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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Son of Charleston, S.C., Shooting Victim to Speak at Gardner-Webb on Sept. 30" (2019). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 194.

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Son of Charleston, S.C., Shooting Victim to Speak at Gardner-Webb on Sept. 30

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Office of University
Communications

September 19, 2019

Chris Singleton Shares Message of Love and Forgiveness



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—In the summer of 2015, Sharonda Coleman Singleton gathered with fellow church members for Wednesday night Bible study at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C. The group welcomed a visitor, Dylann Roof. Suddenly, Roof took out a gun and began shooting. Sharonda and eight other people died, including the senior pastor.

Sharonda’s son, Chris, a baseball player at Charleston Southern University, surprised everyone with his reaction to the tragedy. Instead of spreading more hate, Chris inspired his city and the nation by forgiving the man who murdered his mother.

Chris will share his story, “Overcoming the Unthinkable Adversity with Love and Forgiveness,” at Gardner-Webb University on Sept. 30 at 7 p.m. in the Paul Porter Arena inside the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center. Offered as a Dimensions program, this event is sponsored by the Gardner-Webb Office of Christian Life and Service, Student Development and Department of Athletics in conjunction with the Big South Conference. It is free and open to the public.

Kat Ayotte, GWU associate athletic trainer, remembers seeing Chris play for Charleston Southern against the Runnin' Bulldogs. "Watching how he handled it, and the way he moved forward with doing everything to honor his mom was very inspiring," Ayotte observed. "I thought it was a relevant topic to discuss with the racial tension in our country. I also thought it was something our students could relate to, because Chris was a student at a school in our conference when this happened."

After Chris left Charleston Southern to play for the Chicago Cubs organization, Ayotte kept up with his career. During his time with the Cubs, Chris traveled the country as an inspirational speaker. Recently retired from baseball, Chris is focusing more on sharing his message that "Love is Stronger Than Hate."

"I believe the way Chris handled this tragedy as a college student and what he has done to honor his mom and the other victims can have a large impact on our student body and community," Ayotte shared. "It is his mission to put an end to racism by using his voice and using his hashtag #Can'tLetMomsDown."

Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 48 hours prior to the event. Please call 704.406.4264 or email servicerequests@gardner-webb.edu with your request.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.