



## Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity

*Jennifer Weiss-Wolf*

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## **Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity** Jennifer Weiss-Wolf

The first book to explore menstruation in the current cultural and political landscape and to investigate the new wave of period activism taking the world by storm.

After centuries of being shrouded in taboo and superstition, periods have gone mainstream. Seemingly overnight, a new, high-profile movement has emerged—one dedicated to bold activism, creative product innovation, and smart policy advocacy—to address the centrality of menstruation in relation to core issues of gender equality and equity.

In *Periods Gone Public*, Jennifer Weiss-Wolf—the woman Bustle dubbed one of the nation's "badass menstrual activists"—explores why periods have become a prominent political cause. From eliminating the tampon tax, to enacting new laws ensuring access to affordable, safe products, menstruation is no longer something to whisper about. Weiss-Wolf shares her firsthand account in the fight for "period equity" and introduces readers to the leaders, pioneers, and everyday people who are making change happen. From societal attitudes of periods throughout history—in the United States and around the world—to grassroots activism and product innovation, Weiss-Wolf challenges readers to face stigma head-on and elevate an agenda that recognizes both the power—and the absolute normalcy—of menstruation.

## **Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity Details**

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Author : Jennifer Weiss-Wolf

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# From Reader Review Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity for online ebook

## Aria says

---- Disclosure: I received this book for free from Goodreads. ----

This book needs to exist, but as it is I don't think it fits the bill quite yet.

First off, this could benefit from an addendum section for easy reference of the different organizations mentioned in the text. I know there are end notes, but they are (so very) tedious to sift through. A quick reference of organizations, and brief description of what they do, where they operate, and their contact info. would be invaluable. if there is to be some sort of webpage devoted to this book, then attach the info there as well. i mean, that info needs to be kept somewhere on the web in one easily accessible resource for people trying to research, to help, or who are seeking help. If it doesn't exist in that form somewhere already, it should. (quick, someone get on that. )

The last section of the book quickly becomes dull as it rehashes what has already been covered. There are bits of info here and there, but they really need to be pulled out and inserted in the prior sections where the ideas and issues were already covered. Then the rest of the section can just be dropped, b/c it is mostly redundant and becomes dull very quickly.

The info in the book is good, and it's a great topic that needs addressing in an easy to access way, such as I believe this book was intended to be. The end work would be better if the author would refrain from injecting personal opinions. (Personal experiences are fine, but the opinions are a problem.) Also, the author splits the message several times by trying to pull in other concepts, and that kind of thing will inevitably split your audience and lose supporters. Keep to the topic of periods and related issues. In particular, a book about menstrual politics and the related social realities is way off base to start talking about giving away free baby diapers to parents. That's a problem. You want to solve poverty? Great. Start with birth control and let people use cloth diapers like literally everyone had to use not so long ago before throw away diapers existed, and like I myself had to do when I was a young, poor, single mother. Contributing to the landfill problem w/ costly diapers for breeders? Nope. I can get behind free birth control, but not throw-away diapers for people that can't afford their spawn. Why am I talking about this seemingly off-topic issue in a review on a book about periods and menstruation? Because it's taking up space in this book, and thusly I am covering it here in the hope that the editors will reign in the unrelated crusading. Stay on topic.

Finally, a word about addressing the issues raised here in the states. I'm pleased that there has been some research (although less than in the 3rd world) related to 1st world experiences w/ access to hygiene products, and the problems that result from an inadequately addressing menstrual realities. So much could be helped by making sanitary products freely available in bathrooms, or at the very minimum, at the local health dept. (much as condoms are). However, the author has suggested turning child nutrition programs into vehicles for female menstrual product distribution. Just take several steps back. I realize that it seems easier to tack this sort of thing onto an existing program rather than try to forge a new road, but you couldn't be more inappropriate in this regard. Firstly, these programs are inappropriate for this effort, and the author has latched onto something existing in her mind to serve poverty populations, but that is not the case. these programs specifically exist to fend off child malnutrition and the myriad of problems that result from such a state. W.I.C. in particular has no other function, and any items given to breastfeeding moms are still to supplement healthy breastmilk for the benefit of the baby. Food stamps once existed for the general

