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National Alpha Chi Series Features Gardner- Webb Faculty, Alumnus and Broadcaster

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National Alpha Chi Series Features Gardner-Webb Faculty, Alumnus and Broadcaster

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 16, 2021

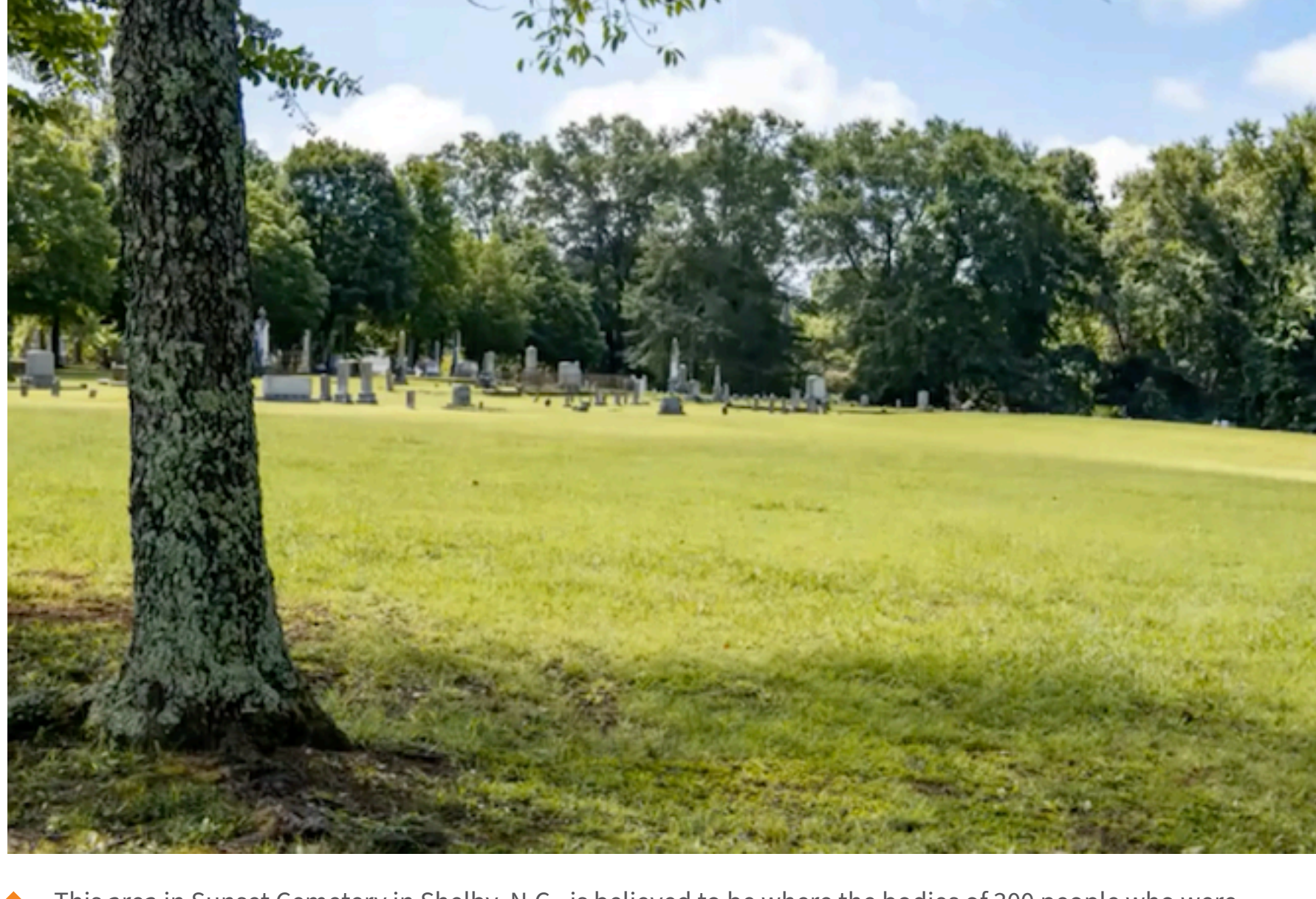


Panel Discusses How Race and Public Memory are Entwined in American Culture

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—People choose to enshrine, invent or bury their memories, which can affect how they react to various situations and their retelling of history. Recently, Alpha Chi National College Honor Society explored these ideas in a conversation called, “Race and Memory in the South.” The conversation featured two Gardner-Webb University professors and two natives of Shelby, N.C., one who is a GWU alumnus. The program was part of Alpha Chi’s National Series, “... and Justice for All – Seeking Racial Equity.” A recording of the event is available [here](#).

