

## **It's Menstrual Health Awareness Month May 2024**

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### **A Note from Our Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

We have a big disconnect when it comes to menstruation and menopause. On the one hand, every life begins with a missed period. And everyone who menstruates, and who lives long enough, will go through perimenopause and menopause. That puts the menstrual cycle right at the center of human existence. On the other hand, there is so much stigma, shame, and grossed-out nonsense about periods—shark week, anyone?—that generations of girls and women have gone to great lengths to hide the fact that they menstruate at all. And perimenopause is still so shrouded in ignorance that many of us are completely unprepared until we're in the thick of it. Our Bodies Ourselves today is part of the global movement for menstrual education as part of comprehensive sexuality education. We must work together to have accurate, judgment-free menstruation and menopause education at every stage of life.



Like so many things, neither access to necessary information, nor access to the products we need, are equally available. The more marginalized we are, whether through poverty, living in a war zone or refugee camp, being unhoused or incarcerated, the harder it is to get the menstrual education and products we need to bleed with dignity. We need to change that.

This month's newsletter highlights a wonderful organization working to end period poverty among Indigenous students; one of our content experts who started that organization; another of our content experts discussing endometriosis; and a radio interview. At the end is an invitation to help Beta test our newly redesigned website!

Onward!  
Amy

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### **Explore Our Resources**

#### **Period Poverty and How to Solve It**

Period poverty in the United States was

exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. A new study showed a 35 percent increase in period poverty since 2018 in the United States; about 2 in 5 people who menstruate struggle to afford period products, and 1 in 5 low-income menstruators report missing work or school due to a lack of access to menstrual products.



For incarcerated menstruators, the situation is even more dire. How can we, personally and collectively, ensure that menstrual products are affordable and accessible, and to reduce the stigma around menstruation?

[Read More about how to solve Period Poverty](#)

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## Meet Our Content Experts



### Meet Eva Marie Carney, content expert on Menstruation through Menopause

This month, we spoke with Eva Marie Carney, founder of The Kwek Society, an elected CPN Legislator, and a humanitarian immigration lawyer. Eva Marie is a dual citizen of the U.S. and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

#### What brought you to Our Bodies Ourselves Today?

I was excited to be invited to join the team of Menstruation to Menopause Content Experts before the OBOS Today launch in 2022. As a young feminist, I knew about the original book published in the 1970s. I welcomed the opportunity to help ensure that Indigenous voices were included in OBOS Today's conversations and online content.

I started [The Kwek Society](#) in 2018 to address period poverty among Indigenous students. Since our start, we've offered period education and period care supplies. I expected that my participation on the Menstruation to Menopause panel would alert me to accurate and inclusive information to share with the folks we support. That has definitely been the case! A recent example is the [Euki online period \(moon time\) tracker](#). We'd been searching for an app that offered a secure way to track periods on smartphones, and my fellow experts alerted us to Euki. You can learn more about the Kwek Society's work and impact [here](#).

#### What gives you hope? What's one thing we can do to take action for menstrual equity?

At least two things come to mind as an answer to both those questions!

First, younger menstruators are rejecting the idea that periods should be discussed in a whisper, if at all. I was tickled recently by the report from one of the trusted adults assisting students with periods at their K-12 school, who said that her 5th-grade students were excited to take on the

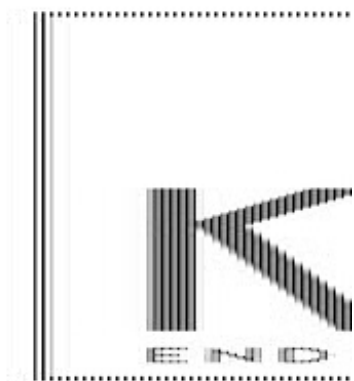
responsibility of restocking supplies in the school bathrooms for their peers. I'm sure a lot of us older folks remember a time when we wouldn't have wanted to be seen at school clutching boxes of pads and tampons!

Second, there's so much more awareness now than when we got our start in 2018 that period poverty is a serious issue right here in the U.S. More of us have come to understand that period poverty likely affects any student whose family qualifies for free or reduced-price school meals. And there are so many more people starting to rethink the crazy "norm" that toilet paper and soap are public bathroom essentials, but not tampons and pads. Pending House bills introduced by U.S. Representatives Grace Meng and Sean Casten would make period supplies much more accessible. The local and state legislation we've been seeing make me think that menstrual equity is achievable in this decade.

[Learn More about Eva Marie](#)

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## Organizing for Change: Ending Period Poverty



### The Kwek Society

The Kwek Society is an Indigenous woman-founded and Indigenous-women-led nonprofit. It supports the dignity and health of Indigenous students and their peers across the United States and celebrates their “moon times” (also known as periods) by providing period supplies and puberty education materials. They primarily work with schools but they also partner with some community-based organizations and Native Nation partners. As part of their message of dignity and celebration, The Kwek Society [shares](#) traditional teachings about puberty and periods. Period support is a monthly, and expensive, obligation! They organize volunteers to conduct period supplies drives and to donate tampons, pads, liners, and cotton underwear. You can find all the ways to help on [The Kwek Society](#) website. If you are part of, or know about, a school with a significant Indigenous population with students that need period support, please [reach out](#) to The Kwek Society for help.

[Learn more about the Kwek Society](#)

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## My Journey and Self-Education with Endometriosis with Content Expert Arielle Dance

### My Journey and Self-Education with Endometriosis

Did you know that endometriosis--a severely painful and disabling disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus--affects one in ten women?

In this video, [Dr. Arielle Dance](#) speaks with her fellow

Menstrual Cycle content expert, [Diya Khullar](#), about her endometriosis journey, how it's shaped her research, and what others should know about endometriosis. She discusses what it's like living with endometriosis, current research on the condition, and opportunities for new and innovative treatments.



[Listen to the Interview](#)

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## News and Events

### Our Bodies Ourselves Today on the Airwaves

[Amy Agigian](#), Executive Director of Our Bodies Ourselves Today, was recently a guest on "Live, Local, and Progressive" with Joan Esposito. The radio show broadcasts on Chicago's WCPT AM 820. Hear about how sex education has and hasn't changed, how the [Our Bodies Ourselves Today website](#) picks up where the books left off, and the continued need for reliable, feminist information.



[Listen to the Interview](#)

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### Help Beta Test the New Our Bodies Ourselves website

A new, redesigned Our Bodies Ourselves website is coming -- and we're hosting a hybrid party on June 18th to Beta test it!

We'd love to have your help as a Beta tester.

Please fill out [this form](#) if you are interested in participating.

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Please share this newsletter with a friend!



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