population, but have been so attacked and stripped bare that they are no longer adequate to support children on. It is increasingly hard for anyone that is not a minor child to receive food stamps, and indeed the legislation put forth continually moves toward making minor children the only eligible beneficiaries of the program. Trying to attach (especially unpopular) non-food items to a food program that barely functions as it is, and is continually being picked apart for new ways to restrict access is not only bad for the goal of menstrual hygiene product distribution, but it would endanger the future of the nutritional program even more so. Just stay the heck away from the nutrition programs. It seems like it would be an opportunity missed anyway, to try to tack the distribution on to these programs. There exists now an opportunity to push this issue and make it part of a normalized discussion about biology and human functional health in much the same way that occurred when free condoms became standard at the health dept. Disease prevention is a better way to open discussions in this area, as that makes it an issue of public health. From that angle you might even be to get CDC interest, particularly since it is a sadly under-researched topic in the 1st world.

As it stands, this book needs work. It should exist, and if it is taken back in for editing would probably serve as a stand-out resource. It has potential to both be an introductory piece for those with no former thoughts or awareness of these things, as well as to be a resource, a jumping-off point, for people maybe already familiar w/ the topic in general, but looking to learn more and learn where to go next. Those looking to get further involved in supporting projects addressing concerns related to this arena, or who might be looking for as yet unaddressed areas that they might forge ahead into, could benefit from a book such as this if it is edited to better contain it's message and information. As it is now, it's a good idea gone sloppy, and that's too bad. It's has the potential to be ground-breaking in it's category; a 1st-starter for the field. It needs serious re-working though, by someone w/ a clearer vision. Such potential, though. Here's to hoping it isn't squandered...it's so close to being something great. So close.

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## **Hafsa says**

Disclaimer: Received a free digital copy of the book through *Netgalley*.

Just from the name of the book, I realized that it was one which was very important and deserved to be read so that I could expand my thoughts and finally catch up with all the fuss over *periods*, the last thing anyone in this patriarchal world ever thought would be the driving force behind beautifully organized political chaos.

Wolf's voice from the very start was focused, salient, informative and unabashed, all things equally important to pull any reader in. To be honest, I hardly ever consciously thought about the main message that this book promotes which is perhaps why I was so inspired by it. Although, I didn't agree with every argument that Wolf made since some of them in my opinion were either unrealistic and something from 'menstrutopia' whereas some were just taking it too far.

However, the focus of my review and rating are not that. As Madame Gandhi puts it "*Periods Gone Public shows why menstrual stigma is not only a social justice issue but an economic and political one.*" That is exactly what the author communicated throughout the book. I really appreciated the fact that the author acknowledged the idea that it is not only women who menstruate but transgender people as well and explored the difficulties faced by them, offering possible solutions along the way – I never thought of that before. Call me socially unaware, but I don't think I ever sat for hours before reading this, consciously

thinking about how menstruation affects so many people at different levels. This is my reason for the high rating. This book made me think.

What I loved the most about this book was how calculatingly persuasive it is and how it effectively fuels you to do something about the issue at hand e.g. yours truly, a *very* lethargic person has now decided that it's high time that her college has pads available in the washrooms just like toilet paper. Period.

Overall, this was a very extensive, informative and interesting read, one which has actually managed to inspire me to do something! (that hardly ever happens) I do want to clarify that the rating is not at all for the message of this book which is beyond meager 5 stars but for the book itself which was repetitive at times, and not that relatable in the US specific chapters, hence the 4 stars.

P.S. I wrote such a long review for this from the ton of notes I made while reading this book but it was deleted because of my browser collapsing at the last minute. It had so many quotes!! SAD LIFE!

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### **Mallorie Watts says**

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT HOW MUCH I LOVE THIS BOOK! I would not be surprised if I started to force people to read this and chucking copies of it at people, heck I could see myself citing it as someone would cite the Bible.

