

NEWS & ANALYSIS

Model Alliance Founder Sara Ziff Files Lawsuit Against Harvey Weinstein Associate



Sara Ziff has filed a lawsuit against Fabrizio Lombardo, Harvey Weinstein, Disney, Buena Vista and Miramax. (Getty Images)

By **DIANA PEARL**

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Sara Ziff, a former model who went on to create the Model Alliance, a non-profit focussed on advocating for better conditions for models and others working in the fashion industry, has filed a lawsuit accusing Fabrizio Lombardo, the former head of Miramax in Italy and a once-close associate of the disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, of rape. She is suing Lombardo, as well as Weinstein, Miramax, its parent company Disney and Disney subsidiary Buena Vista, for abuse and negligence.

In the suit, which Ziff filed in New York State Supreme Court on Thursday, she alleges that Lombardo raped her in 2001. She was 19 years old at the time of the alleged incident. The suit states the alleged assault took place in a New York City hotel room, which Lombardo invited Ziff to after attending a screening of a Miramax film. Ziff, at the time interested in pursuing an acting career, said she went to the room expecting to meet a group of people, including Weinstein and his brother and business partner Bob Weinstein. She instead found herself alone with Lombardo, who made advances towards her, which she rebuffed, before he ultimately assaulted her, she alleged.

“Today I took an important step toward seeking accountability and finally moving towards healing,” Ziff told BoF in a statement. “What happened to me at 19 years old was a catalytic moment for my life’s work. I am fortunate to stand with a powerful community of survivors, and I want to thank those who came before me and paved the way.”

Ziff said that the experience was part of what motivated her to start the Model Alliance and advocate for safer conditions for models. The May 2022 passage of the Adult Survivors Act in New York State, which allows abuse victims to file civil charges on matters that had outrun the statute of limitations until November 2023, prompted her to further consider bringing forth a lawsuit, she **told the *New York Times***.

Lombardo had a longstanding relationship with Weinstein, who is currently serving a total 39-year prison sentence for various sex crimes. He was named in the October 2018 sexual harassment class action suit filed against The Weinstein Company, but this is the first suit accusing him directly of misconduct.

Harvey Weinstein’s lawyer Imran H. Ansari responded to the lawsuit in an email to the *New York Times*. “Certainly Mr. Weinstein 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. As such, Mr. Weinstein firmly denies that he has any liability for the alleged conduct of another.”

Disney and Weinstein’s lawyer did not respond to a request for comment.

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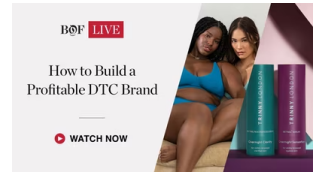
Weinstein’s accusers were muffled for more than two decades, but today’s connected world won’t tolerate this sort of behaviour in any industry, including fashion.

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