

Lawsuit alleges billionaire Leon Black raped autistic teen at Epstein's townhouse

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Chantal Da Silva, Josh Craddock, Reuters

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By Chantal Da Silva

A federal lawsuit filed Tuesday accuses billionaire Leon Black of raping a 16-year-old girl with Down syndrome and autism in 2002 at the Manhattan townhouse of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

An attorney for Black, who co-founded the investment firm Apollo Global Management Inc. and was an associate of Epstein's, has denied the allegations, calling them "frivolous and sanctionable."

The lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court for Southern New York, alleges that the plaintiff, identified only as Jane Doe, was trafficked to Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, who was sentenced last year to 20 years in prison for recruiting and grooming teenage girls to be sexually abused by Epstein.

The plaintiff, who is now in her late 30s, was born with mosaic Down syndrome and has a "developmental age" of around 12, according to the lawsuit.

The complaint alleges that she was preparing to give Black a massage when he pinned her down and penetrated her with "adult toys" in an attack that left her bleeding. It says Epstein later found her crying but refused her request to see a doctor, saying Maxwell would take care of her, instead.

Susan Estrich, an attorney for Black, denied the allegations, accusing Wigdor LLP, the law firm behind the suit, of having a "vendetta" against Black related to multiple cases.

Estrich, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment, said in a statement to CNBC that her client had never met the plaintiff.

"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," Estrich said.

"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."

Black has denied other sexual abuse accusations, including in response to a lawsuit brought by Cheri Pierson, who accused him of raping her in Epstein's Manhattan mansion in 2002, as well as in a lawsuit by former Russian model Guzel Ganieva that was dismissed in May, according to Reuters.

Estrich said the new case would only "provide further ammunition" for a pending sanctions motion Black had against the Wigdor law firm in the case brought by Pierson, according to CNBC.

Black was also reported by The New York Times to have reached a \$62.5 million settlement with the U.S. Virgin Islands, where Epstein had a home, to avoid a possible lawsuit. A spokesperson for Black confirmed the settlement in an emailed statement to Reuters, saying there was no suggestion in the settlement "that Mr. Black was aware of or participated in any misconduct."

Epstein died by suicide in jail in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, call the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline at 1-800-656-4673. The hotline, run by the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN), can put you in contact with your local rape crisis center. You can also access RAINN's online chat service at <https://www.rainn.org/get-help>.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255, text HOME to 741741 or visit [SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources](https://www.speakingofsuicide.com/resources) for additional resources.

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Josh Craddock and Reuters contributed.