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Thursday, June 04, 2015

Johs

## Two tenants keep up constant fight vs. Croman

November 13, 2014 | Filed under: News | Posted by: The Villager



Cynthia Chaffee and her husband, Peter, inside their E. Sixth St. apartment, where she stores her voluminous files on her landlord, Steven Croman. Photo by Gerard Flynn

**BY GERARD FLYNN** | Mary Ann Miller, a host on WBAI radio, recently recalled an encounter she had this year with landlord Steven Croman's "private investigator" Anthony Falconite.

As she was coming down the stairs of her building on Prince St., Miller heard a terrible disturbance heading her way.

"Someone was pounding really heavy with the flat side of his fist yelling, 'I have to get in here. I'm an independent contractor. I have to check the plumbing,' " she recalled.

"My neighbors are Chinese and their English is very limited and were scared to death," she said. But Miller, whose tenant activism goes back to 1970, was not.

Falconite's job, she said, was to frighten tenants, then offer them a low amount of money to move.

"I said to him, 'What are you doing and why are you doing this?'"

The bulky ex-cop, when asked by Miller to produce credentials, refused, she said. Instead he turned around, "furiously yelling all the way down the stairs."

This alleged incident wasn't Falconite's first job for Croman, who is currently being probed by state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office, possibly for using illegal tactics to oust tenants in rent-stabilized buildings. In July, the A.G.'s office slapped the Croman goon with a cease-and-desist order, and he "has now been assigned to desk duty," Miller chuckled.

"He did this to the elderly, mostly to people who couldn't speak English," she said. "He terrorized them."

Falconite has also been known to push the door open, force himself inside, then photograph everything around him.

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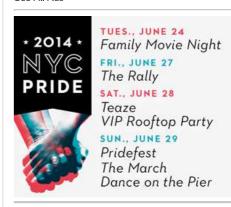
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According to a Croman spokesperson, Falconite denies ever having met Miller.

Miller was involved in the first Stop Croman Coalition, which died. Five years ago, its second incarnation was born when she was hosting a feminist program on WBAI and got a call from Cynthia Chaffee, another distressed tenant of Steve Croman.

Chaffee, who uses crutches, had been battling Croman in and out of Housing Court since he took over her rent-regulated apartment building on E. Sixth St. in May 1999, clearing out most regulated tenants in the process.

She's been to court with him eight times, alleging, among other things, a flood of water pouring down the ceiling light onto the front room floor, plus no heating or hot water.

"She wanted to restart the Stop Croman Coalition," Miller recalled. Despite their failing at first try to revive the group, the two women later met up with 70 Croman tenants on, of all days, July 14, Bastille Day.

"I thought it was a good day to begin a fight," Miller mused. But the momentum eventually slowed down as the "horrendous stories" of "aggressive harassment" began to build up: no heat or hot water, aggressive buyouts, etc.

"You name it he was doing it," Miller said.

But the coalition's second coming struggled with declining support from Croman's tenants. Chaffee and Miller, however, will never forget the efforts of state Senator Brad Hoylman and his predecessor, Tom Duane, whose work on their behalf they praised.

The Stop Croman Coalition recently made a third comeback. The group now numbers about two dozen dedicated members, with about half of them doing the demanding work of documenting harassment and identifying Croman's large property portfolio throughout the city.

The likelihood of their future success could hinge on the A.G.'s investigation. Both women have been visited by members of Schneiderman's office, which declined to discuss the ongoing investigation with The Villager.

Chaffee is currently in Housing Court with Croman.

Like Miller, she is not afraid to face down her deep-pocketed and well-connected foe. Croman is a philanthropist and Democratic Party donor.

"I have had open-heart surgery — that I am afraid of. But not Croman," she said. "He's a punk. With all my heart and soul, I will not stop until they put a stop to him because what he has done to people is horrible."

Driving around the city for years and researching online, they have compiled a list of his citywide portfolio, which at last count, numbers more than 180 buildings. Chaffee also boasts a room half filled with files on his properties.

Chaffee wants to know why Croman has for years been allowed to get work permits from the Department of Buildings, when for years he has owed the agency an allegedly huge sum in unpaid fines for violations.

Both women hope the attorney general's investigation will yield some results and perhaps even prison time for Croman. But they dismissed the recently amended Tenant Protection Act, cosponsored by City Councilmember Margaret Chin and Jumaane Williams. Miller described the act as "timid." A \$10,000 fine, she said, is hardly a deterrent for the likes of Croman, a view some in legal services share.

