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Christian Belanger, Director of Press Relations
Cook County Assessor's Office
773-343-9050 | christian.belanger@cookcountyil.gov

Cook County Assessor's Office Hosts *Black Tax* discussion at National Public Housing Museum

Full recording now available to view on CCAO YouTube channel

Cook County – As part of its ongoing Racial Equity and Real Estate conversation series, the Cook County Assessor's Office (CCAO) hosted a panel discussion on Wednesday, May 22, about *The Black Tax*, a new history that shows how inequitable assessments and predatory practices within the property tax system enriched speculators and removed poor people from their homes.

"At every turn, African Americans have been dealing with a local tax system that has consistently and relentlessly overassessed the homes and neighborhoods where African Americans live," said *Black Tax* author and University of Virginia professor **Andrew Kahrl**. "And at the same time, those tax systems have underserved those very same communities. This is a problem that, in particular, has been linked and traced to the history of homeownership in Chicago."

Other participants on the panel, which was held at the National Public Housing Museum, 625 N. Kingsbury St., included **Fritz Kaegi**, Cook County Assessor; **Frank J. Williams**, Managing Director of F.J. Williams Realty; **Tracey Scott**, Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Housing Authority; **Christopher Berry**, University of Chicago professor; and moderator **Arionne Nettles**, a lecturer and director of audio journalism programming at Northwestern University.

A recording of the conversation is now available to view on the CCAO's [YouTube channel](#).

In addition to highlighting the history of racial dispossession within the property tax system, the discussion also focused on reforms at the CCAO under Assessor Kaegi.

"What we realized is that we could not take the software and the systems that were already there and apply them again. Because that was where some of the bias was – it was built into the software, it was built into the methods, it was built into the processes," said Assessor Kaegi. "We had to rebuild it soup to nuts and show our work."

Professor Berry, whose work on assessment disparities informed the award-winning Chicago Tribune and ProPublica Illinois series "[The Tax Divide](#)," said that forthcoming research from his office shows substantial progress has been made in reforming assessments within Cook County.

"Give credit where it's due, the improvements have been absolutely remarkable on residential equity in Cook County," Berry said. "To put it in simple terms, about 75 to 80 percent of regressivity has been repaired. That's just absolutely remarkable in such a short span of time."

The Black Tax is currently for sale through the University of Chicago Press and can be purchased [here](#).



Pictures from the event can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

For more information about the Racial Equity and Real Estate conversation series, including recordings of past events, visit www.cookcountyassessor.com/racial-equity-and-real-estate-conversations.