



**Media Contact:** Shannon Wiggins, Communications Director  
470.532.0957 (cell) or [swiggins@chambleega.gov](mailto:swiggins@chambleega.gov)

— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

## Stop The Hate

### *Brandon White's Journey from Hate Crime Victim to Chamblee First Responder*

**February 1, 2024** — Officer Brandon White knows firsthand what it's like to be a victim of a crime and now he's using that experience to help others. In February of 2012, White was leaving a neighborhood corner store in the Pittsburgh neighborhood when he was attacked from behind by a group of men. White says he was bruised and went home to gather up his friends to return to the scene of the crime, but no one was there. A few days later, video footage of White's attack was uploaded to a video site by his attackers. The video also made local, national, and international news. That's when he learned that the attack was a hate crime due to his sexual orientation.

"I didn't know any of the attackers," said Officer Brandon White. "I didn't know why they attacked me until I saw the video and learned that it was motivated by my sexuality. They felt like they didn't want gays in their neighborhood."

White worked with the Atlanta Police Department and several other agencies who were investigating the hate crime. White's case was the first in the state of Georgia to be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office under the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act, a landmark federal law that includes crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Out of the six attackers involved, four were convicted and charged. White says FBI Special Agent James Hosty, Brent Gray from the U.S. Attorney's Office, and Greg Smith with *Here's to Life* were instrumental throughout the entire process towards the fight for justice.

"Growing up on the West side of Atlanta, I thought the police were not there to assist you," said White. "Working with APD, the GBI, and the United States Attorney's Office gave me a completely different outlook to show that law enforcement is there to help you and to better your community."

White says his experience working with these agencies sparked his interest to work in law enforcement. In 2019, he began applying to several law enforcement agencies but had difficulty getting an interview due to his driving record. While working to clean up his driving record, White was asked to speak on a panel about hate crimes, discrimination, and harassment hosted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia in June of 2023 at the Chamblee Police Department. At the event, he met Chamblee's Interim Police Chief Gary Yandura where he expressed his interest in becoming a police officer. Yandura encouraged him to apply for the Chamblee Police Department and expressed how the

department is a big believer in “second chances.” White was hired almost a month later by the Chamblee Police Department and graduated from the police academy on November 17, 2023.

“Being a police officer has truly been a whirlwind adventure and an eye opener,” said White. “My message is Stop the Hate, look within and know your worth. What one person decides to do with their lifestyle isn’t going to impact you at the end of the day.”

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*Located just 14 miles from downtown Atlanta, Chamblee is a vibrant urban city with a diverse community and international flair. The City of Chamblee began as a small rail town and was incorporated in 1908. It has grown to more than seven square miles and nearly 30,000 residents. Chamblee is home to a heavy rail MARTA station, a historic downtown and Antique Row, the vibrant Buford Highway Corridor, DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK), the Centers for Disease Control and a thriving business community with a unique sense of entrepreneurship and optimism. Visit [www.chambleega.com](http://www.chambleega.com) for more information.*