"They don't pay their fines, now," Chaffee said. "He owes almost a million in fines, not including sanitation fines or tax liens. It's unbelievable."

Few landlords have been fined by Housing Court judges since the act was passed in 2008 — "possibly" 42 out of 3,200 cases brought by tenants, according to Department of Housing Preservation and Development records.

As a veteran of Housing Court, Chaffee said, "A court case drags on for more than a year because landlords want to wear tenants down emotionally and financially."

As if that wasn't enough, then "there is blacklisting," she said, referring to a disputed move by Housing Court, which places tenants' action in Housing Court on a nationwide database, thus affecting a prospective tenant's credit rating and likelihood of being offered another apartment.

On a final note, Chaffee described the case of another tenant of Croman's, an elderly man living Uptown who, like her, had open-heart surgery.

"They knew he was sick and vulnerable and recuperating," she said, adding they stopped depositing his rent checks.

After more than a year of threats of court action, "he caved in," she said, leaving behind a potentially lucrative seven-room apartment, and is now a resident of the Salvation Army somewhere uptown.

In a statement, a spokesperson for 9300 Realty, Croman's company, said: "We provide high-quality, reliable housing for New Yorkers and prioritize the safety and well-being of our tenants above all else. These two individuals are part of a small group of tenants who have a long history of litigation and making unfounded accusations about conditions in our buildings.

"It is our company policy to promptly address and make repairs wherever they are needed, or when



requested. Our ratio of violations per unit is very low and the majority of the ones that remain open are due to the tenant's refusal to grant us access to make repairs. "We are proud of the work we have done to beautify and maintain our buildings, which include several historically significant properties in the Village and East Village." The Villager encourages readers to share articles: Tweet | 5 | **S+1** | 0 Like 20 people like this. Be the first of your friends. Advertisers from our print edition Coupons Deals Brands Advertisers A-Z Ads Search I'm searching for... Comments are often moderated. We appreciate your comments and ask that you keep to the subject at hand, refrain from use of profanity and maintain a respectful tone to both the subject at hand and other readers who also post here. We reserve the right to delete your comment.

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 $\max_{555} \cdot 28$  weeks ago

+7

"In a statement, a spokesperson for 9300 Realty, Croman's company, said: "We provide high-quality, reliable housing for New Yorkers and prioritize the safety and well-being of our tenants above all else. These two individuals are part of a small group of tenants who have a long history of litigation and making unfounded accusations about conditions in our buildings." bwah ha ha ha, the most childish boldfaces lie, like when you catch a 3 year old doing something and they deny it, Croman and his henchmen are human scum, the suffering they have caused innocent people to suffer is imeassurable I can only hope that all they have given they get back four-fold

#### Reply



Anon · 28 weeks ago

+6

Despicable. Why as Croman been allowed to operate for so long?

Reply 3 replies · active 28 weeks ago



harold · 28 weeks ago

+6

The article writes: "It is our company policy to promptly address and make repairs wherever they are needed, or when requested.

Comment...if you have been monitoring hpd web site for croman buildings of tenant complaint these past 2-3 years you will noticed that his favorite building with 99% seniors and asian (that building they documented in vv nyc 10 worst landlord and vv there goes the neighborhood between 1998-2000) Those rc apts in order to get repair they have to call in hpd inspector to 1st get the problem documented and use hpd as their witness that such needed repair do exist. And follow if you are lucky if repair is done. if you look closely some apt for the same repair they are calling in 2x, 3x still no repair.

Reply 1 reply · active 28 weeks ago



Michael · 28 weeks ago

+6

Let's say it was small group. Does that mean the numbers aren't higher of people harassed by the Croman machine? This article might benefit from some solid research. 900 cases brought to housing court. Who pays for the judges salaries, you and me. Sad that you end your article with statements from 9300 realty maligning the Stop Croman Coalition. The numbers are growing.

Reply 1 reply · active 27 weeks ago



Rev. Glenn · 28 weeks ago

+7

Having just been evicted by the Croman's from our rent stabilized apartment in Hell's Kitchen where we lived for 30 years peacefully before they put in a bar two years ago, no doubt with the intent to drive us out by the

unending noise (never answering our pleas to sound proof the old tenement), they will now be getting \$3,000 /month once its renovated; any way you look at it, its blood money they donate to their charities! Never mind being harassed by their thug at our spiritual retreat to "take a buy out or face eviction," facing the court system where there was no place for Truth to be heard, was even more threatening (and I am still waiting for an answer why the SLA allowed that bar to operate as a cabaret with such a license). One has to wonder, what has become of Humanity? Cynthia Chaffee did more to assist us in our struggle to keep our home, than any legal aid group; for the Cromans to trash her like that is believable, but who can believe anyone who owes close to a million dollars in fines to the city and gets away with it?