This book is easy to read, yet packed with information that will blow your mind, sometimes making you want to bodyslam the policymakers of this world, but sometimes it will give you hope.

This book covers literally every single aspect of menstruation and life.

I recommend this book to everyone.

Definitely a GOOD MF Read™

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### **Heather says**

Coincidentally, I started my period a couple hours after I started reading this, and it ended several hours before finishing it. (Awesome!) If you think that is gross, or you are filled with disgust & awe that I could mention something so "personal", you need to read this book, because that's exactly the line of thinking this book is attempting to combat.

While it felt repetitive, the adage that this affects HALF of the population actually **needs** to be repeated. A *LOT*. In terms of policy making and misogynistic thinking and general degradation, the other half that this does not affect (*even though it actually really does*) seems to forget that. Hell, sometimes I forget that! I've been getting my period monthly since I was 11 years old. I've been on my period approximately 200 times, and I've got at least another 30 years or so to go. Periods affect **EVERYONE**. This book is aiming to prove that.

Like I said before, I thought this book was a tad repetitive, and with non-fiction books, that tends to really bug me after a while because the information starts to feel like page filler. The repetition here was necessary. It really stood to drive home the points being made.

This book covered so much ground and aims to change the way we think about menstrual health. Considering again the number of periods I've had, there was quite a bit of new information for me in here, information I somehow assumed I probably knew, information I probably should have known before now. Point being, I learned a lot. It was extremely informative and very well written. It details menstrual health on many levels, and the effects that lack of information and access have on different groups of women and people, as well as policy changes that need to be made or revised and ways that we can all advocate for change in this regard. I think the author has a liberal/progressive viewpoint (or what I like to call a **human, common sense** viewpoint - I digress), but she does well to mention the advantages AND disadvantages of several ideas, and I really liked and appreciated that.

This book is absolutely worth the read and anyone who reads this book stands to gain knowledge from it. It is heartbreaking and archaic the way this issue is regarded on all fronts, but this book is beneficial in that at the very, very least, it opens up a dialogue. Definitely recommend the content and style of writing.

Side note: I had a digital version of the book and was a little disappointed to realize that there were captions for pictures throughout, but no pictures. Alas, they were at the end, which made me happy. Number one, because the pictures were there, but number two, because they were awesome pictures! It was a welcome surprise. (I especially loved the one of the young girl smiling giddily inside the box of pads.)

Thank you to NetGalley, Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, SkyHorse Publishing & Arcade Publishing for a digital ARC of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says**

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I'm side-eying the heck out of this book right now because it was a special kind of fail. First, I'm reviewing this as a feminist, and whenever I read a political book, I try to approach it with an open mind - regardless of whether it's being written from a perspective I agree with or not. In this case, I did agree with the basic premise: menstruation should not be a charged or taboo subject. It happens to 50% of the population, it really *sucks* for the people who experience it, let's talk about it and find ways to make the existing products for it less environmentally harmful and also suck less - especially for low-income individuals and women in other countries who don't have access to the hygienic supplies that they need at *all*. Totally down with that. How can you disagree?

So the fact that I agreed with this book and *still* didn't like it says something. What does it say? The author - in my opinion - did not write a very good book. I'd say 85% of the problem was tone. It's super ironic that she quotes Andi Zeisler's **WE WERE FEMINISTS**, which is a condemnation of people who commandeer the feminist movement to promote their own personal agenda, because Weiss-Wolf toots her own horn in **PERIODS GONE PUBLIC** a lot. We get to hear about all the projects she participates in - and yes, that's wonderful. But also not what I wanted to read about. And the way she talks about it is a bit difficult to explain, but to me it felt a little smarmy. Especially when she refers to low-income individuals as "the poor."

It came across as sounding very privileged to me, which made reading this book unpleasant.

