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## [Living in a Croman Building](#)

[Published September 2015](#)

They start by trying to intimidate you as soon as they buy the building. They come to your door and tell you none of your leases are valid, that they have taken over the building and that all the leases were invalid if they were issued before they bought it out of foreclosure. They get a lot of their buildings this way.

Then if you are educated to the law and the state and you know your lease is valid, they offer a cheap buyout right away. One of their employees will come to the door and offer a 10K buyout, cash. They did this to numerous tenants in the many buildings I know of.

Then if you have kids and a family, like I do, they corner your wife and children and say that they aren't supposed to live there and that their lease is not valid. This tactic completely instills fear and trepidation. In my case it put a huge strain on my relationship with my son's mother. This is exactly what they intended by this kind of harassment. They also start and engage in verbal fights and seem to relish doing this around the wife and kids to instill more fear. They have investigators come around and bang on your door. The investigator says he is from the fire department or police department and is "investigating you and if you can live here." He is really pushy and insists he has the right to come into your apartment at any time—day or night. Then when you push back, he threatens to have you evicted.

Then when they start renovating they start to cave-in every rent stabilized tenant ceiling if possible. They will leave water running in the above apartment and throw trash down the walls from the above apartment. In our case, all the existing rent stabilized tenants' ceilings collapsed. At one point or another in a seven month period my ceiling actually was purposely caved in three times—while my son, seven years old at the time, was below. Five other tenants had their ceilings caved-in at least once. They never fix anything until the Department of Housing is involved and it takes some time to get the Department involved. The construction that they do is extremely loud and dusty, taking minimal precautions needed to protect the common areas, stairwells, etc. And they will work into the evening, way past working hours. They would leave music blaring in unoccupied apartments to bother tenants and then use that information to try and turn the tenants against each other

They are really just horrible people. It goes on and on, as I'm sure you have read. They go so far as to hire "private investigators" who would lurk around the building waiting for us to come outside to harass us again and ask if we were ready yet to take a buy out—basically anything to intimidate and threaten.

I am lucky enough to have been able to afford an attorney to fight them, but even with an attorney protecting me they seemed to not care—as if nothing could touch them in any way. They don't seem to care about the rule of law at all. I managed to fight them as best as I could over the last four years. I can't imagine that they have been allowed to act this way for so long with out any real consequences. Also, they refuse to renew leases or file with the DHCR unless court ordered. Actually, they don't do anything that they are required to do unless forced by the courts. At that point most of the rent stabilized tenants have already given in, given up and left the building in fear.

It sounds really bleak but this is the way they operate. It is amazing that they have such a systematic way of harassing tenants until they finally just cave-in and leave.

There is so much more that happened, but I can't remember it all. I guess the biggest thing I learned though my ordeal with the Cromans is that they really don't care about laws or fines or anything like that. It appears as if they can take the hit of a 10K fine. I mean what's a 10K fine going to do to them if they turn an apartment from rent stabilized to free market and make much more than that in profit? I know at least three quarters of the apartments in our building were bought out and converted from stabilized to free market apartments. A couple fines here and there really don't matter to a guy who owns one hundred buildings. The economics seem to be that the enforcement and fines are tiny compared to the actual bank loan profit. Hopefully this will change one day, but this is just my opinion about the problem of enforcement for bottom feeder landlords.

Thank you.

James Marion Peterson