The program focused on the relationship between human history and memories. The panel discussed their own memories and talked about how race and public memory are inextricably entwined in American culture, from Confederate monuments and American cemeteries to literature and sports. The goal of the discussion is to further the Alpha Chi mission to “nurture the elements of character that make scholarship effective for good.”

Panelists from Gardner-Webb were Dr. June Hadden Hobbs, who also served as moderator, and Dr. Kemeshia Randle Swanson. Swanson, assistant professor of English, earned her Ph.D. in English at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa). In her research, she studies the intersections of Black feminisms, sexualities studies, critical race theory, popular culture, and the literary imagination. Swanson’s book manuscript, “Maverick Feminist: To Be Black and Female in a Country Founded Upon Violence and Respectability,” is under contract with University Press of Mississippi and is forthcoming. Other peer reviewed publications include “Gang Wars: The Academy vs. the Street” (2014), “The Sexless Servant is the Safer Servant: Domesticated Domesticity in Stockett’s The Help” (2016), and “Lessons Learned, Degrees Earned: Street Literature, Black Bodies, and the Contemporary Academic Classroom” (2018).



▲ This area in Sunset Cemetery in Shelby, N.C., is believed to be where the bodies of 300 people who were enslaved are buried. Dr. June Hadden Hobbs presented the slide as an example of a buried memory.

Hobbs, professor of English and director of Undergraduate Research at Gardner-Webb, is a member of the National Council of Alpha Chi and sponsor of the GWU Chapter. She edited “Markers: Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies” for eight years and has published a book and several articles on popular culture topics such as American hymnody and tombstones as well as on more traditional literary topics. She is the winner of the 2017 Harriette Merrifield Forbes Award for outstanding contributions to the field of gravestone studies. Hobbs regularly teaches an honors seminar called Death in American Culture. She is the co-author with GWU alumnus, Joe DePriest, of “Tales and Tombstones of Sunset Cemetery: Tracing Lives and Memorial Customs in a Southern Graveyard,” forthcoming from McFarland Press.

DePriest is an award-winning journalist who grew up in Shelby. After graduating from Gardner-Webb in 1965 and the University of North Carolina School of Journalism in Chapel Hill in 1967, he was a United States Army journalist in Vietnam and worked as a reporter for the Shelby Star, the Charlotte Observer, and other North Carolina newspapers. DePriest’s focus has often been on local history such as the 1929 strike at the Loray Mill in Gastonia, N.C. He is also the author of “Voices in Time: Stories of the Banker’s House.”

The last panelist is Jonathan Jones, who joined CBS Sports in November 2019 as a senior NFL reporter and panelist on “That Other Pregame Show” on Sundays during the NFL season. He has covered the Super Bowl for six consecutive years. A native of Shelby, N.C., he is a 2012 graduate of UNC Chapel Hill. He was a journalism major and covered college and pro sports for the Charlotte Observer and the NFL with Sports Illustrated. He’s written regularly about race in sports with articles on NASCAR’s struggles with diversity, the penalization of Colin Kaepernick and other Black players by white officials, the use of the n-word on the field, the NFL coaching diversity crisis, and the continued player protests in the wake of the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor killings. He is also the author of “Shelby’s Monument to White Supremacy,” an article about the United Daughters of the Confederacy Monument in Uptown Shelby.

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.

▲ The panelists for “Race and Memory in the South”: (from left) Dr. Kemeshia Randle Swanson, Joe DePriest, Dr. June Hadden Hobbs, and Jonathan Jones.

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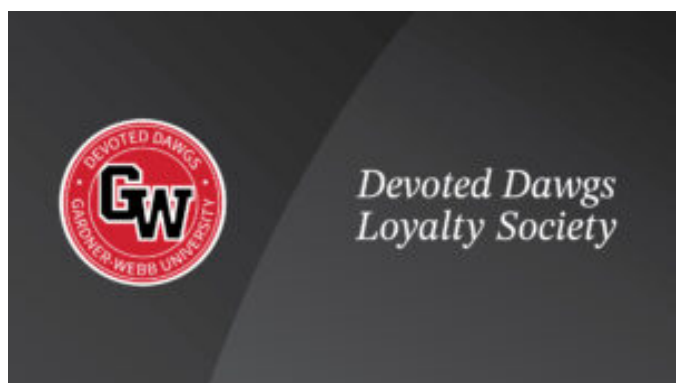


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