I was hoping for something more science-based/philosophical/historical, but *PERIODS GONE PUBLIC* is more of a collection of anecdotes and trivia. The sections about low-income individuals experiencing periods and women in developing countries experiencing periods was interesting, but Weiss-Wolf wrests control of those narratives and they feel like they're being written from a decidedly egocentric perspective. Weiss-Wolf particularly seems to like pop culture, and lists some of the celebrities she admires and credits with furthering the feminist movement. These individuals include Jennifer Lawrence, Amy Schumer, and Rupi Kaur. When I read this passage, things became clear. I thought to myself, "Ah, she's a Tumblr feminist." I call them Tumblr Feminists, but really, they're social media feminists generally, who seem to support a feminism that's bite-sized, neatly labeled, and superficially pleasing brand of feminism. It's the shiny, attractive feminism that celebrities love to embrace: sexual pride, body positivity, free pads for everyone! I feel that this applies to Weiss-Wolf, and while these things are important, there are far more pressing issues.

Now, to Weiss-Wolf's credit, she does cover some of these less savory issues and she has good taste in books (love Zeisler, love Steinhem - Rupi Kaur? Not so much - ugh, Tumblr poetry). I also like that she took the time to write about periods from a trans perspective, and how we look at menstruation frequently from a straight, cis-gendered perspective (periods = child-bearing, heteronormative experience). It actually made me think of this video I watched on YouTube, a how-to video for trans women who wanted to create artificial periods with cornstarch and food dye so they could experience that aspect of womanhood, too. I've read a lot of articles and watched a lot of YouTube videos about periods (BuzzFeed has really tapped that well dry - I noticed they had an article about periods today, even), and a lot of what they have said was covered here by Weiss-Wolf, so maybe that was another problem - I'm burned out on periods.

*Thanks to Netgalley/the publisher for the review copy!*

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2 stars

### **Aisling says**

This is the full metal jacket of menstruation activism- I loved it. Weiss-Wolf considers the issue of access to adequate menstrual care from a multitude of perspectives- political, feminist, socio-economic and environmental, as well as questioning the possible future of the new wave of possible menstrual care in the form of profit based companies.

The author considers a multitude of movements in the developing world which are opening new opportunities for women, both in terms of income and education as well as proper hygiene supplies, as well as the movements in the developing world toward environmentally-friendly options. She also discusses the tough situations faced by members of the transgender community who often struggle with basic access to

facilities after transitioning.

This one is a tour de force. If you've never questioned the tampon in your bag and what a privilege it is to have such easy access to it, this one's for you. Read and weep.

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### **Rhiannon Johnson says**

\*\*In this post I review ASK ME ABOUT MY UTERUS and PERIODS GONE PUBLIC. Publishers have provided complementary copies to me in exchange for honest reviews\*\*.

Let's talk about...uteruses/uteri! Yes, those are both acceptable plural forms of 'uterus'. Half the human population has one but \*wow\* are they controversial! However, regardless of where you stand on hot button issues like birth control and abortion, you probably agree that periods, albeit annoying, aren't very revolutionary. But you are also probably (like me) reading this post from somewhere in the United States, you've likely had ready access to feminine hygiene products, and you have hopefully never experienced a medical problem such as endometriosis. In PERIODS GONE PUBLIC: TAKING A STAND FOR MENSTRUAL EQUALITY by Jennifer Weiss-Wolf I discovered that "a new, high-profile movement has emerged—one dedicated to bold activism, creative product innovation, and smart policy advocacy—to address the centrality of menstruation in relation to core issues of gender equality and equity." In dancer Abby Norman's memoir ASK ME ABOUT MY UTERUS: A QUEST TO MAKE DOCTORS BELIEVE WOMEN'S PAIN, Norman describes having her pain dismissed repeatedly by medical professionals and "shows that women's bodies have long been the battleground of a never-ending war for power, control, medical knowledge, and truth. It's time to refute the belief that being a woman is a preexisting condition." I would recommend these releases to everyone and anyone...you need not have a uterus to learn something from these releases. As a matter of fact, more of the non-uterus owning half of the population should read these!

