

NEWS [/NEWS]

East Village Landlord Accused Of Clearing Tenant's Apartment While He Was Hospitalized With COVID

BY [JAKE OFFENHARTZ](#) [/STAFF/JAKE-OFFENHARTZ]MARCH 25, 2021 8:49 P.M. • [82 COMMENTS](#)

➡ A missing person flyer for Nagaoka GOFUNDME

When Ryo Nagaoka was hospitalized with coronavirus earlier this year, the landlord of his East Village apartment wasted no time changing the locks. After just three weeks, they hired a cleaning company to empty his apartment. His neighbors, assuming he'd passed away, erected a makeshift memorial outside.

But Nagaoka, a 65-year-old restaurant worker, was not dead. On Wednesday night, he returned to his Avenue D apartment to find nearly all of his possessions — aside from his piano and his pet tortoise — were gone.

"They thought he died," neighbor Sierra Zamarripa, who's helping to organize a fundraiser (https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-ryo-rebuild-his-life?utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=customer) for Nagaoka, told Gothamist. "He came back last night and there were padlocks on the door."

The Lazarus-like story has prompted an outpouring of support and confusion from East Village residents, and questions over how the property's owners — who include Alex Rodriguez and mega-investor Barbara Corcoran — justified trashing his belongings so quickly.

Records show that Dan Shapiro purchased the 21-unit Avenue D walk-up in 2018 from ex-Trump fixer Michael Cohen. Corcoran and A-Rod reportedly (<https://nypost.com/2019/06/25/a-rod-takes-bigger-swing-at-residential-real-estate-in-nyc/>) became part owners in 2019.



➡ The apartment where Nagaoka lives, partially owned by A-rod GOTHAMIST

In an emailed statement, an attorney for Shapiro told Gothamist that the tenant was hospitalized on January 27th after he was discovered incapacitated by the building's super. The owners made "every effort to locate the Resident," including making calls to local hospitals and the city, but claimed they couldn't find him. On February 17, just three weeks later, the apartment was cleaned by an outside company hired by the landlord, according to attorney Mitchell Kossoff.

"The few salvageable possessions were saved for the Resident in hopes of his return," the statement continued. "Also, the Resident's pet tortoise remained in the apartment and was cared for by the landlord's agents until the Residents return [sic]."

Multiple neighbors told Gothamist that Nagaoka had not received any of his most important possessions as of Thursday afternoon. "He has no shoes, no toothbrush, no documents or ID, no passport, no fridge or stove," Valentina wrote in his GoFundMe. "What the management has done is so inhumane and I'm pretty sure very illegal." (Nagaoka could not be reached for comment).

Ellen Davidson, a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society, said the actions did in fact appear to violate the law. "It's not up to the landlord to decide if someone is coming back," she said. "You're not allowed to clear out someone's apartment because you think they're not there."

Even without the ongoing eviction moratorium, it's illegal for landlords to "lock-out" tenants without going through the housing court process, Davidson emphasized.

"They're referring to the property they stole from him as being 'salvageable' because they're starting to build their case that his possessions weren't up to their standards," she added. "It's shocking."

Neighbors pitched in on Thursday to lend Nagaoka a mattress, and to ensure he had other necessities, including blankets and food. They said his health is much better than it was when he was hospitalized earlier this year.

Cea Weaver, an organizer for the tenants rights group Housing Justice for All, said the story was "symbolic of landlords getting really desperate in the face of the eviction moratorium."

"A-rod doesn't need more money," she added. "People just believe that renters are less than them."

Inquiries to Rodriguez and Corcoran were not returned.

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82 Comments

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SpideySense • 4 days ago

Landlords are required to get a formal eviction and once it is granted they must place all property of the tenant into a storage facility.

A-rod sucks.

41 ^ | ▾ • Share ›



EdLES ➔ SpideySense • 4 days ago • edited

It's been a long time since I had to deal with this kind of stuff, but don't scumbags... I mean landlords have to wait at least 3 months before even beginning evictions?

21 ^ | ▾ • Share ›



Paige Isaacs ➔ SpideySense • 3 days ago

not if its considered 'abandoned'... which is a term they use loosely. the fact that APS couldnt locate him in a hospital is a lawsuit against the city waiting to happen. but yeah 3 weeks is some BS from the landlord

4 ^ | ▾ • Share ›



Osnosis ➔ SpideySense • 3 days ago

As someone who has done this process countless times, every managing agent knows that you have to get court-ordered possession before you can even enter the apartment (unless a clearly delineated emergency). This is the kind of act that is rare, but is used to paint all landlords as evil.

