

Maude Gorman

CMASAS Class of 2013
Miss Massachusetts World America



Survivor. Advocate. Student. Friend.

Maude Gorman is doing big things with her life. The twenty-one year old Stonehill College junior identifies herself in many ways and this year she holds the title of Miss Massachusetts World America. Maude's days are now filled with pageant participation, volunteer work and professional advocacy, not to mention college courses. She dreams of joining the Peace Corps after college, putting to use her degrees in Communications and Anthropology. Her future is promising and bright, but she hasn't always felt that way.

"At one point I wouldn't have ever thought that I could be anything in life," Maude says. "If it wasn't for CMASAS, I wouldn't even have a high school diploma."

When Maude was thirteen years old, she was raped repeatedly by three men. She and a friend were walking home from a park near their home in Massachusetts when the men caught her and assaulted her all night. She kept the assault a secret and experienced severe PTSD, falling

into depression and suicidal thoughts. Maude, who was always a straight-A student, began failing her classes and dropped out of four different high schools before finally enrolling in CMASAS and finishing her courses to receive a high school diploma.

"It was the only school that took a chance on me, the only school that believed that I could graduate," she says. "CMASAS kind of gave me the courage and encouragement to believe in myself at that time. I had let being a good student slip away from me but everyone at CMASAS believed in me and really pushed me to be the best student I could."

Apart from the instructors at CMASAS who Maude said made a world of difference in her education, it was also the self-paced and individualized aspects of online learning that enabled Maude to heal and succeed.

"CMASAS gave me the chance to take a step back and work on myself and do school as I felt that I could," Maude says. "So I loved that it was self-paced. That is what really helped lead me to my recovery."

Through extensive therapies Maude was able to journey towards recovering from the trauma of being sexually assaulted and she worked tirelessly to become physically healthy again after having become obese.

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"Just to have the flexibility of school and still know that I was heading towards a goal was really helpful," she says.

Maude entered a beauty pageant for fun and though she didn't win, she found that involvement in pageants brought her joy again. She continued to compete in pageants for five years before winning Miss Massachusetts World America this past March, and used the competitions as a motivator towards becoming healthy in all aspects of her life.

"I kind of used pageants as a force to propel me into my new dreams for life," she says.

Maude now uses her title as Miss Massachusetts World and all that she has learned on her journey to advocate for other victims of sexual assault. She has done extensive research on the issue and given numerous presentations at conferences and rallies across the nation. She has worked alongside the Attorney General of Massachusetts to change legislation and began a program on her college campus that replaces regular coffee cup sleeves with sexual assault awareness sleeves that have hotlines on them that students can call. Maude also began volunteering at hospitals and is training to be a part of medical advocacy teams where she will give away what she calls Hope Bags — tote bags with resources for rape victims, stuffed animals and gifts, providing young victims of trauma with hope and support.

Maude says she's able to accomplish all of these amazing things thanks to her incredibly supportive mother. She is also motivated by her need to daily choose to continue to persevere. "It's something you have to work through and daily choose to survive," she says of her journey towards recovering from assault and trauma.



Maude is an advocate for Habitat for Humanity and often volunteers to help build homes.

To other students who are experiencing a hardship or recovering from a trauma, a health issue or an emotional crisis, Maude gives this word of encouragement.

"I would say to keep your head up. You probably can't see it right now but down the road you will look back at this experience and you'll be grateful it happened because it is going to shape you into being an amazing person and it's going to drive you to accomplish more than you will ever think you can. There is light at the end of the tunnel and you just need to drive yourself to see it."



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