



Photo provided by Kamrin Pressley

Kamrin Pressley '22: *Asked for Help When She and Her Family Needed It*

Kamrin Pressley '22, a Mercy senior from Co-op City in the Bronx, found herself moving from working at the Mav Market, the College's community food pantry, to needing it to feed her family. Her father, a single parent, was sickened by COVID-19 and could not work. "He caught all the symptoms," she said. "So during that time, because he was my provider, I had to provide for him." Pressley had a federal work study job, but without her father's income there wasn't enough food in the house.

As a Mav Market student worker, she had seen fellow students ashamed to come in. She says one of her jobs was to reassure everyone the Market was a safe place, inclusive and without judgment. But she understands the pain. "It feels shameful when you can't even feed yourself. The hardest thing somebody can do is ask for help. After you ask for help, the next step

is also accepting that help." So, she reassured her dad he didn't have to struggle. She was going to pick up food and supplies from the Market.

Pressley knew about Mercy College long before she attended it. As a high schooler she had joined NYC GREAT, an organization which provides experiences that develop leadership and communication skills in young women who are currently attending high school. One of the experiences it offers is the chance to physically go to a campus and see what it's all about. "So when I was a tenth grader, we came to Mercy."

Pressley was in the top ten students in her Truman High School class when she graduated. Her NYC GREAT group was the first in the program's history to graduate high school—their graduation ceremony was actually held at Mercy College. It was there, Pressley says, that she caught the attention of former Mercy College Associate Professor of Literacy and Multilingual Studies Aramina Ferrer, Ph.D., a long-serving educator in Mercy's School of Education, and

currently a member of the NYS Board of Regents. "She literally said come to Mercy on this date. She took me to admissions, and was such an amazing advocate for me. She told them, 'Look at this student!'"

From that point on, Pressley, a first-generation college student, said she found her family and a home away from home. "The Mercy community in the Bronx is filled with people who look like me."

Pressley feels the pride of being the first in her family to attend college, and also the responsibility to succeed. "College is no joke," she said. "These past four years I have had to put a lot of my own problems to the side. When I get to studying, I'll forget to eat." Which is precisely why she understands the importance of the Mav Market in both the physical and the educational nourishment of the students it serves. "I love working for campus life. I love working at the Market. I love doing events. I've made so many friends because of my time here."

Pressley will receive her bachelor's degree with a major in psychology and a minor in English. She wants to go immediately to graduate school—at Mercy if possible—to get an advanced degree in Mental Health Counseling. Her goal is to treat adolescents and children, using the education she received to pay it forward for those who are suffering. "I know what it's like to deal with mental health issues. And especially in communities of color, mental health is often taboo. Someone needs to take time to talk, and to support these young adults."

"The more you try to advance yourself the better off you'll be in your life."

She said her dad will be right there as she crosses the stage to receive her degree in May. He is only part of her motivation to succeed. "I've always had the mindset that I don't want to just make my dad proud, I want to make myself proud. I always knew: education is powerful. The more you try to advance yourself the better off you'll be in your life. I have friends who didn't even graduate high school, and I don't want to be that person." If history is any guide, it's a good bet she won't.