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Ex-Model Accuses Weinstein Associate Of Rape In NY

By [Ivan Moreno](#) · [Listen to article](#)

Law360 (April 7, 2023, 3:51 PM EDT) -- A former model and founder of a nonprofit advocacy organization for people in the fashion industry is accusing an ex-[Miramax](#) executive and associate of Harvey Weinstein of raping her after luring her to his hotel in New York in 2001, according to a lawsuit in state court.

Sara Ziff, the founder of the Model Alliance, was a 19-year-old model and aspiring actress in 2001 when Fabrizio Lombardo, a Miramax executive at the time, invited her to his hotel after a movie screening at the studio's offices, according to her lawsuit filed in Manhattan state court.

Lombardo told Ziff they would be joined by Weinstein and another young woman who had attended the screening, according to the lawsuit. Lombardo said Weinstein's brother and business partner might also be there, according to the lawsuit, which also names Weinstein, [The Walt Disney Co.](#) and its subsidiaries Buena Vista and Miramax.

"Ms. Ziff did not know that what awaited her at the hotel was not the promised chance to discuss her acting career with the Weinstein brothers, but a trap set by Mr. Lombardo to get Ms. Ziff alone and rape her," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit alleges that the movie studios and Weinstein, who is described as Lombardo's close friend, failed to properly supervise Lombardo while he was the executive in charge of Miramax in Italy and other parts of Europe from 1999 to March 2004.

"As Harvey Weinstein was a high-level executive of Miramax and Disney during the relevant period, the companies are liable for his negligent supervision and retention of Mr. Lombardo," the lawsuit said.

Imran H. Ansari, an attorney for Weinstein, did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday, but he told [The New York Times](#) in an email that his client "had no control over any alleged conduct by Mr. Lombardo, nor would he have any reason to know what Mr. Lombardo was doing nor where Mr. Lombardo was at the time that Ms. Ziff alleges she was raped."

Weinstein is serving a combined sentence of 39 years for sex crimes in New York and Los Angeles.

The lawsuit alleges Lombardo and Ziff were alone at his hotel penthouse suite when he "began to make unwelcome advances."

"She repeatedly pushed his hands away, but he continued to touch her," the lawsuit says. At one point, Lombardo allegedly "pulled her towards him and pivoted her around onto the bed on her back. Mr. Lombardo then laid on top of Ms. Ziff," according to the lawsuit.

"Ms. Ziff, having difficulty speaking, managed to say 'no' multiple times, but Mr. Lombardo continued to assault her," the lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit was filed under New York's Adult Survivors Act, which allows survivors of sex crimes to bring civil claims that would otherwise be time-barred within a one-year period that ends in November 2023.

"Thanks to the Adult Survivors Act, it is not too late for survivors like Sara Ziff to seek justice. We intend to see that she gets it," Ziff's attorneys said in a statement Friday.

The lawsuit also said it is timely under a New York City law that allows survivors of gender-motivated violent offenses to file civil claims that would otherwise be time-barred within a two-year period starting March 1, 2023.

Counsel for Lombardo could not be determined Friday. A representative for Disney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ziff is represented by Laura E. Edidin and Douglas H. Wigdor of [Wigdor LLP](#) and Laura L. Koistinen and Kevin Mintzer of the Law Office of Kevin Mintzer PC.

Counsel information for Lombardo was not available Friday.

The case is Ziff v. Lombardo et al., case number 952010/2023, in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York.

--Editing by Adam LoBelia.

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Courtney Cormican

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