

# Leon Black Tried to Sex-Traffic Russian Model for Epstein: Lawsuit

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It's been a long few months of accountability for billionaire Leon Black, who is just now answering for his financial and personal relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. For well over a year following the death of the alleged sex trafficker, Black remained at the top of his private equity firm Apollo Global Management and in the chairman's seat at the Museum of Modern Art. But following an internal Apollo inquiry that found that Black gave \$158 million to Epstein for boilerplate tax planning and estate guidance, the junk bond prince agreed to step down at Apollo this year; two months later, he announced he would not seek reelection for the MoMA chairman position.

These high-profile exits are legacy killers, but for Black, they are at least relatively clean breaks. In New York State Court, however, a messier legal battle has revealed some damning allegations surrounding his Epstein connections. In a filing on Monday, former Russian model Guzel Ganieva claims that Black trafficked her, flying her from Manhattan to Palm Beach “without her consent, to satisfy the sex needs of Epstein.”

The alleged incident took place in October 2008, as Apollo navigated the financial crisis and Epstein was serving time for procuring a child for prostitution — a deal in which he was allowed to leave the Palm Beach County Jail for up to 16 hours almost every day. According to the lawsuit, Black drove Ganieva, who was then in her mid-twenties, to a mansion in Palm Beach that was guarded by a sheriff's deputy, where she was pressured to have sex with Epstein. While there, Ganieva states that alleged Epstein recruiter Sarah Kellen told her: “You have to let them do whatever they want with you, and you have to let them be with multiple sexual partners if that's what they want. They are very powerful, and if you don't do what they want you to do, there will be consequences that I do not want for you.” After she refused, Ganieva alleges that she and Black got on a flight back to New York, during which Black did not speak to her.

The filing on Monday is not the beginning of the pair's battle in the court and the press. Following a tweet in March in which Ganieva called Black a “predator” and alleged he “sexually harassed and abused” her for years, the financier told Bloomberg in April that he had a “consensual” affair with Ganieva and was later “extorted” in exchange for her staying quiet. This claim led to a defamation suit in June in which Ganieva claimed Black raped her at her apartment on the Upper East Side in 2014 and forced her to sign an NDA in 2015; Black denied the allegations in a court filing in July.

Though fallout from the Epstein scandal has been relatively scarce in the months leading up to Ghislaine Maxwell's November trial for allegedly sex-trafficking a 14-year-old, on Monday, alleged victim Virginia Giuffre sued Epstein associate Prince Andrew in New York, claiming he abused her when she was 17.