#### Reply



 $SCC \cdot 28$  weeks ago

+5

The STOP CROMAN COALITION ("SCC") - Part 1

There are many more than "Two Tenants" fighting Croman.

Each day the STOP CROMAN COALITION gets phone calls and emails from desperate tenants of Steve and Harriet Croman who feel they have no where to turn, facing constant harassment permit-less renovations, living in constant toxic dust, dirt, grime, muck and unbearable noise, some having the floors between apartments crack open, where tenants can look through the cracks into the apartment below. Bedbugs, vermin and rats, Ceilings falling down on people more times than you can imagine, chronic leaks, water pouring through the electric light fixtures, constant no heat and no hot water & many days of no water at all, with no notice and without even time to fill a milk jug with water so you can wash you face in the morning, no notices are posted downstairs and if a memo is posted the elderly & infirm who don't go out often do not know what's going on, requests for repairs are not made.

#### Reply



SCC · 28 weeks ago

+5

#### STOP CROMAN COALITION ("SCC") - Part 2.

There's illegal roof decks, illegal basement apartments, doors where windows were leaving to make-shift roof decks, fires, robberies, abusive supers, nasty and rude property managers, illegal hotels, prostitution, renting to "psychics" and "massage parlors" that encourage "drop-ins" at any time of the day or night, along with Croman renting commercial spaces to "Noisy Cabarets and Bars" that make life unbearable to the tenants living in the building above. Also the Cromans take tax abatement money to not deregulate apartments and deregulate them none-the-less. In addition to this, rent security deposits are not returned, leases are not renewed, some rent checks are not cashed, and market rate tenants have their rent increased hundreds of dollars after their lease expires.

Reply 1 reply · active 27 weeks ago



SCC · 28 weeks ago

+5

#### STOP CROMAN COALITION ("SCC") - Part 3

Using the courts and their attorneys to harass tenants with over a thousand lawsuits - most of them frivolous to exhaust the tenants both emotionally and financially, tenants are framed to lose the case and are perjured upon by the Cromans and their lawyers, who bring in paid workers to falsely testify against tenants by fabricating stories, submitting false evidence and fraudulent sworn affidavits and they lie and perjury in court papers and on the witness stand.

To create their "Signature Look," entrance ways, hallways, and staircases are demolished and tenants live with contaminated dust dirt, demolition noise like living in a war zone, open front doors creating a safety hazard, all so that the Croman's buildings can look uniform and the tenants suffer, all to ensure their "Signature Look."

And yet a spokesperson for 9300 says: "We are proud of the work we have done to beautify and maintain our buildings..."

Reply 2 replies · active 27 weeks ago



SCC · 28 weeks ago

+4

### STOP CROMAN COALITION ("SCC") - Part 4

All of the above and this is just the tip of the iceberg, in answer to your demeaning article of tenant activism. We could enumerate a lot more.

The Village Voice had the guts and courage to have created and published a list of the top 10 worst Landlord's with Steve Croman topping the list. Perhaps the Villager should start a list of their own and we have a candidate to head their list.

The STOP CROMAN COALITION, united and growing.

Reply 2 replies · active 27 weeks ago



Mary Ann Miller · 28 weeks ago

+4

Your article stating "Two tenants keep a constant fight vs. Croman," I'm one of the two.

Firstly, I have never been to court with Steve Croman. Secondly, the Stop Croman Coalition is alive and well in NYC. Thirdly your article does not let facts get in the way of the truth.

To quote a very long time ago tenant activist, Esther Rand concerning landlords

"They are not the lords of the land, but the Scum of the earth."

The struggle continues.... Mary Ann Miller

#### Reply



Cynthia Chaffee · 28 weeks ago

+4

Two Tenants Keep up Constant Fight vs. Croman (part 1)

Concerning your recent article in the Villager, "Two Tenants Keep Up Constant Fight vs. Croman "first of all: the Chaffees do not live on 6th street, but rather on East 18th street. There are many more inaccuracies in this article concerning Steve Croman and the Stop Croman Coalition and several facts need to be corrected.

