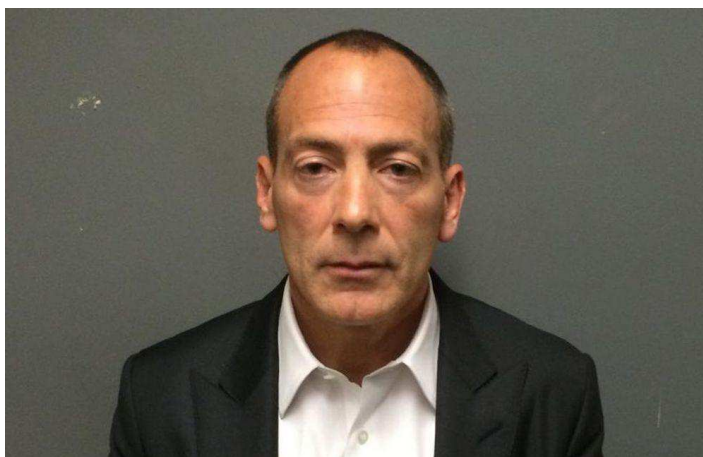


BEDFORD + BOWERY

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NEWS

Notorious Landlord Steve Croman Sentenced to a Year in Rikers, Which 'Ain't Exactly the Ritz'



Steven Croman (Photo from the Office of the Attorney General)

Steve Croman has been sentenced to a year in prison and ordered to pay a \$5 million fine— an almost unheard-of punishment for a Manhattan landlord.

The sentence was delivered earlier today after Croman, who owns property in the East Village and Lower East Side, pled guilty to multiple counts of mortgage and tax fraud related to his 140 buildings.

“I hope you spend your time thinking about those who you harmed,” said Judge Jill Konviser, of New York City Criminal Court, noting that Rikers “ain’t exactly the Ritz.”

The sentencing was welcomed by those in attendance, including activists belonging to anti-Croman groups such as the [Stop Croman Coalition](#) and [Good Old Lower East Side](#). However, Croman continues to avoid accusations that he engaged in a campaign of harassment targeting tenants in rent controlled apartments.

When Croman emerged from the elevator, photographers quickly moved to snap photos of him. His eyes widened slightly as flashes went off, and one of the two smartly dressed defense attorneys accompanying him took him by

the arm and led him into the courtroom. After Croman declined an opportunity to comment, Judge Konviser urged him to spend time “thinking about the religious principles that this case was postponed for,” a reference to the succession of Jewish holidays that had delayed his sentencing so he could spend them with his family.

In May of last year, tenants and activists who had long been protesting Croman attempted to **deliver a letter of condemnation** from 32 religious figures who objected to the landlord’s practices.

State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman charged that Croman fraudulently received over \$45 million in loans by lying about the rental income of his properties, telling lenders that he was receiving market rate rent from rent-stabilized units.

According to the Attorney General’s lawsuit, Croman’s companies performed construction without proper permits at least 175 times and he told employees to disregard the orders of building inspectors. “When the rent controlled tenant moved out below me, he gut renovated,” said Michael Jasz, a Corman tenant, at the sentencing. “He tore out the walls and my apartment got filled with dust.”

The city’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found dust levels in excess of the legal threshold over 20 times, according to the Attorney General’s office.

Jasz shared a story about his next-door neighbor: “A friend of theirs was staying there for a few days and had a dog. The silica dust was in water puddles, the dog licked it up and died three days latter.”



Activists and tenants assembled outside of the courthouse. (Image by Diego Lynch)

A civil suit, also filed by Schneiderman, alleges that Croman used a retired New York City policeman to intimidate tenants into taking buyouts in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and East Harlem.

“One time he sent this ex-police officer, who went into the apartment without permission,” said Luiz Cortes, describing the alleged harassment. “He was giving orders and started asking for ID.”

The ex-cop, Anthony Falconite, illegally entered apartments, read tenant’s mail, and followed them to their jobs to interview colleagues, the suit alleges.

State Senator Brad Hoylman said in a statement that he was “elated to see justice finally served. This sends a clear message to landlords: Respect rent-regulated tenants or face the consequences– including jail time.”

After being sentenced, Croman was handcuffed and lead out of the room by court officers.

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