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Atlanta Public Schools Students to Attend Private Screening and Roundtable Discussion of *The Great Debaters*

ATLANTA – On Friday, Jan. 25, 450 Atlanta Public High School students will attend a private screening and panel discussion of the Golden Globe Nominated film ***The Great Debaters*** at the AMC Magic Johnson Greenbriar Mall 12. The screening is sponsored by The Chris Draft Family Foundation, in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools.

Immediately following the screening, students and community leaders will engage in a roundtable discussion, moderated by **NBC 11Alive** Anchor **Sam Crenshaw**. The discussion will include representatives from local community organizations and school district officials who will mingle with the APS student leaders in the audience before, during and after the screening, into the discussion portion. Also in attendance will be Chris Draft's Rams teammates, former Falcons teammates as well as retired NFL players representing the NFLPA Retired Players Atlanta Chapter.

The 450 students attending the special screening are part of The Chris Draft Family Foundation's Character Team™, and have been selected as **Draft's Picks** by their schools. Draft's Picks are unique individuals who have been identified in their community by school administrators, teachers, or coaches as peer leaders. "A Discussion and A Movie" – Atlanta follows a successful screening and roundtable discussion with 300 students, representing 15 public high schools in St. Louis on January 11.

Draft points out the significance of providing Atlanta Public Schools student leaders this opportunity, "Creating an opportunity around a film like *The Great Debaters* can inspire and empower student leaders, providing a forum where they have a voice in their community and an opportunity to express their opinions clearly to individuals able to help them work to make a difference. *The Great Debaters* is a testament to what encouragement and support can do, and bringing students and community leaders into an engaging forum like this begins a conversation that will impact change."

The community leaders, who range from philanthropists, active and retired professional athletes, community service organization executives and state government officials were carefully selected to co-mingle with the student leaders and school administrators. The Foundation requested that attendees from the community arrive in time to greet the students as they arrive to the theater, and sit with the school groups in the audience for the duration of the event so as to engage them in discussion, following the film screening as the student leaders are processing their reactions.

An invited community leader, **Lamar K. Scott**, Chief of the Atlanta Human Resources Center at the CDC, is the son and grandson of former Wiley College Presidents, Dr. Julius S. Scott, Sr. (9th President of Wiley College) and Dr. Julius S. Scott, Jr. (14th President of Wiley College). His father was a student of Professor Tolson, described as a "very brilliant man who had a high regard for vocabulary." Scott recalls his father sharing stories of Professor Tolson inviting students to his home in the evenings, where they would sit on the floor discussing issues while being served cookies and soft drinks.

The Great Debaters is a true story that chronicles the journey of Professor Melvin Tolson (Denzel Washington), a brilliant but volatile debate team coach who uses the power of words to shape a group of underdog students from a small African American college in the Deep South into a historically elite debate team. In their pursuit for excellence, Tolson's debate team receives a groundbreaking invitation to debate Harvard University's championship team.

The film is directed by two-time Academy Award winner Denzel Washington and stars Washington, Academy Award winner Forest Whitaker, Jurnee Smollett, Nate Parker, Denzel Whitaker, and Kimberly Elise. *The Great Debaters* was written by Robert Eisele and Tom Epperson, produced by Todd Black, Kate Forte, Oprah Winfrey and Joe Roth and is currently playing in theaters nationwide.

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