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NEWS

# Model Sara Ziff Accuses Harvey Weinstein Associate of Rape, Sues Disney & Miramax

Sara Ziff, founder of the advocacy group Model Alliance, filed a lawsuit against Fabrizio Lombardo, who happens to have been Weinstein's best man.

By **Emily Leibert** Published Friday 2:50PM | Comments (4) | Alerts



Harvey Weinstein and Fabrizio Lombardo in 2007, left, and Sara Ziff.

Photo: Getty Images

Harvey Weinstein's [legal woes appear far from over](#), as the convicted rapist's name has appeared in yet another lawsuit—this time from [former model Sara Ziff](#).

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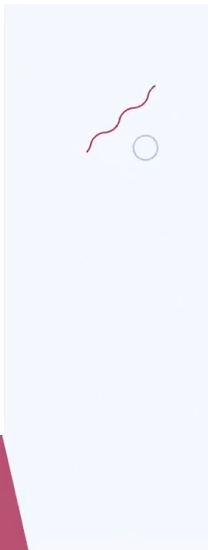
On Thursday, Ziff [filed suit](#) against Fabrizio Lombardo, the former head of Miramax Italy and one of Weinstein's closest friends and associates. Ziff alleged that Lombardo raped her in a New York City hotel room in 2001 when she was just 19. She's also suing Weinstein, Disney, Buena Vista, and Miramax for abuse and negligence under the Adult Survivors Act, a 2022 law that allows victims of sexual assault to bypass the statute of limitations in order to bring civil claims against perpetrators.

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“It’s taken over 20 years to process this,” Ziff said in an [interview](#) with the *New York Times*. “I couldn’t even talk to anyone about it for the first few years, let alone imagine taking legal action.”



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# The New York Times



## Lawsuit Accuses Former Associate of Harvey Weinstein of Rape

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You might recognize Lombardo's name from his involvement in the original #MeToo scandal that put Weinstein behind bars. In 2017, Lombardo was accused of enabling Weinstein's systemic sexual abuse by four women, including actress Asia Argento and model [Zoe Brock](#). The women claimed Lombardo, who [gave](#) Weinstein the mantle of Best Man at his 2003 wedding, was employed by Miramax for the sole purpose of helping Weinstein take advantage of young women, though Lombardo [denied](#) the allegations and never appeared in court. Lombardo was also named in the [class action sexual harassment suit](#) brought against the Weinstein Company in 2018, but the case was [later settled](#) during the Weinstein Company bankruptcy filing, according to the *Times*. This is the first time Lombardo has publicly and legally been accused of rape.



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screening and said Ziff would get to meet Weinstein. When the screening ended, Ziff claimed Lombardo invited her to grab drinks at the Mercer Hotel and told her Weinstein and his brother would be there. Instead, when she arrived, Lombardo brought her to a penthouse suite. The Weinsteins weren't there.

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After repeatedly telling Lombardo she had a boyfriend and fielding advances, Ziff claims Lombardo “pivoted her around onto the bed on her back” and raped her. “Ms. Ziff was in shock and lay in the bed, frozen. Mr. Lombardo fell asleep,” the suit reads. “Ms. Ziff woke up early the next morning, confused and alone in the hotel room. She walked home to her apartment, took a long shower, and cried.”

Ziff claims she did not tell anyone about the rape until 2005 when she confided in model and actor Caitriona Balfe. Balfe confirmed this account to the *Times*. Later, in 2017, Ziff filed a report regarding the incident with the New York City Police Department, but Lombardo was never charged.

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“I’ve been very anxious about it and at times wondered if I even want to go through this process,” she said. “I’ve spoken to other people who’ve gone through it and every single one of them says it’s a nightmare. But no matter how much I’ve tried to ignore it or minimize it, this is not my burden to hold.”

When asked for comment, one of Weinstein's lawyers, Imran H. Ansari, told the *Times* in an email: "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."

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Though Ziff's Model Alliance advocates for survivors of sexual assault and abuse within the fashion industry, Ziff has never spoken publicly about her own experiences. Under Ziff, the Model Alliance is currently working on shepherding [the Fashion Workers Act](#), a bill introduced to New York State legislature last year that hopes to protect young models from predatory behavior and systemic sexual abuse and harassment in the industry. Co-sponsored by State Senator Brad Hoylman, the bill is set to be reconsidered this year after it did not pass initially.

Ziff, now a 40-year-old mother, tells the *Times* that what happened to her certainly pushed her into advocacy work, as she helped young women pursue the sort of justice she was never able to.

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"It felt like here was a real sense of possibility that perhaps we could do something about what happened," Ziff said, "even if it happened a very long time ago."

