

# Suit Accuses Billionaire Leon Black of Rape at Epstein N.Y. Townhome

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By Michael Katz

November 29, 2022



Billionaire financier Leon Black is being accused in a lawsuit of raping a woman in 2002 in a private room at the Manhattan luxury townhome of the late Jeffrey Epstein.

The [lawsuit](#), filed Monday in New York Supreme Court, names Black, the founder and former CEO of private equity firm Apollo Global Management; the estate of Epstein, who died by suicide in 2019 while in jail awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges; the 1953 Trust, where Epstein's assets went after his death; and Epstein's executors.

The woman, Cheri Pierson, claims in the suit she was supposed to give Black a massage in a private third-floor suite in a meeting prearranged by Epstein. Pierson, a single mother who had given Epstein massages in the suite, the suit said, believed the \$300 she was receiving would help her care for her young daughter.

The suit alleges Pierson was raped after she refused Black's advances for oral sex. The suit said after the incident, Pierson "could barely walk out of the house onto the sidewalk, as she was in excruciating pain and still in shock."

The suit said Pierson told a confidante about the incident, and the person told her if she went public about what Black had done, no one would believe her. Pierson sued under a new New York law that allows adult survivors of sexual abuse to sue their alleged abusers, even if the statute of limitations on their claims expired. The law gives victims a one-year window to file such claims, which opened Wednesday.

"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," attorney Jeanne Christensen of Wigdor LLP 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."

Black's attorney, Susan Estrich, told NBC News that "we intend to defeat these baseless claims and to pursue all of our remedies to hold the [plaintiff's firm] legally accountable for their abusive conduct and misuse of the courts."



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Black, whose net worth is \$9 billion, according to Forbes, was forced to step down as Apollo's CEO and chairman in March 2021 following an independent investigation into his ties with Epstein. Black also is being sued in New York Supreme Court by Guzel Ganieva, alleging rape and defamation. Ganieva also is represented by Wigdor.