

# The Loudest Silence: Teen Champions Mental Health Advocacy

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

As the world begins to recover from quarantine, the mental health effects of dealing with prolonged social isolation and fear are beginning to be felt. According to the World Health Organization, [global cases of anxiety and depression have risen 25% over pre-pandemic times](#).

While some teens may feel uncomfortable discussing mental health issues, Visions Senior Ma'Shaya Pryor (University Prep) is trying to help people struggling with mental health issues find their voice. Her senior project titled "The Loudest Silence" aims to capture stories of mental health struggles and raise awareness about good mental health practices.

"The Loudest Silence" was a project that I've always wished existed in our society today," says Ma'Shaya. "**Mental Health is the anchor to any individual's mind. It affects the way individuals function in their daily lives.**"

The Loudest Silence encourages volunteers to share their stories through a Google Form. Submissions can either be short passages, prose, or even poetry.

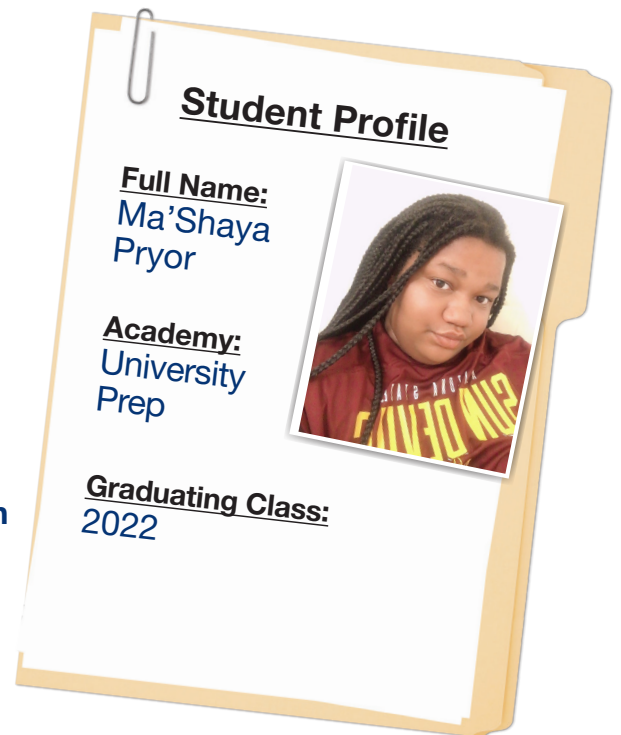
"Every participant gets to choose what they want to submit," says Ma'Shaya. "There are no rules on what you can or can not say. I refuse to silence these individuals more than they already are."

As a part of this project, Ma'Shaya has had the opportunity to read stories about the hardships and mental struggles many people walk around with on a daily basis. While each story is unique, the project has revealed some common traits among those suffering from past trauma.

"Reading other individuals' stories has made me realize how much schools, and friends can save a person," says Ma'Shaya. "Many individuals go to school to escape the abuse that they are facing. They avoid being home, **they try to distract themselves with tasks because they are taught that not being okay is not okay.**"

The Loudest Silence has also revealed that simply talking about mental health challenges may not be enough.

"Some people who want to seek help don't because they can't afford to pay hundreds of dollars for therapy or counseling," says Ma'Shaya. "In many mental health awareness videos the most common thing that is said is to speak to a family member or a close friend. **The problem with that is, these family members or friends can be the reason why these individuals have gone through abuse or trauma.**" (Continued on Page 2)



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“I have had the support of my teachers and counselors right from the beginning,” says Ma’Shaya. “My English teacher Mrs. Singley has offered to help me if I needed it and **I am very grateful to have such amazing teachers.**”

It’s no surprise then that Ma’Shaya would like to make mental health advocacy a full time career. After graduating Visions, she intends to pursue sociology and psychology in college with the goal of becoming a therapist for kids and teens. She hopes that using creative writing can help people come to terms with their past so they can begin to make sense of their futures.

“It is okay to feel pain, it is okay to break, it is okay to scream and feel as if nothing matters, but it is also okay to speak up on the abuse that you have experienced. **It’s your story to tell, your life to change and find peace in, and you have the right to be heard.**”

If you are in crisis or in need of immediate help, call the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 800-843-5200.

