

RUNWAY

Model Alliance Founder Sara Ziff Accuses Former Miramax Executive of Rape

BY LAIA GARCIA-FURTADO

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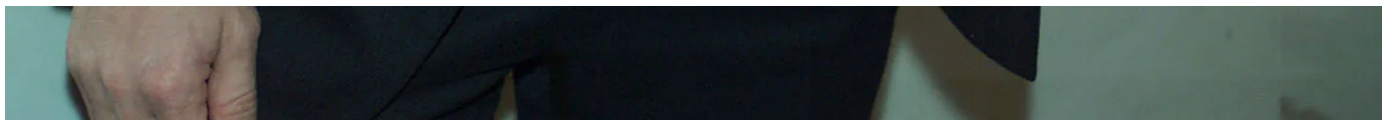
Photo: Taylor Hill/FilmMagic

On April 6 in New York State Supreme Court, Sara Ziff, founder of the Model Alliance, brought forth a lawsuit against the former head of Miramax in Italy, Fabrizio Lombardo. The former model was spurred by the recent passage of the Adult Survivors Act, which extended the rights of victims of sexual assault to bring civil cases to court that would've otherwise not been possible on account of the statute of limitations.

In the suit, Ziff alleges that Lombardo assaulted her in a New York City hotel in 2001. At the time she was looking to break into acting, and her agents organized the meeting. According to *The New York Times*, the Miramax executive allegedly invited her to a screening and later to drinks at the Mercer hotel under the pretense that she would be able to meet now convicted movie producer Harvey Weinstein and his brother, Bob.

Instead she says she was taken to a penthouse suite, where the attack took place. Named in the lawsuit are Lombardo, Harvey Weinstein, along with Disney and its subsidiaries Buena Vista and Miramax. She had previously filed a report with the NYPD in 2017, but it did not lead to any charges. Lombardo has not publicly responded to the allegations; Weinstein's lawyer denied that his client had any liability for Lombardo's alleged conduct.





Through her work with the Model Alliance—a nonprofit promoting sustainable practices in the fashion industry, “from the runway to the factory floor,” according to its mission—Ziff has long helped other women deal with their abuse and trauma. (She received the 2021 CFDA award for positive influence.) Currently she and her organization are working to pass the Fashion Workers Act, which aims to protect the rights of not only models but makeup artists, stylists, and other, usually freelance, employees.

“I see Model Alliance as part of a new wave of activism around finding new frameworks for labor rights, especially for a global, mostly female, highly mobile workforce,” Ziff said in an interview in 2021. “We’ve got a multipronged approach. We work to create and support legislation, but we also acknowledge this is a global industry, and it’s not like we can change laws in every jurisdiction all over the world, so we have to get the industry on board and sign onto meaningful commitments. There need to be standards that are enforced no matter where people are working.”

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