

Leon Black accused of raping teenager at Jeffrey Epstein townhouse

[cnbc.com/2023/07/25/leon-black-accused-of-raping-teenager-at-jeffrey-epstein-townhouse.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2023/07/25/leon-black-accused-of-raping-teenager-at-jeffrey-epstein-townhouse.html)

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Key Points

- A federal lawsuit accused Leon Black of raping a teenage girl in 2002 at the Manhattan townhouse of disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein.
- An attorney for Black denied the allegations and accused Wigdor LLP, the law firm behind the lawsuit, of pursuing a “vendetta” against the private equity investor through multiple cases.
- The lawsuit was announced hours after the Senate Finance Committee unveiled details of its yearlong investigation into Black’s ties to Epstein.



Leon Black, Chairman, CEO and Director, Apollo Global Management, LLC, speaks at the Milken Institute’s 21st Global Conference in Beverly Hills, California, May 1, 2018.

Lucy Nicholson | Reuters

A federal lawsuit filed Tuesday accused Leon Black, the billionaire co-founder of Apollo Global Management, of raping a then-16-year-old girl with autism in 2002 at the Manhattan townhouse of disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein.

The lawsuit alleges the unidentified plaintiff had been trafficked to Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, who in late 2021 was convicted of procuring underage girls for Epstein. The plaintiff, who is now in her late 30s, is described in the legal complaint as being born with mosaic Down syndrome and having a “developmental age” around 12 years old.

An attorney for Black denied the allegations and accused Wigdor LLP, the law firm behind the lawsuit, of pursuing a “vendetta” against the private equity investor through multiple cases — one of which was dismissed in May.

The latest civil lawsuit against Black was filed days after The New York Times reported that he had agreed in January to pay \$62.5 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands to settle any potential claims from the territory’s investigation of Epstein.

Earlier Tuesday, the Senate Finance Committee unveiled details of its yearlong investigation into Black’s ties to Epstein, including \$158 million Black allegedly paid him for tax and estate planning services.

“Today, because of legislative initiatives in NYS granting sexual violence victims the right to file claims previously barred by the statute of limitations, we were able to commence a legal action against Leon Black for harms committed years ago against our client Jane Doe when she was a minor,” Wigdor partner Jeanne Christensen said in a statement.

“This is significant for our client and for all sexual assault survivors. It is an honor to represent Jane Doe and we look forward to proceeding to discovery and trial on Jane Doe’s claims,” Christensen said.

Susan Estrich, an attorney for Black, in a statement called Tuesday’s lawsuit “frivolous and sanctionable.”

Estrich said Black has never met the plaintiff, who is referred to as Jane Doe in the legal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in lower Manhattan.

“These vicious and defamatory lies, masquerading as allegations, have been intentionally manufactured by the Wigdor law firm as part of the firm’s vendetta against Mr. Black for vigorously and successfully defending himself over the past two years,” Estrich said.

“Wigdor’s prior case against Mr. Black was recently thrown out by the Court and this one will be too. These allegations — about an incident that supposedly took place 20 years ago — are totally made up, entirely uncorroborated and, as pleaded, squarely violate the statute of limitations.”

“This sham proceeding will be promptly dismissed and will provide further ammunition for Mr. Black’s pending sanctions motion against the Wigdor firm,” the lawyer said.

That motion for sanctions was filed in December in New York Supreme Court in another case brought by Cheri Pierson, whose lawsuit accused Black of raping her in Epstein's Manhattan mansion in 2002. Pierson is described as a struggling single mother who had agreed to give Black a massage in a meeting arranged by Epstein.

Black's request to sanction Wigdor argued that the law firm has "repeatedly abused the court system to launder frivolous, unsubstantiated, and damaging accusations of sexual assault against Black across two lawsuits."

The bid for sanctions also references Guzel Ganieva, who was represented by Wigdor in a 2021 lawsuit accusing Black of sexual assault and defamation was dismissed in May. Ganieva reportedly fired Wigdor as her representative in March.