

# She Was a 16-Year-Old Model When Harvey Weinstein Invited Her to Lunch

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At 16, the model moved to New York, leaving her hometown in Poland and her parents behind to chase dreams of becoming a Hollywood actress.

At a modeling event in 2002, the teenager, Kaja Sokola, met the famous movie producer Harvey Weinstein. He found out she was interested in acting and invited her to lunch a few days later. Excited and eager, she thought the man behind “Pulp Fiction” and “Shakespeare in Love” could open doors for her career.

But instead of taking her to lunch, Ms. Sokola says, Mr. Weinstein brought her to his New York apartment, forcing her to massage his penis and blocking the door when she tried to escape.

On Thursday, Ms. Sokola filed a lawsuit accusing the movie mogul of sexually abusing her when she was a minor.

Ms. Sokola was able to sue Mr. Weinstein in New York under the Child Victims Act, a new state law that opened a one-year window allowing sexual abuse victims of any age — including those whose cases had expired under the old statute of limitations — to take legal action. The one-year window started in August.

Victims of sexual abuse in New York were previously required to file civil lawsuits by their 23rd birthdays. Ms. Sokola is now 33.

Because of the expanded statute of limitations under the new law, Ms. Sokola is one of the few Weinstein accusers who can seek to hold the Walt Disney Company liable for Mr. Weinstein’s behavior. Disney bought Miramax Films, the production company co-founded by Mr. Weinstein and his brother, Bob, in 1993 and sold it in 2010.

Mr. Weinstein has faced lawsuits from dozens of women since 2017, when investigations by The New York Times and The New Yorker revealed decades of sexual harassment allegations against him. The disgraced producer is facing a criminal trial on sexual assault charges that begins on Jan. 6 in Manhattan.

Ms. Sokola’s lawsuit, filed in Manhattan state court, accuses Miramax, Disney and Bob Weinstein of enabling Harvey Weinstein and ignoring sexual misconduct allegations against him. She is suing them, along with Harvey Weinstein, for an unspecified amount in damages.

Her allegation first appeared last year under the name "Jane Doe" as part of a class-action lawsuit brought by several women. Benjamin Brafman, Mr. Weinstein's lawyer at the time, called her accusation "completely uncorroborated" and "patently false."

Donna Rotunno, Mr. Weinstein's current lawyer, did not respond to a request for comment on the new lawsuit.

Lawyers for Bob Weinstein, Miramax and Disney also did not respond.

Ms. Sokola decided to file her own lawsuit after rejecting a \$25 million tentative settlement agreement reached last week by Mr. Weinstein and dozens of his accusers.

More than \$12 million — a quarter of the overall settlement package — would go toward legal costs for Mr. Weinstein, his brother and other former members of their studio's board. The board members would be insulated from future liability, and the accusers would drop their claims against Mr. Weinstein and other executives.

"I cannot accept the proposed 'global settlement' as fair or just," Ms. Sokola said in a statement. "There is no accountability for the perpetrators, insufficient compensation for all of the victims and millions of dollars going to people that I believe enabled Weinstein."

On their way to lunch in 2002, the new lawsuit says, Mr. Weinstein asked Ms. Sokola how old she was. She replied that she was 16. He was 50 at the time.

Mr. Weinstein's driver dropped them off at Mr. Weinstein's apartment in SoHo, the lawsuit said, instead of taking them to a restaurant for lunch. Mr. Weinstein told her that if she wanted to be an actress, she had to feel comfortable getting naked and doing whatever the director wanted. Mr. Weinstein said he had made the careers of Penélope Cruz and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Under his instructions, Ms. Sokola says, she took off her blouse and unzipped her jeans. Then, Mr. Weinstein touched her vagina and directed her to touch herself.

He took off his pants and forced her to massage his penis while he grabbed her breasts, the lawsuit said.

She fought back tears and tried to leave, screaming that she did not want to touch him. Mr. Weinstein blocked the door, she said. He yelled at her to calm down and said she should work on her stubbornness.

"Harvey Weinstein's demeanor became intense, as if he was hunting prey," the lawsuit said. "Sokola realized then he was determined to sexually satisfy himself with her in whatever way he wanted."

Mr. Weinstein eventually ejaculated on the floor, the lawsuit said.

Ms. Sokola said she worried that she had just destroyed her career by refusing to go along with Mr. Weinstein's demands. A few days after the incident, he repeatedly contacted her, saying he was the only person who could help her become an actress, she said.

She said the incident flooded her with guilt and shame, causing long-term depression and anorexia.

She now works as a clinical psychologist in Krakow, Poland.

The age of consent in New York State is 17, but Ms. Sokola's allegations are too old under the law to be the basis of a criminal charge. Her lawyer, Douglas H. Wigdor, said prosecutors had not interviewed her as part of any criminal case.