Neither Ms. Miller nor myself were ever involved in the first Croman Tenants Group that met at Cooper Square, nor do we know why it fell apart, even though we have our suspicions. Another bit of misinformation in this article is that in 2007, I heard the program on WBAI, "ARTISTS AS ACTIVISTS" hosted by Mary Ann Miler. It was definitely not a "Feminist Program," as the reporter states, it was a "Housing Program" concerning the tenants of 47 E. 3rd Street facing eviction by the Economakis family. The theme of the program was not only that the city would be losing rent regulated apartments, but the artists, painters and poets, film-makers, actors, singers, and writers would also be lost to New York.

#### Reply



Cynthia Chaffee  $\cdot$  28 weeks ago

+4

Two tenants Keep up Constant Fight vs. Croman (part 2)

One of the guests on her program, David Pultz, suggested that I listen to the interview and get in touch with Ms. Miller, which I did, and during our conversation the STOP CROMAN COALITION was founded and has progressed continuously culminating in the ongoing investigation by the New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a Cease and Desist Order issued to Anthony Falconite, and a Manhattan Elected Officials Public Statement on the Attorney General's investigation into Landlord Steve Croman.

#### Reply



Cynthia Chaffee · 28 weeks ago

+4

Two Tenants Keep up Constant Fight vs. Croman (part 3)

The STOP CROMAN COALITION was created on "Bastille Day," July 14, 2007 over the phone with Ms. Miller and myself, and this SCC has persevered and flourished. There were not 70 people that day, only Ms. Miller and myself, but a subsequent meeting we held did bring out 70 very angry Croman tenants. We NEVER failed at our first try, as was incorrectly reported, but our first and only STOP CROMAN COALITION has persevered to this day. There was never a "3rd comeback." After meeting in small places the SCC got too big and needed a large public space, so we hooked up with GOLES, because the majority of Croman's buildings are in the 10009 zip code. But it is still the original STOP CROMAN COALITION, that we founded on July 14, 2007, and we now have a SCC Hell's Kitchen Branch, and our soon to be SCC Harlem Branch is also in the making.

#### Reply



Cynthia Chaffee · 28 weeks ago

+4

Two Tenants Keep up Constant Fight vs. Croman (part 4)

The SCC has been in effect continuously since 2007, and the coalition has been growing consistently since that time. We will continue the battle until we win and the Croman's total harassment and disregard of the law and of their tenants is fully exposed, that he is forced to correct violations and pay his fines, totaling almost a million dollars

The Croman spokesperson falsely states: "These two individuals have a long history of litigation and making 'unfounded accusations' about conditions in our buildings." The public record is there and available. Violations existed and still do. The Croman's mantra is "the tenant's refusal to grant us access." It's very difficult to deny the workers access to make repairs when they don't show up, so they twist the blame on the tenants. Other Croman tenants and myself were repeatedly dragged into housing court by the Cromans for cases we didn't initiate. I had to enforce repairs with an HP action.

### Reply



Mary Ann Miller · 28 weeks ago

+5

Two Tenants Keep up Constant Fight vs. Croman (part 5)

It is amusing that with regards to Croman's in-house private investigator, Anthony Falconite, who was issued a "Cease and Desist Order" by New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, the reporter states that "Falconite denies ever having met Miller." How could Mr. Falconite remember anyone since he's harassed so many people? I would find it hard to keep track also.

As far as the Croman's "Philanthropic Works" or deeds, they owe almost a million dollars to the City of New York; any of the Cromans' Philanthropic Deeds are most likely paid for by his default on city fines. It is easy to give away money when it's not yours; it belongs to the taxpayers of New York.

The Villager's caption: "They can't stop fighting Croman"... We won't stop fighting him until he is no longer a threat or in a position to harass and destroy the lives of not only the rent regulated tenants but those paying market rate as well.

Cynthia Chaffee

#### Reply



ANON · 28 weeks ago

+4

#### 6/4/2015

It is really misleading to give the last word to the landlord. And WHO is this spokesperson and why wasn't that person identified? Those Croman tenants Mary Ann Miller & Cynthia Chaffee were both named, so why wasn't this person for 9300 identified in this article?

It is unconscienceable that Steve Croman should have the last word.

You didn't do your homework and we find your article totally inaccurate and inadequate.

Reply 2 replies · active 28 weeks ago



Cynthia Chaffee · 28 weeks ago

+5

RE: The Spokesperson for 9300 (part 1)

We have identified the "Spokesperson for Steve Croman and 9300 Realty," and it is one Kelly Magee. She now works for Phil Singer, in his public relations firm, hired by the Cromans, "Marathon Strategies," which specializes in making unsavory characters look good, they call it "Crisis Management."

