

Leon Black accused of raping woman in Jeffrey Epstein's NYC home: suit

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A struggling single mom filed suit against Leon Black Monday, alleging the billionaire raped her in Jeffrey Epstein's Manhattan townhouse two decades ago, new court papers show.

Cheri Pierson claims the dead pedophile arranged for her and Black, 71, to meet at his Upper East Side mansion, where the legendary investor and former head of Apollo Global Management assaulted her, according to her Manhattan Supreme Court lawsuit.

"She recalls desperately yelling and screaming" and she "tried to kick" but "he was too strong," the suit states, describing the alleged 2002 incident.

Black's lawyer Susan Estrich said in a statement that Pierson's claims are "categorically false" and part of her efforts to "extort money from Mr. Black by threatening to destroy his reputation."

Pierson — who says she was introduced to Epstein in 2000 by his ex-girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell and an unnamed Ukrainian woman — came forward publicly for the first time in the suit, filed under New York's Adult Survivors Act.



Billionaire Leon Black has been sued by Cheri Pierson, who claims he raped her in Jeffrey Epstein's townhouse in 2002.

Bloomberg via Getty Images

When she was roped into Epstein's orbit, Pierson was a single mom trying to start a skincare line and struggling to make ends meet. She was paid around \$300 for each of roughly five massages she gave to Epstein at the East 71st Street townhouse — where he would masturbate and ask her to perform oral sex on him, which she always refused, the suit claims.

Pierson then stopped seeing Epstein as he "was not happy" that she wouldn't go further with him. But then in 2002, she called him "in desperate need for money," the filing states.

The well-connected financier had a messenger bring her a card with \$300 and the message "compliments of Jeffrey Epstein." Shortly after, Epstein called Pierson saying he wanted to introduce someone who could help her — and set up a meeting with Black, the suit claims.



Pierson says she gave Epstein massages in exchange for \$300 at his townhouse.
Christopher Sadowski

Black showed up in a business suit and seemed very familiar with Epstein's home, taking Pierson up to the massage room and having \$300 ready for her, the lawsuit alleges.

The hulking 6-foot-four, 300-pound Black allegedly undressed and insisted on giving her oral sex, which he did violently while holding her upside down with her legs over his shoulders, according to the suit, which notes Pierson was much slighter, weighing 125 pounds and being 5 feet 8 inches tall.

During the alleged rape, Black bit her causing "excruciating pain," the court papers claim.

After, when they both were outside, the former MOMA chairman told her, "Black, my name is Leo Black," before hopping in a town car and leaving, the lawsuit alleges.

Pierson says she had horrible vaginal swelling, tearing and bleeding that she had to recover from over the next several weeks. She was in pain and had difficulty urinating because of it, the suit claims.

Black reached out to her several times after, and she met up with him on two occasions – the first time she left soon after out of fear and devastation and on the second, he gave her \$5,000 cash when they met at the bar of the St. Regis Hotel, the suit alleges.

Black called her soon after, saying he wanted to see her again and when Pierson asked why, he responded, "I just gave you \$5,000!" according to the lawsuit.

Pierson claims Black had become involved with women who Epstein had previously been with when they were underage, the suit says.

But when the women got older, "Epstein simply passed some of these women on to Black, and likely other men," the filing states.

"Black, thereafter, became involved sexually with these women, at least several of whom had been with Epstein for years while underage."

Pierson, who now lives in Virginia, is suing Black for sexual assault and other claims. Her suit also names Epstein's estate, which she accuses of negligence. She is seeking unspecified damages.

Pierson was able to bring the case under the recently enacted Adult Survivors Act which allows adult victims of sexual abuse to file suit during a one-year period – regardless of whether the alleged incidents occurred outside of the statute of limitations.

"Thanks to the passage of the Adult Survivor's Act, survivors of sexual violence like our client Ms. Pierson can seek the justice they deserve no matter how many years ago their trauma was suffered," Pierson's lawyer Jeanne Christensen said in a statement.

"We look forward to holding Black and Epstein's estate accountable for their appalling unlawful conduct as alleged in the complaint by our client."

Pierson's accusations first surfaced in Russian model Guzel Ganieva's own lawsuit in which Ganieva claims Black was sexually violent toward her for years. Pierson was not named in that suit, rather the incident was described as happening to a "Jane Doe."

Black has vehemently denied Ganieva's claims.

Ganieva – and a Jane Doe mentioned in her suit – have also brought their allegations to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, which has opened up an investigation into Black, according to court papers filed in Ganieva's case in October.

The DA's office declined to confirm or comment on the existence of a probe into Black.

The same firm that represents Ganieva – Wigdor LLP – also represents Pierson.

Estrich, Black's lawyer, said that Pierson and Ganieva's suits are part of Wigdor's efforts to carry out a campaign of false and defamatory accusations against her client.

“We intend to defeat these baseless claims, and to pursue all of our remedies to hold the Wigdor firm legally accountable for their abusive conduct and misuse of the courts,” Estrich said.

Lawyers for Epstein’s estate didn’t return a request for comment Monday.