

Billionaire Leon Black faces lurid claim amid new flurry of Jeffrey Epstein developments

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By Julie K. Brown Miami Herald

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Billionaire hedge fund founder Leon Black has been accused of beating and raping a 16-year-old girl with a rare genetic disorder at Jeffrey Epstein’s Manhattan mansion in 2002, a newly surfaced allegation of sexual abuse involving a powerful friend of the late multimillionaire.

The lurid details are outlined in a lawsuit filed Tuesday in Manhattan federal court. The accuser, identified as Jane Doe, was introduced to Black by Epstein, the part-time Palm Beach, Florida, resident who had already been sexually abusing her for months, according to the lawsuit.

Jane was told by Epstein that Black was “a very important person” and admonished to obey Black and receive a “good report” for her services, she said.

The lawsuit comes amid a flurry of Epstein developments, including the U.S. Senate Finance Committee opening an investigation into Black’s financial dealings with Epstein, the New York financier who died in a Manhattan jail in 2019 awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges. His death has failed to stem the tide of lawsuits and investigations into how Epstein was able to cultivate powerful friendships despite allegedly abusing girls and young women for decades.

It also comes several months after Black paid \$62.5 million to the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands to head off a potential lawsuit over his ties to Epstein.

Although Epstein is gone, efforts continue through the courts to identify and hold accountable friends and associates who allegedly abused victims procured by Epstein.

The Leon Black settlement, first reported by The New York Times, comes as the USVI on Monday filed a motion for summary judgment against JPMorgan bank, which the USVI contends helped facilitate Epstein's crimes.

Besides Black, the USVI, which itself has been accused of turning a blind eye to Epstein's predations, is also investigating a number of other Epstein associates.

Susan Estrich, Black's lawyer, said of the USVI agreement: "There is no suggestion in the USVI settlement that Mr. Black was aware of or participated in any misconduct."

The spokeswoman described Tuesday's lawsuit as "totally made up, entirely uncorroborated" and past the statute of limitations.

Jane, now in her late 30s, recalled that she was frightened by Black's sheer size: 6-foot-4 and 300 pounds. She said he looked like an "ogre" with a "bulbous nose" and a face and neck that had a number skin tags and moles. The suit said Epstein told Jane that she was his "special girl" whom he had selected specifically to give his "special friend," Black, a massage.

When Epstein left the massage room, Black violently threw Jane up over his shoulder onto the table so hard that she thought the table might have broken, according to the lawsuit. She tried to scream but Black placed his hand over her mouth, while shouting obscenities at her, the lawsuit said.

The claim says he raped Jane, who has a condition called mosaic Down syndrome, multiple ways so violently that she began bleeding. Black allegedly laughed at her attempts to push him away, and once, when she kicked him, he picked her up and threw her on the floor, according to the lawsuit. Afterward, sobbing in pain, she asked Epstein to take her to the hospital but he refused, handing her a towel and telling her that Ghislaine Maxwell, his girlfriend who was convicted of sex trafficking after Epstein's death, would tend to her.

Jane's story began, however, a year earlier, when she joined a cheerleading camp near her home outside Washington, D.C. There, she met a cheerleading coach, identified by the pseudonym "Elizabeth." The coach invited her to join the team even though the group of girls was far younger than Jane. Shortly thereafter, Jane's mother allowed her to move into Elizabeth's town home.

Her life quickly changed. Elizabeth turned into a monster, allegedly beating Jane repeatedly, locking her in a room, withholding food and forcing her to exercise until she could no longer stand. Although Jane has a high IQ, she had the development of a 12-year-old and had learned to be obedient and trusting, according to the lawsuit, filed by lawyer Jeanne Christensen.

Elizabeth also brandished a gun, and threatened to kill Jane if she told anyone, the plaintiff says.

Christensen said she has reported what happened to the Department of Justice.

After weeks of abuse, Elizabeth took Jane to a party in Washington, D.C., at “a large home, with a circular drive, fountain and pillars” where the only people at the event were adults — mostly older men. Maxwell welcomed her in a motherly fashion, holding her hand and, according to the suit, seized upon her disabilities and her childlike features as suiting Epstein, who liked slight girls with fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes.

The following week, Elizabeth put Jane on a private plane from Virginia to Palm Beach, where she was met by a driver who took her to Epstein’s estate. Shortly thereafter, both Maxwell and Epstein trained Jane to sexually arouse Epstein, giving her childlike “happy claps” when she satisfied him. The suit alleges that another Epstein associate taught Jane how to have sexual intercourse with Epstein.

From then on Jane was “shipped out” by Elizabeth to Palm Beach and the U.S. Virgin Islands, forcing Jane to miss most of her junior year of high school. She was passed on to other men that year, including Black, and sent back to Elizabeth, who was paid in envelopes of cash, according to the lawsuit.

Christensen said that up until recently Jane had not realized that she was able to hold anyone accountable for what happened to her, since it was so long ago. However, they were able to file the claim against Black because recent legislative initiatives in New York have given sexual violence victims the right to file claims previously barred by the statute of limitations.

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