



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:**

Josefina Loza  
office@lozafina.com  
epicforgirls.org

**MEDIA INVITE: First Cohort of Girls Ref the World Academy to Celebrate Graduation - Second Cohort underway with record breaking registrants**

(OMAHA, NE) - EPIC for Girls and J's Braintrust, is thrilled to announce the graduation of the inaugural cohort of the Girls Ref the World (GRoW) Academy. This landmark event celebrates the pioneering group of young women who have completed a rigorous program designed to launch their careers in sports officiating. The graduation ceremony will take place on Thursday, Nov. 9, 2023 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Village Empowerment Center, 5190 Sprague Plaza, Omaha, NE, and we extend an open invitation to media personnel to join in the festivities.

**Ceremony Highlights**

The graduation event promises to be a celebration of achievement and empowerment. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet the graduates (some as young as age 14), hear their stories, and witness the presentation of certificates. Speakers will include Brenda Council and other leaders from the sports industry and program participants who will share insights on the importance of diversity in sports officiating.

**Program Success**

Over the course of four weeks, the GRoW Academy has equipped these trailblazing young women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to enter the field of sports officiating. The program has emphasized not only the technical aspects of officiating but also the development of soft skills, financial literacy, and job readiness — empowering participants to take control of their futures in a traditionally male-dominated arena. Several leaders including Dr. Kristin Saxena, Nicole Mitchell, Candias Jones, and Amaun Frazier participated as guest speakers throughout the training.

**Future Prospects**

The graduates of the GRoW Academy are now registered with the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) and are stepping into the world of sports with confidence. The success of the first cohort is a beacon for the program's future, signaling a positive shift towards inclusive representation in sports administration.

**Invitation to Media**

We invite media representatives to be a part of this momentous occasion and to share in the graduates' achievements. Interviews with graduates, program facilitators, and organizers will be available upon request.

## **RSVP**

Please RSVP to Kimberly Thomas at [kimberly@epicgirls.org](mailto:kimberly@epicgirls.org) or 402-320-1822 by 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 9. Media kits will be provided, and refreshments will be served.

## **More about "Girls Ref the World" (GRoW)**

Designed with an aim to diversify sports administration, this groundbreaking initiative will target young women of color ages 14 to 24 from North and South Omaha, equipping them with the necessary skills for a thriving career in sports officiating in Nebraska.

The objective of the GRoW academy is not only to impart trade skills but also to:

- Ensure BIPOC girls/young women are presented with opportunities on par with their counterparts
- Equip participants with skills that have long-term relevance, potentially opening further doors in the sports world.
- Craft pathways that navigate away from systemic socio-economic challenges
- Introducing the potential of integrating academic and professional pursuits

## **Program Highlights:**

Duration: 4 weeks with twice weekly seminar and practical skill sessions.

Timing: Evening classes, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Location: Hosted in both North and South Omaha.

Features: Led by BIPOC experts, inclusive of soft-skills training, financial literacy, job readiness training, NSAA registration, and more.

Stipend: Participants receive compensation for every in-class hour.

Materials: All supplies for the course will be provided.

Funding: This program was made possible through funding from the James E. Semerad Foundation and grant funding from The Simple Foundation Crime Prevention & Intervention program.

## **Eligibility:**

Enrollment in high school, college (including 2-year and 4-year courses), trade school, or a GED program during the application.

U.S. citizenship or permanent legal resident status (conditions apply).

Authorization from Parent or Guardian.

For those interested in learning more about the Girls Ref the World academy, or looking to support this empowering initiative as a sponsor or partner, please contact Jeffrey Williams at [j.williams@jsbraintrust.org](mailto:j.williams@jsbraintrust.org) or Kimberly Thomas at [kimberly@epicgirls.org](mailto:kimberly@epicgirls.org)

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## **About EPIC for Girls**

EPIC for Girls is dedicated to empowering girls of color through sports, education, and mentorship. We level the playing field; provide black and brown girls with the tools and resources needed to build confidence and develop essential life skills.

**To request an interview or learn more about EPIC for Girls and their programs, please contact Josefina Loza at [office@lozafina.com](mailto:office@lozafina.com) or visit their website at [epicgirls.org](http://epicgirls.org)**