



The Voice of the West Village

WestView News

Unfinished: Croman's Trail Since Jail

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By Cynthia Chaffee and Mary Ann Miller

According to Joseph Turco's January 9th, 2020 article in WestView News, referring to the **American Greed** episode aired last year "starring" Steve Croman, we tend to agree. There is so much more for the program to cover about convicted felon Croman; we hope they will do a sequel as so much has happened in the last year since the show originally aired.

But not much has changed since Steve Croman's time in jail. In fact, he seems to have been emboldened as a consequence of serving so little time for his misdeeds. If anyone thinks that jail made a difference in Croman's life, think again. He's emerged with a new defiance, a new slew of lawyers, and a new company. In fact, on January 12th, 2018, while still in jail, Croman started the new company, **ECALP CORP.**, with the law firm Goldberg, Weprin, Finkel, Goldstein LLP. (ECALP is the word place spelled backwards.)

Also, in 2018 a fire at 204 East 13th Street caused all the tenants to become homeless and completely destroyed the business **Bruno Pizza**.

Two class action lawsuits have commenced against Steve Croman for illegally deregulating apartments—one lawsuit in Harlem at **326-338 East 100th Street** and another at **560-566 Hudson Street**. In several of his buildings tenants were forced to vacate their apartments because the bedrooms, built below street level, were deathtraps. Even though these rooms were never meant to be used for sleeping, but for "recreational" use only, as there is no egress to the street in case of emergency, Croman continues to fraudulently advertise these apartments' recreational rooms

to vacate their apartments because the bedrooms, built below street level, were deathtraps. Even though these rooms were never meant to be used for sleeping, but for “recreational” use only, as there is no egress to the street in case of emergency, Croman continues to fraudulently advertise these apartments’ recreational rooms as bedrooms.

Croman is trying to remove all negative publicity about himself and his family from the web, going so far as to have his lawyers offer an Uber driver money to agree to eradicate, and sell them the rights to his video **“Uber Attack—Rich kid Jake Croman filmed in foul mouth tirade in Michigan”** (that went viral) of son and heir Jake Croman shouting at the driver, “Minimum wage faggot.”

Despite all that is going on against Croman, as you can see, none of it has dampened his appetite for acquiring buildings. It’s reported that he **owns over 200 buildings**. But not satisfied, since his release from jail he has most recently acquired multiple buildings. 561-563-565-567 Hudson Street and 302-304 West 11th Street (which housed the White Horse Tavern) were purchased for a total of \$14 million dollars, in addition to his recent purchase of **340 East 58th Street** for \$12.3 million and 2154 Second Avenue for a little more than \$2 million.

That brings us to Croman’s latest ECALP CORP.’s endeavors, the purchasing of **354 East 19th Street**, 401- 409 East 59th Street, and possibly acquiring 84 Second Avenue and **100 Second Ave**.

It was reported in PincusCo that Croman Real Estate recently borrowed **\$45.8 million** from New York Community Bank for a multifamily property in Nolita, **\$34 million** from Axos Bank for a property on the Lower East Side, **\$16 million** from New York Community Bank for a multifamily building in the East Village, and **\$14 million** from New York Community Bank for property in the West Village. He paid **\$12 million** to Marlboro Realty Associates for a multifamily property in Midtown East and **\$2.1 million** for property in East Harlem. Croman was imprisoned for defrauding several banks; as New York Community Bank was one of them, why are they lending him money again for new properties?

As this article goes to print, Steve Croman is harassing the owners of the very fine Indian restaurant, Haveli, located at 100 Second Avenue, to coerce them into selling him their building at a price much below its actual worth. He refers to some unsigned and unnotarized right of first refusal to force the Haveli owners into selling to him, but the **Owners' Affidavit** denies signing any document and they have the original unsigned copy.

All these transactions amount to multimillions of dollars. American Greed reported Croman's net worth to be \$640 million dollars with an annual income of \$63 million dollars and that he is well on his way to becoming a billionaire. Yet he was allowed to make the court-ordered restitution of only \$8 million to some of his tenants in four installments over a period of several years. Why was he allowed to do this with such high earnings, as if it were a hardship for him to pay the required amount?

Since his release from jail on June 1, 2018, twenty of Croman's buildings have been returned to his control under a consent agreement, and he'll get twenty more this year.

We'd like the AG's office to begin another investigation into the tactics and business practices of Steve Croman. Once again it will be up to the tenants to present the Attorney General with the evidence to begin another investigation. Until that time, we are chronicling Croman's treatment of his tenants regarding rent overcharges, lease issues, no heat, hot water, gas service, or repairs, threats of eviction, frivolous lawsuits, harassment, etc.

We applaud the rent laws passed on June 14th, 2019. We applaud the State Assembly and Senate, and especially Senator Brian Kavanaugh, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development for passing the most pro-tenant laws of the last 30 years. We also thank State Senator Brad Hoylman for his constant support of tenants, and especially for the Stop Croman Coalition.

We have followed Steve Croman's trail since his incarceration, and we will continue to follow his activities. We hope his trail leads back to jail.

Cynthia Chaffee and Mary Ann Miller are co-founders of the Stop Croman Coalition.