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### **Marie Andrews says**

Review also posted on my blog: <https://lotsoflivres.com/2017/07/23/p...>

As a feminist and someone who frequently engages in activism, through both protests and online, I was definitely aware of the rise in political interest in periods and menstruation over the last year or so. From Kiran Ghandi's marathon run without a tampon, to tampon tax protests, 2015 onwards definitely marked a new era in which periods were no longer marked with the same level of taboo as previously.

Yet even with an above-average level of knowledge and a personal interest in similar sort of projects, I thought Periods Gone Public: Taking A Stand For Menstrual Equity, was a fantastic read which offered a broad, yet in-depth pool of knowledge of where the world currently stands with everything period-related. I found it particularly interesting to learn about the history of menstruation and how attitudes and products have changed over the last 100 or so years and why this has come about.

What I never considered before reading this book is the severe effects that menstruation-linked policies can have on those who are marginalised within communities such as those who are homeless or in prison. The lack of opportunity in accessing menstruation products can have a huge impact on these members of society

and can cause further embarrassment and exclusion – simply because of something so natural. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf clearly expresses her concern over the effect this is having and urges for more action to be taken to combat this effect. Although the majority of the change needs to be achieved through policy reform, I didn't realise how the general population can help too and I will be exploring ways that I can help locally through donations and lobbying.

Many other topics were covered in this book, including various menstruation products that have been created over the world for specific contexts, other smaller activist movements and inclusion of trans, non-binary and other LGBTQ+ identities that don't identify as women but still have a period. There are also numerous pictures and links to other websites to find out more information, which provides a simple way to further research any aspects or topics discussed.

This easy-to-read book is a fascinating, yet a fundamental book to fully grasp where we, as a global population, have come in terms of understanding and highlighting the importance of addressing menstruation. Although we have certainly come a long way, it is clear that we still have a lot more to do and achieve and this book addresses these issues. Whether you have no knowledge about this relatively new movement or have a keen interest, I can guarantee this will be an insightful book! I highly recommend!

\*I received this book in exchange for an honest review\*

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### **Betty says**

Half of the people in the world have periods. Menstruation was once a taboo topic associated with superstition and prone to stigma, but in the 21st century it is still a taboo topic associated with superstition and prone to stigma.

Wait, what? Unfortunately, it's true.

*Periods Gone Public* touches on this subject, as well as the lack of access to menstrual products in some parts of the world (something that disrupts education for girls, as they have to stay home each time they have a period due to the lack of sanitary items and/or no private area in which to tend to their needs). Problematic issues closer to home include the lack of menstrual products for the homeless, as well as an inability to acquire these necessities. Pads are rationed for women in some prisons, and the inadequate supply is often of inferior quality, leading to soiled clothing the inmates have no choice but to wear—leading one to the obvious conclusion that the subsequent humiliation is used as another form of control over the already powerless.

These are but a few of the issues discussed in this book. Most of the topics included are things that I was completely unaware of, and made me realize that, for some, being on their period caused a great deal more disruption in their lives than I ever thought possible.

### **Final Thoughts**

I enjoy books that make me think, and this one certainly gave me a lot to think about. I was completely unaware that "period activism" was even a thing, but after reading this book? I can see why it's needed.

**I received an advance review copy of this book courtesy of Arcade Publishing via Edelweiss.**

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## Amy says

I stumbled across Periods Gone Public while browsing on amazon, and picked it up both because the topic sounded interesting and because I'm perennially interested in public policy and policy health, both of which this book promised to address. I have to say that I am extremely impressed.