^ | ▾ • Share ›



Bernie_Geotz_Squirrel_Luv • 4 days ago

Here's the feel good landlord story I was waiting for. The Super

probably wanted the apartment like in Seinfeld. Snitch.

2 ^ | v • Share ›



r. • 4 days ago

if they thought he died, why would they bother keeping any of his belongings in case he comes back...from the dead?

19 ^ | v • Share ›



Ninjahedge ➔ r. • 3 days ago

BRAAAAAAAINS!

And passport, please. I am going to Canada...

1 ^ | v • Share ›



Big_AI72 ➔ r. • 3 days ago

The deceased tenant's possessions would become property of his estate (next of kin).

1 ^ | v • Share ›



r. ➔ Big_AI72 • 3 days ago

ok..so why did they trash a bunch of his stuff?

^ | v • Share ›



Big_AI72 ➔ r. • 3 days ago

good question!

^ | v • Share ›



Paige Isaacs ➔ r. • 3 days ago

because landlords dont follow the law around here... if they couldnt locate him or family, they assumed what was the point. i've seen them do it all the time.

1 ^ | v • Share ›



Reign-of-Drones ➔ r. • 3 days ago

Because they assumed no one would complain and they could renovate and re-rent. And because they're pigs.

3 ^ | v • Share ›



Osnosis ➔ Reign-of-Drones • 3 days ago

This is another canard: if the unit was rent stabilized, you can't raise the rent by renovating. So the landlord wouldn't bother renovating a crap unit (like this obviously

was). This was just incompetence, pure

was). This was just incompetence, pure and simple.

^ | v • Share ›



JamesD → r. • 3 days ago

Because terrible people do terrible things

1 ^ | v • Share ›



Osnosis → r. • 3 days ago • edited

Even when granted possession the landlord is required to maintain the possessions for the estate of the deceased.

^ | v • Share ›



Michael • 4 days ago

"Cea Weaver, an organizer for the tenants rights group Housing Justice for All, said the story was "symbolic of landlords getting really desperate in the face of the eviction moratorium.""

She is soclose to getting it!

7 ^ | v 1 • Share ›



Joey Buckets Was Shadow Banned → Michael
• 3 days ago

She gets it:

"A-rod doesn't need more money," she added. "People just believe that renters are less than them."

19 ^ | v • Share ›



Rex Rocket → Joey Buckets Was Shadow Banned
• 3 days ago

Wrong. A-Rod always needs more money and has proven before that he will do anything to get it. Successful rich people aren't careless or simply thoughtless--they are always working very hard to get as much of your money and property as they can.

^ | v • Share ›



Bogan Logan → Joey Buckets Was Shadow Banned
• 3 days ago

It's nice that anyone would think A-Rod or Barbara are involved in day to day decisions in buildings like this. While they should be responsible, it feels like a safe bet that they had no idea until they got that first email asking for comment.

6 ^ | v • Share ›

**StuntKockSteeev** → Bogan Logan

• 3 days ago

I mean, that's true, but if the article said "two famous dullards, motivated by their ego and obliviousness mistakenly assumed investing in real estate would be a completely ethical way to increase their unethical fortunes", I'm sure someone would have objected anyway.

^ | v • Share ›

**Jen I** • 4 days ago

I am going to have to look for the gofund me page. This is just so awful.

6 ^ | v • Share ›

**willygreenbeard** • 4 days ago

The landlord is subhuman garbage. I hope Ryo wins a payday.

21 ^ | v • Share ›

**Spirit of 76** → willygreenbeard • 3 days ago

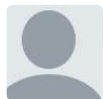
"Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated. Reports of my lawsuit sure as hell won't be."

8 ^ | v • Share ›

**Queen_Cake** • 4 days ago

This is *horrible*. Good God.

5 ^ | v • Share ›

**petekachu** • 4 days ago

It makes no sense. If someone went on vacation for 3 weeks they wouldn't change the locks and sell his stuff. Therefore they must have known something about his condition and assumed he was dead.

