

Leon Black**Leon Black accused of raping woman at Jeffrey Epstein's New York home**

Lawyer for Apollo founder says the allegations are 'baseless'



Leon Black, pictured, stood down from Apollo in 2021, after a report found he had made far larger payments than previously known to Jeffrey Epstein © Patrick T. Fallon/Bloomberg

Joe Miller and **Mark Vandavelde** in New York NOVEMBER 28 2022

A woman who says she was raped at convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's New York home by Leon Black, the co-founder of US investment group Apollo Global Management, has sued the former executive and Epstein's estate in a Manhattan court.

Lawyers for Cheri Pierson allege she was recruited by Epstein's friend Ghislaine Maxwell while working as a receptionist some time in 2000 and initially employed as a masseuse, before being assaulted by Epstein's friend [Black](#) in 2002. Maxwell was sentenced in June to [20 years in prison](#) for helping Epstein abuse minors.

In a 30-page complaint filed in a New York state court in Manhattan, Pierson's lawyers said she sustained "severe and debilitating pain", and as she "had no medical insurance, was left to deal with the physical aftermath of what [Black] had done". They allege Black consequently arranged to meet Pierson, then a single mother, at a New York hotel and paid her \$5,000 in cash.

A lawyer for Black, Susan Estrich, said the latest allegations against her client “are categorically false and part of a scheme to . . . destroy his reputation”.

The lawsuit opens a new front in a long-running legal battle between Black and the Wigdor firm, which represents Pierson in the action filed on Monday, and is also suing Black on behalf of his ex-mistress Guzel Ganieva.

Black has accused Wigdor of abusing the legal process to publicise false allegations of sexual assault in an effort to extort money and destroy his reputation. In a defamation action filed against the law firm last month, Black’s lawyers wrote: “This case is the epitome of how the #MeToo movement can be hijacked and abused.”

“This serial abuse of the judicial process cannot stand,” Estrich said on Monday. “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.”

Black stood down from his role at Apollo in 2021, after an investigation commissioned by the company revealed he had made [far larger payments](#) than previously known to Epstein.

Lawyers at Dechert, which conducted the probe, concluded that Black had paid \$158mn to Epstein for tax advice and other professional services after Epstein’s 2008 conviction for soliciting sex with a minor. Epstein was indicted on federal sex-trafficking charges in 2019, and died by suicide in his New York cell a few weeks later.

The lawsuit by Pierson is among the first to be filed under New York state’s Adult Survivors Act, which allows people to file sexual assault claims even if the statute of limitations has expired. Last week, a former journalist sued Donald Trump under the new law, alleging the former president raped her in the mid-1990s. He has denied the allegations.

“Thanks to the passage of the Adult Survivors 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,” said Jeanne Christensen, a lawyer at Wigdor who is representing her.

“We look forward to holding Black and Epstein’s estate accountable for their appalling unlawful conduct as alleged in the complaint by our client,” Christensen added.

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