

# EXCLUSIVE: Tenants say landlord aide still harassing them

BY GREG B. SMITH

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State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman warned ex-cop Anthony Falconite to stop harassing rent-stabilized tenants of an East Harlem building. (KEN MURRAY/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS)

He's back.

A so-called "tenant relocater" ordered to stop harassing rent-stabilized residents for landlords who want them out is back at it, tenants allege.

A year ago, state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman warned ex-cop Anthony Falconite to stop the harassment or face penalties.

Tenants say Falconite had been barging into people's apartments, taking photos of their mail and following tenants to work in an effort to coerce them into leaving so owners could charge higher rent.

In July 2014, Schneiderman filed a "cease and desist" order against him, citing "a pattern of unlawful intimidation, deception and harassing conduct."

This week tenants at an East Harlem building say Falconite is again trying to intimidate them into taking buyouts they don't want.

The E. 108th St. building was purchased by landlord Steve Croman in August 2014, and rent stabilized tenants there say they were soon pressed to accept buyouts.

Teofilo Garcia Ayala, 35, said Falconite twice pushed his way into his family's apartment to pressure him on a buyout.



Teofilo Garcia Ayala said Falconite pushed his way into his family's apartment to pressure him on a buyout when his young children and home. From left to right: Felix, 14, Andy, 6 and Steven, 10, with their mother Bernarda Flores. (TOMAS E. GASTON)

"When he came the first time he came very aggressively. It was a form of interrogation," he said. "He demanded very loudly to know what my name was and then he saw that my wife was in the apartment and he demanded to know her name."

Falconite "wanted to be assured that we were the ones on the lease," then allegedly offered them \$6,000 to vacate, which Ayala rejected.

"My children were present. They were scared and they asked me 'what does this man want?'" he said.

Ayala and other tenants will rally with the housing advocacy group Movement for Justice in El Barrio outside their building Thursday demanding that Schneiderman end Falconite's campaign.

Melissa Grace, a spokeswoman for the AG, said, "If Mr. Falconite is engaging in the same reprehensible behavior that has already led this office to issue a cease and desist letter against him, we will follow up and take additional action."

Falconite's attorney, Edward Spiro, said "the allegations are without merit."

"Mr. Falconite is professional in his actions and undertakes his role in compliance with the law and the Office of the Attorney General's cease and desist letter," Spiro said in a statement.

