe’s claims,” Christensen said.

On Tuesday, Senate Finance Committee chair Ron Wyden wrote to Mr Black asking for further information about “inexplicably large” payments made to Epstein for financial advisory services.

Mr Black has previously said he cut ties with Epstein in 2018 due to a fee dispute.

A spokesperson for Mr Black told the *New York Times* his \$62.5m settlement with the US Virgin Islands shouldn't be construed as "evidence of wrongdoing".

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The Independent did not immediately hear back from attorneys representing Jane Doe and Mr Black.

Mr Black, who co-founded private equity firm Apollo Global Management before leaving in 2021, has an estimated net wealth of \$10.1bn, according to *Forbes*.



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