In his website, Phil Singer describes himself as a "veteran political strategist and public relations expert," who was senior advisor & consultant to Andrew Cuomo's campaign for governor, as well as counsel for Chuck Schummer 2000-2006, top official for Hillary Clinton's presidential bid, national spokesperson for the Kerry-Edwards campaign, and also for Congressman Steve Rothman and Senator Robert Torricelli.

Ms. Magee began her career working for the notorious pro-landlord paper, the NY Post, no doubt honing her anti-tenant skills.

cont....

#### Reply



Cynthia Chaffee · 28 weeks ago

+5

RE: The Spokesperson for 9300 (part 2)

Before her stint at the Post, Ms. Magee was "Communication Director" for NYC Council Member Margaret Chin, and "helped deliver major victories in land use development projects through out lower Manhattan."

Ms. Magee previously worked as the Press Secretary, as Chief Spokesperson for the NYC Department of Buildings, an agency where coincidentally the Cromans owes almost a million dollars in unpaid ECB fines & DOB is reluctant to enforce and collect.

Now Kelly Magee is the public relations spokesperson for Steve and Harriet Croman and their entities 9300 Realty and Croman Real Estate, and her job as the Croman's hired gun is to publically shield and distance the Cromans from bad publicity - to discredit tenants - and diminish our coalition.

Kelly Magees's defense of the manner in which Steve & Harriet Croman operates and maintains their buildings leaves a lot to be desired and it's her job! She gets paid to say this.

#### Reply



Anon · 28 weeks ago

+5

Had the author of this article bothered to do his job, he would have discovered that the SCC is growing in numbers each and every day and its' reach goes from LES to HK to Harlem and on. Also, had the author done his homework, he would have discovered that Croman buildings are full of "Immediately Hazardous" and "Major" DOB ECB violations. In fact, some of those violations are even considered "aggravated", which is HUGE.

#### Reply



SCC · 28 weeks ago

+5

Perhaps Gerard Flynn and Croman's PR folks should check out the Yelp reviews of 9300 Realty. They are the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth...well minus the few staged ones by 9300 Realty staffers.

Reply 1 reply · active 28 weeks ago



Oh please · 28 weeks ago

+5

Their liberal leanings and donations to charity. Oh please. My best guess is the reason donations are made is so they can decieve people into believing they are not pathologically greedy. Or to gain favor from law enforcement and politicians who should have dealt firmly with them much, much sooner. It has absolutely nothing with generosity. All the while they tell the reporter how decent they are they continue to do the kinds of things that have triggered an investigation by the Attorney General. The fact is Croman invented hubris and simply can't stop himself. He really believes he's not going to prison. It's just amazing.

Reply 2 replies · active 17 weeks ago



anon · 28 weeks ago

+4

The Cromans are trying to buy respectability but it will never work. Their charitable donations are BLOOD MONEY from tenants they tortured. They'll superfically give money to a cancer fund, while at the same time they doubled the rent on a family suffering with a beautiful young child suffering with cancer. You can read about it here. http://evgrieve.com/2012/10/despite-plea-landlord...

Steve and Harriet Croman harassed and EVICTED 23 Families out of 2 entire buildings to make an Obscene Mega Mansion for themselves at 12-14 East 72nd st. It's been empty over a decade and they still haven't moved

#### 6/4/2015

in and all those tenants lost their homes. Poster Boy for Landord Greed, Sociopaths with a depraved indifference to their tenants, socialite wannabes. May their own greed devour them.

Reply 1 reply · active 27 weeks ago



You won a MINUS - 15 · 28 weeks ago

+3

Congraulations Oh Please - You have just won a MINUS - 15 from the Cromans and their Cromanites!

Obviously Croman does not like your comment..." He really believes he's not going to prison. "
Let's hope both he and his equally criminal wife both go to the slammer, (eventhough prison is too good for
the likes of them). There's a place awaiting them in the bowels of hell. Just look at how many minuses there
are respoding to your insightful response. You really rattled their feathers. Croman must have his entire office
clicking away today. Hi Kelly, Tony, Oren, Annabelle, Brenda, Michael & Warren, are you all having fun?

#### Reply



 $guest \cdot 28 \ weeks \ ago$ 

+4

Whatever the motivation of the writer, it's still obvious that the Croman Empire is nothing but a greedy, sick corporation which is finally being investigated. So glad to learn of this development. Although I have not had direct dealings with Croman, I know several people who had the misfortune to end up with him as their landlord. So his time has come...

#### Reply



Jan · 28 weeks ago

+4

I would not want to be Croman, his wife or his staff right now. Wait until they uncover it all-this isn't the half of it

Reply

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