

Incarcerated Croman Files Suit Against Caffè Vivaldi, Owner Says

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With controversial landlord Steve Croman mere days from prison release (next Sunday), one of his victims is speaking out. Not a resident, but the 35-year-old **Caffè Vivaldi** on Jones Street in the West Village. The long-running establishment has been threatened ever since Croman took over back in 2011 (<https://www.boweryboogie.com/2011/11/caffè-vivaldi-rent-plight-reaches-moveon-org/>).

Below is an update (<http://caffèvivaldi.com/blog/2018/4/4/an-update-from-ishrat>) to customers from embattled owner Ishrat Ansari, who recently suffered a stress-induced stroke. "I want to let you all know that Mr. Croman, a convicted felon, is taking us to court again, and we might be forced to close our doors," he says.

Dear Friends of Caffè Vivaldi,

It's been almost two years since my last update to all of you. Most of you do not know that for the last 20 months, I have been undergoing slow recovery from a stroke resulting after a long period of extreme and constant stress. My untimely stroke occurred two weeks before a crucial court hearing about the Caffè's future—that has continued to drag on to the present.

In 2011, my tormentor, Steven Croman, became the new owner of the building where Caffè Vivaldi resides. From the beginning, his conduct has been belligerent and illegal, unilaterally breaking the renewed lease, which commenced on January 1, 2012, that I signed with him for the Caffè Vivaldi space, and treating me with dismissive contempt.

My emotional distress reached its most damaging state as Mr. Croman's conduct towards me rose further and further above the law. The menace that Mr. Croman continues to pose threatens to destroy 35 years of history nurtured by Caffè Vivaldi in the West Village.

I am still not even close to full recovery, with many challenges ahead. My cognitive deficits especially have forced me to take a backseat in making decisions for the Caffè, and have prevented me from continuing to take full and strategic action against Mr. Croman.

I want to let you all know that Mr. Croman, a convicted felon, is taking us to court again, and we might be forced to close our doors.

As you might know, on February 27, 2013, New York State Civil Court Judge Lynn R. Kotler, declared Caffè Vivaldi to be a "cultural institution," and dismissed Mr. Croman's case against us, noting that in essence, Caffè Vivaldi had been partially evicted by the landlord from the space allowed in the lease. This ruling in essence helped us keep the vision and history of Caffè Vivaldi alive.

You have stood beside us on many occasions since Mr. Croman took over as landlord at 32 Jones Street. Over 5,000 of you have signed on to a petition to help us avoid an outrageous rent increase of almost 400%; you've supported us to soundproof the Caffè when we revamped our business strategy due to Croman's interference; and another 1,561 of you have rallied to our side during our ongoing civil lawsuits with Mr. Croman.

I and the Caffè Vivaldi family wish to thank you for your ongoing generous goodwill and support throughout the years. Over the next few weeks, we will keep you informed as things develop.

Thank you for keeping Caffè Vivaldi alive.

With love and gratitude,

Ishrat