


Ex-Hedge Fund Exec Who Resigned Amid Jeffrey Epstein Scandal Dubbed a ‘Predator’ in Lawsuit

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The former head of a multibillion-dollar hedge fund who resigned earlier this year amid scrutiny of his financial ties to **Jeffrey Epstein** has been hit with a lurid lawsuit accusing him of raping, intimidating and paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to silence a woman over the course of a decade.

Former Apollo Global Management CEO **Leon Black** has been sued in New York County Supreme Court by **Guzel Ganieva**, who alleged earlier this year in a series of tweets that the hedge fund honcho “sexually harassed and abused” her for years.

“While he understood my career aspirations, he could not understand when I refused his sexual advances,” Ganieva tweeted on March 17. “I was bullied, manipulated and coerced. Similarly, under duress, I was forced to sign an NDA in 2015.”

The lawsuit said Ganieva “bravely” called Black a “predator” on Twitter, then got a text from him the next morning:

On March 17, 2021, Ms. Ganieva bravely posted on Twitter that Black was a “predator” that had “sexually harassed and abused” her for years. The next morning, Black texted Ms. Ganieva to call him immediately. She refused.

A few days after those then-little noticed posts, Black quit Apollo Management, months earlier than his planned resignation originally scheduled for this July. Black had announced his intended exit in this past January, amid scrutiny of his financial ties to Epstein. Apollo claimed that an independent review by the global law firm Dechert LLP cleared Black and the company of any impropriety.

The report found that Black paid Epstein \$158 million for estate planning between 2012 through 2017, well after Epstein was jailed after pleading guilty on a charge of soliciting a minor for prostitution.

Weeks after those social media posts, Black granted an interview to Bloomberg, in which he alleged that he paid Ganieva to hide a consensual affair. Black denied that his sudden departure from the hedge fund on March 22 had anything to do with Ganieva’s allegations days earlier.

Ganieva’s lawyers **Jeanne M. Christensen** and **Lindsay M. Goldbrum** describe Black’s allegations as the predictable counteroffensive of a financial titan.

“Knowing that he could no longer control her into silence, Black resorted to the age-old playbook used by wealthy and powerful men – he made a preemptive claim of extortion,” their 30-page lawsuit, first reported by the *Miami Herald*’s dogged Epstein chronicler **Julie K. Brown**, states.

“This textbook strategy involves overpowering the female accuser by victimizing her one more time in a public way with threats of criminal charges,” the complaint continues. “As demonstrated by Black, this is accomplished by going to the ‘criminal authorities’ to accuse Ms. Ganieva of extortion and placing her on the legal defensive before she can take any legal action against him—just in case she planned on doing so.”

In a statement to Law&Crime, Black’s spokesperson reiterated those accusations of criminal extortion and called Ganieva’s allegations of harassment and other inappropriate behavior “categorically untrue.”

“This frivolous lawsuit is riddled with lies, and is nothing more than a wholesale fiction,” the spokesperson said. “The truth is that Leon Black had a wholly consensual relationship with Ms. Ganieva for six years, and then, as we have previously advised the criminal authorities, Mr. Black was subsequently extorted by Ms. Ganieva for many years and made substantial monetary payments to her based on her threats to go public about their relationship and cause him reputational risk and harm to his family. Mr. Black emphatically denies each and every spurious allegation put forth in this lawsuit and looks forward to disproving them in court.”

According to the lawsuit, Ganieva was a single mother in her early 20s who recently immigrated to the U.S. from Russia when she first encountered Black, who allegedly picked her out from a crowd during an International Women’s Day event in March 2008.

Ganieva claims Black started performing “sadistic sexual acts on her without her consent and despite her saying no” starting that year, inside a studio apartment with a mattress on the floor and no other furniture.

In 2011, Ganieva alleges that she enrolled in an undergraduate program to allow her to seek a career outside modeling, and Black used the occasion to sign her a \$480,000 “loan” with a five percent interest rate that was “unfathomable” for her to repay, according to the lawsuit.

“Financial control – a tried-and true tactic to achieve dominance over another, was a method Black knew intimately and understood would place Ms. Ganieva in his debt forever,” the complaint states.

Ganieva claims Black had her sign another one just like it two years later in 2013.

After completing her math degree, Ganieva claims, Black kept her in a cycle of dependence on job leads that never materialized.

Ganieva claims that Black raped her in July 2014, after allegedly arriving unannounced in her East 77th Street apartment in Manhattan when she was sick.

“At over 6’5” and 300+ pounds, Black had no difficulty dragging Ms. Ganieva into the bedroom and throwing her on her back on the bed,” the lawsuit alleges. “She was limp and unable to move.”

“Despite her begging him to leave, he took off her clothes and his own,” it continues. “Inexplicably, he spared Ms. Ganieva the pain of his usual sadistic rituals and quickly got on top of her and forced his penis into her vagina against her will. Disgustingly, when Black was done, as he stood up and put his clothes back on, he angrily said: ‘Now I have fucked you.’”

A little more than a year later, Ganieva claims, Black presented her with a non-disclosure agreement and threatened that if she did not take the “deal,’ i.e. his hush money,” he would make sure she wound up “in prison” or he would “destroy her life,” according to the lawsuit.

Ganieva says the agreement forgave her roughly million-dollar loan, but she says he refused to give her a copy of it.

“From that time until April 2021, Ms. Ganieva received regular payments from Black, via wire from an account called ‘E Trust,’” the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit levels four causes of action against Black: defamation, defamation per se, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and gender motivated violence.