Weiss-Wolf takes a topic that usually gets shunted off to the side and explains the health and wellness implications of consistently ignoring menstruation in public policy. Various chapters discuss the health implications of lack of access to proper supplies (infrequent changing, which leads to frequent urinary tract infections and an increased risk of other reproductive health problems; increased use of potentially dangerous substitutes, such as the story of one girl in India who ended up requiring a hysterectomy at 13 after using cloth which she was unaware was infested with reptile eggs; etc), menstruation in prison (everything from inadequate menstrual supplies available, the 'rationing' of menstrual supplies meaning that there's not enough to go around, unfair distribution of menstrual supplies by guards and/other inmates, lack of access to working toilets/showers even menstruation despite risks to other inmates/guards of potential blood-borne pathogens, refusal to launder blood-stained uniforms/bedding or provide new uniforms/bedding due to the laundry schedule, etc) or while homeless (lack of access to hygiene facilities, lack of privacy for changing menstrual supplies, the lack of access to laundry facilities, the likelihood that valuable menstrual supplies will be stolen, infrequent changing of menstrual supplies on hand or use of potentially dangerous substitutes and the attendant increased risk of infection, the likelihood of stress and lack of dignity associated with forced free bleeding, etc), the implications of the tampon tax and why menstrual supplies should be considered necessities under state tax codes (that are not deemed necessities implies that they are luxuries, but - given the health implications of not using menstrual supplies - this is clearly not the case), the confusing and contradictory classification of menstrual supplies by various state and federal bodies/programs (which result in varying levels of safety oversight and product disclosure by the FDA; for example, we know more about the ingredients in mascara and lipgloss than about tampons or other menstrual supplies), the implications of excluding menstrual supplies from the approved for purchase lists for programs like SNAP and WIC (menstrual supplies are, for some unfathomable reason, put in the same category as pet food, cigarettes, and alcohol), the case for free menstrual supplies available in all restrooms in public spaces and workplaces (such as avoiding lost productivity at work in the event of an unexpected period start and making an effort for ease of accessibility for all, especially low-wage earners who are likely to have difficulty affording menstrual supplies in the first place), as well as suggestions for first steps and overall policy direction. And Weiss-Wolf does this against the backdrop of inclusion; she goes out of her way to recognize the issues faced by the trans community specifically and build those concerns into policy suggestions.

Periods Gone Public is an extraordinarily well-written book regarding the public policy and social issues with continuing to ignore menstruation, and it is a beacon of hope that period-positive movements already in existence will be able to change the status quo in terms of both culture and policy. Weiss-Wolf does an amazing job reviewing the issues at hand, making a case for suggested changes, and recognizing barriers that will be faced (including the implications of entrepreneurial activism and whether or not businesses can really stand at the helm of lasting, wide-reaching social change; right-wing blowback in general; entrenched dogma regarding women's/trans people's health/bodies; the potential for health issues associated with some periods of for some of the menstruating population to be construed as a built-in, biologically based weakness, meaning that women/trans people should not be entrusted with anything of importance; the age and maleness of the majority of Congress, meaning that issues important to women/trans people often go unrecognized or

not dealt with; the issue of environmentally sound products, especially considering that accessibility campaigns usually revolve around disposable menstrual products, the price associated with most environmentally sound menstrual products, and the potential barriers - such as a homeless individual lacking the privacy and soap necessary to clean a menstrual cup - to using reuseables; among other things). While Weiss-Wolf does not offer a 'battle plan' (as she puts it), she does offer a 'blueprint' and enumerates ways to get involved with menstrual activism. I am also happy with Periods Gone Public being available for borrowing via kindle unlimited, as usually only right-leaning public policy are available for borrowing. Hopefully, that will increase the availability and accessibility of this book, helping the message of period-positivity and menstrual activism to reach a wider audience. I am very happy to have found this book, learned a lot from it, and will recommend it to others.

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### **Sara says**

I'm trying to raise my knowledge of feminist issues this year, and when I saw this on Netgalley it caught my attention. I guess I've never really thought about menstruation other than, you know, having one. It's not something people talk about, or want to read about. But maybe we should.