8 ^ | v • Share ›

**JamesD** → petekachu • 3 days ago

My thoughts, exactly

^ | v • Share ›

**TheLadyJAK** → petekachu • 3 days ago

Yes, they said he was found incapacitated by the building's super

^ | v • Share ›

**discogarage** • 4 days ago

This is a horrific story! My building was owned by michael cohen (I found out in the paper) & is now managed by Stonehenge - I wonder if A-Rod owns it now. It's been an LLC since my old landlord passed away.

3 ^ | v • Share ›

**Matt** • 4 days ago

It's almost as if Manhattan's a real estate investor's playground instead of a habitable place to live.

17 ^ | v • Share ›

**Reign-of-Drones** ➔ Matt • 3 days ago

Bingo.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

**gargupie** • 4 days ago

Don't they need a death certificate as proof? And now that he's alive and well, aren't they going to help him resettle down since it was their mistake? Disgusting...

5 ^ | v • Share ›

**Ninjahedge** • 3 days ago

*"They're referring to the property they stole from him as being 'salvageable' because **they're starting to build their case that his possessions weren't up to their standards,**"*

BS. He did not pay his rent on time, so they booted him ASAP.

65yo restaurant worker? Yeah, he's gone for sure!

Also, regardless of whether or not they felt that his place was salvageable, ANY documents should have been archived. Passports, family items like albums and the like, should have been boxed up and put in a storage facility until relatives were notified for pickup within a certain window (90 days?).

This isn't even dealing with the legality of the situation. This is just common (uncommon now) decency.

7 ^ | v • Share ›

**Golf Hard** • 3 days ago • edited

Arod owns "part of" an Avenue D building, what a loser. Dude got paid half a Billion (just in salary!) for playing baseball, that's plenty of money for even a gigantic moron to live off. Guess he wants to play businessman. Well have fun dude. Steve Croman,

Jared Kushner, Arod. Nice.

7 ^ | v • Share ›



Ninjahedge ➔ Golf Hard • 3 days ago

In all fairness:

1. Was it him that decided to do this, or was it an investment recommended by his financial manager/broker?
2. What is his stake in this? 80%? DO SOMETHING! 5%? Fugettaboutit... AND stop blaming him just because he is the biggest recognisable name remotely involved with this.

And because he split with J-Lo...

I think this is mainly a middle-management issue by individuals that had some stake (financially or otherwise) in this.

4 ^ | v • Share ›



gargupie ➔ Ninjahedge • 3 days ago

Splitting with J -Lo would be the lamest excuse.

^ | v • Share ›



Ninjahedge ➔ gargupie • 3 days ago

Lamest excuse to blame him for something he may have no more contact with than his broker investing in it?

Possibly.

I think just blaming him for BEING ARod is a bit lame too....

3 ^ | v • Share ›



Jude of Elfame ➔ Ninjahedge
• 3 days ago • edited

Whether he actually knows what he invested in or not, when you have stake in something, you're partially to blame if the people running that thing are committing what might boil down to a human rights violation. Don't put your name on something if you don't want to be associated with it.

2 ^ | v • Share ›



Ninjahedge ➔ Jude of Elfame
• 3 days ago

That is legal blame.

Did he emblazon "T" on it .

He also isn't Helmsley. (ick).

1 ^ | v • Share ›



Jude of Elfhame → Ninjahedge
• 3 days ago

I would argue it's also moral blame. We're not talking about a Joe Schmo who has ten shares of stock in a megacorp, we're talking about a person with money and power. What he does with it carries real consequences for real people.

2 ^ | v • Share ›



Golf Hard → Ninjahedge • 3 days ago

Just picking on an easy target. Especially since his baseball earnings are so well known. When you make a half billion dollars playing baseball, you have enough. Stop it already. People in Arod's position ought to spend the rest of their lives taking it easy, and trying to use their wealth to help people. I hate to count other people's money but people like Arod don't need to diversify, they don't need to grow their assets and all the crap, they need to calm the f down.

3 ^ | v • Share ›



gargupie → Golf Hard • 3 days ago

But he wants to quadruple his ego

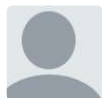
^ | v • Share ›



TheLadyJAK → Golf Hard • 3 days ago

Gotta invest that money so it's tied up and not taxable

^ | v • Share ›



Deputy Cartman • 3 days ago • edited

Welcome to Manhattan real estate, where you're treated as a hindrance to revenue generation to recoup investment, not a human being, please enjoy your stay.

If only there were a way to reach out to blood-gargling psychos about to go shoot up a grocery store with an AR-15 and... point them in the right direction. "Hey there WomenSuck420. Got