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FAITH LEADERS AND TENANTS CITYWIDE CALL FOR AN END TO ABUSE BY INFAMOUS "WORST LANDLORD", CROMAN

Faith Leaders: Tenants Will Not Be Pushed Out
Respect Tenants' Rights

New York City, April 7, 2016

Tenants living in buildings citywide owned by abusive landlord Steve Croman – named twice by the Village Voice as one of the 10 Worst Landlords in NYC – and who have suffered threats, harassment and illegal rent increases at his hand have enlisted powerful new allies in their fight for justice. These tenants who refuse to stand by while their families are displaced have won the support of 31 faith leaders from across the five boroughs and beyond to denounce this unjust treatment and bring about change. **Faith leaders and tenants from Croman-owned buildings will deliver letters from the 31 faith leaders to Croman's office at 632 Broadway, 7th Fl (near Bleecker St.) on Thursday, April 7th at 1:30pm.**

In their letters, the 31 faith leaders from a broad array of denominations – including Catholic priests, rabbis, Buddhists, and Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Methodist, Unitarian and Interfaith ministers – exhort Croman to "treat your tenants with dignity and respect rather than pressuring them to leave their homes."

This landlord's underhanded tactics include threats of jacking up rents by hundreds of dollars coupled with pressure to take buyouts. Tenants who reject buyout offers have received bogus leases with illegal rent increases, a blatant attempt at removing apartments from rent stabilization. Croman is also known for baseless court actions and hazardous and toxic demolitions and renovations, tactics aimed at driving out long-term tenants. Religious leaders argue that Croman's abuses and tactics will have long-lasting effects as they "are resulting in the loss of critical rent regulated housing, which has a devastating impact on our communities by destroying the ethnic diversity and character of them."

Croman is currently under investigation by the New York State Attorney General for his efforts to push rent-stabilized tenants out of their homes. Despite action by the Attorney General against Croman's "tenant relocation specialist," Anthony Falconite, well-known for harassing Croman's tenants, this individual is still operating and pressuring tenants in buildings across New York City.

East Harlem tenant, Esperanza Figueroa, a member of Movement for Justice in El Barrio, is one of many who have suffered Croman's intimidation attempts and abuse. When Esperanza went to Croman's office to pay her rent, staff demanded that she sign a "Surrender Agreement" saying she would give up her apartment. When she refused, Croman illegally jacked the rent up by $300 a month on her new lease. Esperanza refused to sign and joined together with her neighbors and tenants in other Croman buildings to defend their rights as tenants. Esperanza, along with other members of Movement for Justice in El Barrio and members of the Cooper

Square Committee and are now joined in their efforts by a powerful grouping of faith leaders from multiple denominations and faiths reflecting the diverse backgrounds of tenants in Croman's over 185 buildings citywide. Figueroa says, "My family and I are staying in our home. This landlord is trying to scare us with threats, push us out of our community and sell it off to the highest bidder. With the support of priests, ministers, rabbis and other faith leaders, we're even stronger and we're not going anywhere."

George Tzannes, a tenant of 529 East 6th Street and a member of the Cooper Square Committee, who had been living without cooking gas in his building since December of 2014 (gas was just recently restored after a 15 month outage) said, "When Steven Croman bought the rent-regulated building where I've lived since 1974, the tenants immediately experienced aggravating rent billing errors, questionable legal fees, lost rent checks and baseless court actions. But the worst part is the way hazardous and toxic demolitions and renovations in vacant apartments push regulated tenants into buyouts. After years of living with toxic dust contamination from construction and enduring constant service cut-offs, anyone would want to leave."

These examples of Croman's abuse expose the landlord's true intentions: to force rent-stabilized tenants and their families from their homes, replacing them with people from outside their communities who can pay double and triple the rents, further contributing to gentrification in low-income neighborhoods. The 31 letters to Steven Croman end by saying "as the owner of over 185 buildings in New York City, you have a great responsibility to thousands of tenants and we implore you to take on this responsibility and respect the rights of your tenants".

Who: Faith leaders and tenants from Croman-owned buildings
What: Deliver 31 letters from faith leaders to landlord Steven Croman
When: Thursday, April 7th at 1:30pm
Where: Office of Steven Croman, 632 Broadway, 7th Fl (near Bleecker St)

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