The biggest political issue surrounding periods I've heard about recently has been the campaign in the UK to scrap the so-called 'tampon tax', whereby the sale of sanitary products shouldn't also be additionally charged. At the time of the campaign I remember feeling indignant that women had to even pay for something deemed essential, let alone pay tax on it as well. This book expanded this argument, but also included issues I hadn't even considered. Homelessness and menstruation. Menstruation and poverty. Periods in the non-Western world (the brief note about a New York article regarding a young girl using rags infested with lizard eggs particularly struck a chord).

The book itself is organised in a loose pattern of following the author as she traversed a year in the political landscape of menstruation, and includes her travels around the globe helping to educate and distribute sanitary products, as well as simply listening to women's stories. All women's stories. Teenagers, prisoners, the homeless, from all different cultures and societies. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf did a lot of research here, and a lot of ground is covered with a diverse set of women. The author excels at bringing together a large range of stories, with so many different issues. My other concern was that a lot of her arguments are very American (understandably, as she's American), but I would have liked to have read more from a European perspective and in particular what the NHS is doing about these issues (the sentence about Boots being described as a 'swanky pharmacist' made me chuckle). At times I also felt the story were getting heavily bogged down in facts - I wanted to read more about the authors journey, and more importantly the people that she meets and their stories, rather than facts and figures.

My favourite section in the book was the chapter about menstruation and homelessness. The women's stories were so hard hitting and relatable - and I felt a little ashamed of myself for never thinking about the kinds of problems that these women face on a daily basis. Such as the inability to fit a box of tampons in your rucksack, your only way of transporting your things with you. Having no access to sanitary public bathrooms, resulting in infections. Or that tampons are so expensive they're seen as a luxury, and one of the things most likely to be stolen when living on the streets.

Collectively, I thought this was an extremely thoughtful piece of work and has certainly opened my mind to the greater issues women still face with regards to menstruation in the modern age. It's something that women shouldn't be hiding - it isn't a taboo, and we should be bringing it to the forefront of the media.

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## Tim says

In an otherwise treacherous political era for women's bodies and health, activists and lawmakers are advancing a new, affirmative agenda – for the very first time, one that meshes menstruation and public policy. From tax reform to public benefits to corrections policy, periods have become the surprising force fueling a high-profile, bipartisan movement.

Activist Weiss-Wolf's debut 'Periods Gone Public' explores the ever-evolving global and national political debates and conversations around menstruation. She explores the many forms of protests (e.g. #periodsforpence) and legislative debates (repealing the 'tampon tax'), and examines how social background impacts menstrual equity (she especially focuses on homelessness, poverty, and the prison system). Her focus goes far beyond the US, as these questions arguably have a much bigger impact in non-western countries: from simple truths like the fact that menstruation taboos lead to monthly loss of income due to the days menstruating people have to take off, and the lack of education because menstruating teens miss school days for the same reason.

The issues Weiss-Wolf discusses in this book are about nothing less than educational opportunity, economic empowerment, health and bodily integrity, and the understanding that menstruation is deeply rooted in the broader fight for human rights across the world. She makes the compelling point that these issues need to be thought globally and holistically: we should not only think of how to ensure basic women's health care and hygiene in all corners of the world, but also how we manage the logistics (production of menstrual products, clean water supply, waste management etc.), and the educational support structure that is needed to eradicate menstrual discrimination.

Weiss-Wolf shares her firsthand account in the fight for 'period equity' and introduces readers to the leaders, pioneers, and everyday people who are making change happen. In addition to compiling a brief history of menstrual activism, she also shares her thoughts on specific legislation that should be passed to clear the way towards menstrual equity.

Weiss-Wolf has a clear, and sometimes funny, way of writing. This book was a lot of fun to read, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the topic, or social and feminist discussions in general. I do, however, want to share some points on what I would have liked to see in the book: For one thing, Weiss-Wolf does briefly mention the fact that menstruation is widely seen as a natural function of female bodies, yet in fact that is not quite correct. Not all female bodies menstruate, and some men and gender-nonconforming individuals do. This fact needs to be included into all discussions on menstruation, and the author does not always live up to that standard. That may be because it is difficult to cite specific statistics on the problem, although I think that should not deter us from including non-female menstruating bodies in the discussion. To be fair, she does discuss the problem of widening the scope of the discussion to include all genders and non-genders, but I think she could have done a better job at taking her own advice on the topic.

