



**National  
Public Housing  
Museum**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 10, 2025

## **NATIONAL PUBLIC HOUSING MUSEUM SELECTS OPEN MIKE EAGLE AS 2026 ARTIST AS INSTIGATOR**

*Residency Begins With Public Interview and Performance December 4, 2025*

**Chicago, Illinois** (November 10, 2025)—The **National Public Housing Museum**, the first museum dedicated to telling the stories and sharing the history of public housing in the United States, today announced Chicago-born hip-hop artist **Open Mike Eagle** as its seventh **Artist as Instigator**. The year-long residency, which combines art and advocacy to make creative public policy interventions around housing-related issues, kicks off with a public event at the National Public Housing Museum (919 S. Ada Street, Chicago) on Thursday, December 4, 2025, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, where Eagle will share early plans for his project and give a performance.



*Open Mike Eagle; photo credit Robert Adam Mayer*

Eagle is known for weaving personal history, humor, and social commentary into work that feels intimate and expansive at once. After releasing *Neighborhood Gods Unlimited* (Auto Reverse Records) earlier this year, he was praised as “one of the pillars of the underground rap community” (Stereogum) and “the king of heartfelt, surrealist rap” (Washington Post). Over the course of more than a dozen solo and collaborative projects, he has helped define and popularize the genre he calls “art rap,” a shorthand for leftfield and avant-garde rap music.

His 2017 concept album *Brick Body Kids Still Daydream* (Mello Music Group) is a tribute to the Robert Taylor Homes, a former public housing project in Chicago where members of his family lived before the high-rise complex was demolished as part of Chicago’s Plan for Transformation, forcibly dislocating residents and dispersing communities. The record blends lived memory with surreal, dreamlike imagery to honor the creativity, resilience, and interior lives of public housing residents, while also naming the trauma and cultural loss that followed displacement.

Through the Artist as Instigator residency, Eagle will develop *The Sound of a Brick Body Complex* (working title), an immersive multi-media project exploring the musical histories and creative legacies of public housing communities that have been displaced or erased. The project will draw from oral histories, interviews, archival records, and community collaboration to honor artists whose contributions have shaped American culture.

“I’m interested in capturing and preserving the stories of musicians that were raised in housing systems that have been erased,” said Artist as Instigator **Open Mike Eagle**. “Through the telling and re-telling of these stories through new forms of musical production, we can find ways to honor the artists that lived in these spaces to learn from their lives and their loss. This project will celebrate the unheralded generations of families—like my own—that lived, loved, laughed and died in public housing.”

Eagle joins a distinguished roster of past Artists as Instigators: **Natasha Florentino** (2024–2025), **Dr. ShaDawn “Boobie” Battle** (2023), **Marisa Morán Jahn** (2022), **Tonika Lewis Johnson** (2021), **Jen Delos Reyes** (2020), and **William Estrada** (2019). Through film, dance, art installations, and other creative work, each of these artists has used their residency to foster social change and bring visibility to issues impacting public housing residents and other historically disinvested communities complex histories that are often invisible to most people. With funding from Mellon Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council, the program supports these artists with a \$10,000 honorarium, a \$10,000 project budget, exhibition space, and additional support to help develop their work.

“Open Mike Eagle’s approach to music and artmaking reminds us that the personal is political,” said **Tiff Beatty**, Associate Director and Director of Arts, Culture, and Public Policy at the National Public Housing Museum. “Through narrating and reflecting on his own upbringing and experiences with humility, humor, and deep reverence, he embodies the Museum’s mission to preserve, promote, and propel the right of all people to a place to call home. His work will be

furthered by the connections he will make with our network of urban planners, scholars, activists, and public housing residents.”

Eagle’s residency connects to the Museum’s REC Room, a dedicated listening space where visitors are encouraged to explore the history of music in public housing by spinning records and digging through a selection of albums curated by DJ Spinderella, and it builds on recent community-centered programming, including Groundwaves Generations, hosted by rap icon and innovator MURS, which celebrated the intergenerational power of hip-hop and storytelling.

Additional information on Open Mike Eagle and his project, the Artist as Instigator program, and the interview and performance on December 4, 2025, can be found at [nphm.org/program/artist-as-instigator/open-mike-eagle/](https://nphm.org/program/artist-as-instigator/open-mike-eagle/).

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Images Available at National Public Housing Museum [Media Center](#).

### **About Open Mike Eagle**

Open Mike Eagle spent the 2010s finding comedy in rap music and American nightmares. On albums like *Brick Body Kids*, *Still Daydream* and *Dark Comedy*, he delivered hilarious socio-political insights via half-sung verses laid atop progressive production. Acclaim from publications like Pitchfork, Rolling Stone, and NPR coincided with headlining solo tours and top-billing at events like Adult Swim Festival. Between studio sessions, Eagle co-founded *The New Negroes*, a standup-meets-music variety show that explores perceptions of blackness. He and co-founder Baron Vaughn brought the show to Upright Citizens Brigade, Comedy Central, and venues around the U.S. Since founding his record label Auto Reverse Records, though, Eagle has scaled back the jokes. He’s finally unpacking his traumas and acknowledging their impact.

### **About the National Public Housing Museum**

Our story starts with a simple truth: that all people have the right to a home. Founded by public housing residents, the National Public Housing Museum is the first cultural institution dedicated to interpreting the American experience in public housing. Filled with history, memories, music, and art, the Museum is a welcoming community gathering place that honors the stories and experiences of public housing residents. Through partnerships and programs, the Museum also serves as a civic incubator that inspires visitors to take informed action to advance housing justice.

### **National Public Housing Museum**

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