

(<http://westviewnews.org>)

THIS MONTH ON WESTVIEW NEWS ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/THIS-MONTH-ON-WESTVIEW-NEWS/](http://westviewnews.org/this-month-on-westview-news/))

FEATURED ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/FEATURED/](http://westviewnews.org/featured/))

MONTHLY COLUMNS ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/MONTHLY-COLUMNS/](http://westviewnews.org/monthly-columns/))

EDITORIALS ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/EDITORIALS/](http://westviewnews.org/editorials/))

ARTICLES ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/ARTICLES/](http://westviewnews.org/articles/))

BRIEFLY NOTED ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/BRIEFLY/](http://westviewnews.org/briefly/))

WESTVIEWS ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/LETTERS-2/](http://westviewnews.org/letters-2/))

PHOTOS ([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/PHOTOS/](http://westviewnews.org/photos/))

› [BRIEFLY NOTED \(HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/BRIEFLY/\)](http://westviewnews.org/briefly/) › AMERICAN

GREED, STARRING STEVE CROMAN

([HTTP://WESTVIEWNEWS.ORG/2020/01/AMERICAN-GREED-STARRING-](http://westviewnews.org/2020/01/american-greed-starring-steve-croman/)

[STEVE-CROMAN/](http://westviewnews.org/2020/01/american-greed-starring-steve-croman/))

American Greed, Starring Steve Croman

📅 January 9, 2020 📖 Briefly Noted (<http://westviewnews.org/briefly/>)

Steve Croman appeared on national television last year and again on repeat television in late 2019, but probably not in the way he might've hoped. The long-running syndicated television show American Greed examined the con game the “Madoff of Landlords” was playing when he was charged in a broad case that included, among other things, mortgage fraud, wire fraud and tenant harassment. The show's storyline is well written enough, but it feels unfinished.

American Greed did a decent job describing the

dedication and commitment of the lawyers from the office of the New York Attorney General who prosecuted Mr. Croman. The AG had gotten wind of Croman's practice of using ex-NYPD cops, possibly high on steroids, to instill fear among Croman's tenants using all manner of threats. In the criminal case it brought, however, the government traded in twenty felonies for a short jail sentence and a fine. That's called plea bargaining.

To appreciate such a modest victory, one must know of the historically unprosecuted landlord crimes and misdeeds that occur every day in New York City. A jail sentence is almost never rendered upon a landlord, so nine months in Rikers is considered by many to be something like a baby step toward justice. The jail term, however, was served for Croman's mortgage fraud, not for what he did to his tenant-victims. The bankers got their pound of flesh first. Croman was released from prison last year, but the civil aspects of his misdeeds are ongoing.

The civil case brought against Croman at the same time as the criminal case was also settled at the same time, as part of "one global settlement," which had

been the declared legal strategy of defense counsel Benjamin Brafman from the outset. Brafman demanded and got a million-dollar retainer from Croman for that service.

Having the means to make restitution goes a long way in easing the burden of a conviction. Croman has been made to pay over eight million dollars into a fund to be administered by a referee who has been fielding tenant claims and authorizing payouts.

The tenants, many of whom were transformed into

activists by their circumstances, gave compelling testimony. But the backstory segment of this American Greed episode really missed a chance to expose Croman as merely one of hundreds of similar degenerate landlords in our city. Exploring the pattern and practice of how landlords and their lawyers game the system would have been a public service. Instead, American Greed producers closed the segment with a YouTube video of Croman's son cursing out an Uber driver with the pathetic "Do you know who I am?" routine. It was both vile and viral.

Two things are now certain: 1) Croman will remain on the Attorney General's "Worst Landlords" list for some time; 2) his son, like an apple falling close to the tree, will likely inherit a business virtually unchanged by his father's sins. And get this: when he got out of jail, the very bank he defrauded loaned him the dough to buy the White Horse Tavern!

As for American Greed, I hope it runs repeats of this Croman episode forever so that Greenwich Village will never forget what this landlord did and how he and his family have shown zero remorse.

—*Joseph Turco, Esq.*

*The writer is a trial lawyer. jatlaw2001@yahoo.com
(<mailto:jatlaw2001@yahoo.com>)*

Like

(/##tumblr)

(/##twitter)