The second criticism I have is that the structure is all over the place. She seems to have difficulty deciding between a chapter-for-chapter or a essayistic approach towards the book. She spirals around issues concerning menstruation touching on certain aspects again and again, even if a detailed discussion of the aspect was included in an earlier chapter. I found this irritating in certain chapters, as I felt it took away from making important points in a clear and concise manner.

Overall, Weiss-Wolf's thorough research and detailed history, coupled with her practical suggestions for advocating for menstrual equity, make this book an illuminating read.

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### **Nicki says**

This was such a shocking but also a truly inspirational read! I actually read this months ago and have been sitting on my review not sure when I should post it. Even though we live in the 21st century and almost anything can be discussed in public without embarrassment, I felt slightly unsure about the reception I'd get to a book review about menstruation. Yes it's only on my blog, Goodreads and amazon, so it's not like I'm standing on a street corner shouting about Period Inequality or running the London Marathon 'free bleeding', unlike some of the period activists mentioned in this book.

The only period activists I'd read about before was, Arunachalam Muruganantham in a BBC article from a few years ago. He's one of many people mentioned in the book finding ways to bring cheaper and hygienic sanitary wear to women in India and around the world.

I read shocking stories about homeless women finding it nearly impossible to gain access to tampons and towels, and also the barbaric treatment of women in US prisons whilst having their periods. It made me realise how unfair women are treated in society because we bleed every month. Why should girls miss school because they can't find the money for the exorbitant price of a box of tampons or sanitary towels?! Why are these essentials still being taxed in some countries?

It's not all doom and gloom though, as the author highlights all the positive activities that are happening around the world to fight menstrual inequality.

A definite must read for women of all ages.

Thanks to NetGalley and Skyhorse Publishing, Arcade Publishing for my digital ARC.

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### **Ruth says**

**Please note that I received this book from Thomas Allen & Son in exchange for an honest review.**

I have to admit that I started off feeling pretty skeptical about this book. I mean, periods? Why would I want to read about that? And taking this book on the subway (with its cover screaming PERIODS GONE PUBLIC)? Fat chance of that happening! But as I started to read, I realized that my reaction is part of the problem.

Why are women so ashamed and embarrassed by this natural process, WITHOUT WHICH we, as a human race, would come to an end? Throughout the book Jennifer Weiss-Wolf points out ways that patriarchal society (either maliciously or simply without realizing) influences the lives of people who menstruate. She discusses how some individuals and organizations are improving period equity across the planet and what steps we might take moving forward.

Weiss-Wolf really knows her stuff and that is evident through her writing. She brings to light so many things

I had never considered, such as how much of a struggle it is for homeless people to access menstrual products, how menstrual products are taxed as luxury items in the US while products like Viagra and Rogaine are not, and that not everyone who menstruates is female. Weiss-Wolf comes at each issue from multiple angles and provides a way for every person to see the benefit of her proposals. For example, she shows how some of the changes she wishes to see could also promote economic growth, thereby appealing to those concerned more about the bottom line than period equity itself.

Throughout my reading experience, I was struck by the quality of the writing. It is just so *pleasant* to read a well-written book. Either Weiss-Wolf is an amazing writer, her editor is fabulous or, I suspect, it's a combination of both!

I would 100% recommend this book to anyone who likes reading non-fiction, is interested in social justice, and wants to learn something new.

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### **Michelle Welch says**

I read this book as an uncorrected proof from Edelweiss.

The book's slightly sassy title gives way to some serious and often dismaying content: Why is there virtually no oversight in the production of menstrual hygiene products? Why are these products taxed as if they're nonessentials, unlike food - including junk food - and medications - including Viagra? And why are they so hard to come by around the world and even in some communities in America, thereby ensuring that women find it impossible to fully participate in public life?

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