

MoMA Trustee Leon Black Accused of Raping Teenager

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Editor's Note: The following story contains mentions of sexual assault. To reach the National Sexual Assault Hotline, call 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or visit online.rainn.org.

Billionaire art collector and Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) trustee Leon Black is accused of raping a teenager in Jeffrey Epstein's Manhattan townhouse in 2002 in a federal lawsuit filed yesterday, July 25. The alleged victim was 16 years old at the time, though [court filings](#) explain that she was born with Mosaic Down Syndrome and that her “developmental age is around 12 years old.”

Black's financial ties to Epstein — in the form of payments of \$158 million, reportedly for estate and tax services provided between 2012 and 2017 — came to light in 2021. Black stepped down as CEO of his private equity firm [Apollo Global Management](#) in late January of that year. In February, [Hyperallergic](#) published an open letter signed by more than 150

artists, art workers, and activists calling on MoMA to cut ties with Black. Although the museum announced in May 2021 that Black would no longer serve as chairman of the board, he remains a trustee. MoMA has not responded to *Hyperallergic*'s requests for comment

Yesterday's lawsuit, filed by Wigdor LLP on behalf of Jane Doe, claims that Epstein trafficked Doe into his predatory ring of underage girls and taught her how to perform "massages" involving sexual intercourse. Epstein allegedly told the victim to give a massage to "his special friend Leon Black," who is accused of violently raping her using adult sex toys. The lawsuit alleges that the teenager was not taken to a doctor after the incident even though she was bleeding and that Epstein told her that Ghislaine Maxwell — Epstein's accomplice, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison last year — would "take care of it."

Black denies the allegations. In a statement emailed to *Hyperallergic*, his lawyer Susan Estrich called the most recent lawsuit "frivolous and sanctionable" and said the claims are "entirely uncorroborated." The lawyer also said that Black never met the victim. "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.

This is the third time a woman has pressed legal charges against Black for alleged sexual violence. In 2021, Guzel Ganieva accused Black of sexual abuse and harassment. The billionaire countersued for defamation. In November 2022, Cheri Pierson accused the billionaire of a "brutal" sexual attack at Epstein's mansion.

"Sadly, Ms. Doe's experience is one more in a long line of despicable and heinous experiences inflicted on a minor trapped in Jeffrey Epstein's web — a web that extended to a group of powerful and influential men, including Leon Black," the most recent lawsuit reads.

Doe is represented by Jeanne Christensen at Wigdor, the law firm that represented both Pierson and Ganieva. Black filed a motion for sanctions against Wigdor in December 2022.

Wigdor eventually withdrew from the Ganieva case this March, citing Ganieva's wish to represent herself. A few months later, Ganieva's case was dismissed.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of a *New York Times* report on Friday that Black paid the United States Virgin Islands \$62.5 million in a settlement to protect him from future accusations surrounding Epstein's sex trafficking ring. Meanwhile, in Washington, DC, the Senate Finance Committee is investigating Black and his fiscal ties to Epstein in a larger probe into the ultra rich's tax-avoidance schemes.