

Billionaire investor Leon Black sued for defamation by woman claiming he forced her into ‘sadistic sexual acts’

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Molly Crane-Newman

Billionaire investor Leon Black was sued on Tuesday by a woman who alleges the private equity bigwig forced her into twisted sex acts and said he'd have her thrown in jail for publicly uncovering his violent and “sadistic side.”

Güzel Ganieva says 69-year-old Black, the former CEO of Apollo Global Management, used his influence to bully her into silence after a years-long affair built on coercive manipulation and violent abuse, according to the lawsuit filed in Manhattan Supreme Court.

Ganieva's accusations first arose in March when she fired off several tweets accusing the wealthy investor — who's worth an estimated \$9.3 billion — of sexual assault and forcing her into a non-disclosure agreement that she never got to read, the suit details.

Black stepped down from the private equity giant he co-founded in 1990 within days of the allegations surfacing, but he denied his decision was related.

In a statement to Bloomberg in April, which is the basis for Ganieva's defamation suit, Black characterized their relationship as “a consensual affair” and claimed she had been trying to extort him since it ended seven years ago.

Black also said during the interview that he made payments to Ganieva in an attempt to spare his family from public embarrassment.

In the suit filed Monday, Ganieva said Black made no effort to hide their relationship from the public. She said the couple ate countless meals together in restaurants, and that Black took her to Broadway shows, museum exhibitions and the movies, including the premiere of “The King's Speech,” and even sat beside her cheering for the New York Knicks.

“In the midst of all these very public outings, Black never once worried about sparing his family from public embarrassment,” the lawsuit says. “Nor did he care about being seen out with other young women, often of Russian descent, in addition to Ms. Ganieva.”

The suit details “sadistic sexual acts” Black allegedly forced Ganieva to do in barren New York City apartments with nothing but a mattress on the floor. The Russian native says the more disturbing encounters with Black were often followed by periods of “remorseful and conciliatory behavior” on his part, in which he'd convince Ganieva to meet with him once again.

The pair first met at a Women's Day event in Manhattan in 2008, where Black "picked her out of the crowd," according to the suit. Ganieva was a single mother in her early twenties who had emigrated to the U.S. with dreams of becoming a model. Black was worth over a billion dollars and married with two children.

Black told Ganieva he'd help put her kid through school, would personally finance a movie for her to produce or direct "after convincing her that acting was too difficult a business," according to the complaint. Further, Black said he'd purchase Ganieva a townhouse to turn into an art museum and help her get into Harvard Business School.

None of Black's grand plans ever materialized and he often took pleasure in Ganieva struggling to find a job, her suit claims.

Ganieva left the city with her son to escape Black's presence following an alleged assault in July 2014. She claims Black burst into her apartment, where she was in bed recovering from an illness, and raped her.

"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," said Ganieva's lawyer Jeanne Christensen.

"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."