

Atrocious NYC Landlord Steve Croman Charged With 20 Felonies

BY TATIANA CRAINE

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Steve Croman pictured in the March 24, 1998, issue of the *Voice*

Photo by Andrew Goldberg

After years of using shady business tactics and relentlessly ousting tenants from their apartments, infamous landlord Steve Croman may finally get his comeuppance.

Today, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman [announced](#) that Croman had been indicted on twenty felony charges, including grand larceny, falsifying business records, a scheme to defraud, criminal tax fraud, and offering a false instrument for filing.

Croman, who now owns 140 Manhattan properties, has popped up on the *Voice's* Worst Landlords list since 1998.

The landlord and his employees are notorious for harassing and filing lawsuits against his tenants in order to flip their rent-stabilized apartments. Anthony Falconite, an employee Croman referred to as his "secret weapon," was also charged today for his role in threatening and intimidating tenants into accepting "buyouts."

A [2000 *Voice* profile](#) of Croman detailed the sometimes devastating influence he has had on neighborhoods and residents:

Croman's concentration of property along Mott and Mulberry streets – four buildings in a two-block area – has magnified his role in transforming Little Italy into Nolita; in other areas, where his holdings are more scattered, his effect is less obvious. But with his ownership of more than a dozen buildings from Gramercy to Greenwich Village and a brokerage firm that lists many more citywide, Croman's influence on the real estate scene cannot be dismissed. Says Janet Freeman, a Little Italy resident who is not a Croman tenant but who has seen him change her neighborhood from an affordable, stable community into an incubator of trendy, if transient, tenants: "His destruction of neighborhoods is intense."

Croman's very style – at turns relentless, then solicitous – is disturbing. Tenants say they have been as creeped out by his unusually friendly overtures – asking them if they've missed him, for example, and sending holiday packages of chocolates and blue corn tortilla chips via UPS – as by his constant phone calls, especially to immigrant tenants and their English-speaking children. He regularly invites tenants out for coffee, but before the creamer hits the table, they say, Croman has already launched into hardball tactics to get them to move. The first step is usually a chummy buyout offer, typically with a proviso that they tell no one the terms. If the deal is rejected, tenants say, Croman threatens eviction.

In 2014, Croman was labeled the "Repeat Offender" on that year's list of [horrible NYC landlords](#):

Steve Croman, who owns multiple properties throughout Manhattan, seems to almost delight in playing the role of the villainous landlord. Over the years, tenants claim, he's initiated pointless lawsuits, ignored requests for repairs, and flat-out refused to renew leases, all in an effort to drive them out of their rent-stabilized units. If Croman had a mustache, he would have twirled it throughout – but what he lacks in diabolical facial hair he makes up for in henchmen. In July, the *Daily News* reported that New York attorney

general Eric Schneiderman launched an investigation into Croman's tactics and slapped Croman employee Anthony Falconite, a former NYPD cop, with a cease-and-desist order following claims that Falconite had been sent to intimidate residents into moving.

The harassment over the years was so bad that the [Croman Tenants' Alliance](#) was formed as an online support group for current and former tenants to share information and resources about renting in NYC. "One of the tools aggressive landlords rely on is your sense of isolation, fear, and helplessness," the site says. "You are not alone. Don't be afraid. You are not helpless. You have rights!" In 2015, his tenants even [targeted the landlord with flyers](#) around Manhattan.

If convicted, Croman could face 25 years in prison.