

when she bleeds



A COLLECTION OF PERIOD POEMS

Featuring

*Nnenna Eronini • Ademidun Ajiwe • Ajiboye Temidayo Ayengbero
Ishola Hubaidat • Oluwatumise Gbajumo
Elemuren Adekemi Immanuel • Ehikocho Ngumezi
Oded Ucheagwu • Jessica Ibironke
Akinyemi Temiloluwa Emmanuella
Ajadi Deborah Morenikeji • Michelle Onuminya*

by

Girl Child Art Foundation

It takes courage to share our period stories.
When She Bleeds is a collection of poetry about
mensuration memories, understanding self,
being a woman, sisterhood, cycles, and rage.

To all the girls who participated in this project,
we say a big **thank you** for sharing your stories.

Special thank you to Ms. Nkechi Mordi and Mr.
Olutunde Fadairo for the role you played as judges.

To Mr. Ibe Ananaba, we appreciate your support.

Ada Onyejike-Ananaba
Founder, Girl child Art Foundation.

WHEN SHE BLEEDS

*The excitement and feeling
She felt when she understood the meaning
Of those drops of no return
Now, a new woman is born*

*She is not numb to the pain
That has to be appreciated
She's not blind to the the river
That oozes out of her*

*When she doesn't bleed,
She cannot begat any fertile seed
Her value reduced and forgotten
Thrown to the dogs to be eaten*

*And when she does
Excitement of different doses
Fills her heart and soul
For she can make a home*

- Nnenna Eronini, 20



HONOUR TO THE FEMININE

*To the woman of bravery
A scarce jewel
To the abode of safety
A being dwell*

*Groomed as a female child
To be a girl, lady, and woman
The monthly blood flow*

*Her womb is a warm haven
Between her laps comes a baby
She could be the mother of seven
On her nip sucks the able*

*Behind her is a relaxing bed
Her chest lies the supplement food
Either fighting for the sole or the head
Her compassion is beyond the good*

*Honor to the feminine who is selfless
A figure whose essence isn't useless*

- Ademidun Ajiwe, 21



CUPS AND MATCHES

*My red cup held high,
I can't feel my legs but I'm not high.
My energy pegged down,
Nothing will ruin my dance, not this red clown.*

*I'm a boss on my lane,
I'll shut my door and conquer this pain,
Pass me the lighter,
These matches might make me look like a fighter.*

*Oh, my last cash!
They are saying two per day isn't good enough,
Can't it all end in a flash?
Life's hard already, must this also be tough?*

- Ajiboye Temidayo Ayengbero, 22



IT'S THAT TIME OF THE MONTH AGAIN!

*It's that time of the month again,
when my body soils me in a pool of red.
Pain, it pierces deep in my lower abdomen.*

*The stain, it's visible on my favorite skirt
Oh, the shame! can someone get me some ibuprofen?
'cause it's that time of the month again,*

*When my immune system betrays my trust.
"No white blood cell can fight this battle," it says.
Can somebody please, hand me a pain killer!
Oh the cramps! and also get me a sanitary pad while you're at it?
'cause it's that time of the month again,
when building a fortress becomes necessary to protect my tainted dignity.*

- Ishola Hubaidat, 21



MY CYCLE MY PRIDE

Is my cloth stained?

Is my pad showing?

Does this cloth make my pad obvious?

All the questions that run through my mind when I'm ON.

I can't tell why my tummy is hurting

I am too ashamed to tell about my cramps

Why?

Because we've made being a woman on her flow into a shameful act.

I have cramps in class

Can't tell make it obvious

Can't tell my male teachers

Why?

Because I am too scared of what they'll think.

- Oluwatunmise Gbajumo, 19



RED LIQUID DRIPPING

*Dripping down my knee
Flowing with so much ease
Like water from the mountains
Pain striking beneath my chest
My back and my legs even my head*

*Who else feels how I feel?
Scarcity everywhere but the liquid beneath me knows no scarcity*

*Flowing like water without walls, Flowing to the brim
Wetness everywhere beneath
How can I stop the flow?*

*Myself I irritate, I stink
The flies behind and before me need not to tell me
I can't sit less I damp my deep blue skirt With red liquid*

*Besides me lay a multitude of worn clothes
Pieces of my own wrappers, Changing and washing
In foamless brown water,
8 times on each day 5 times on each night
My hands surely hurts*

*I know what I feel I know how it feels
The pain and the fear
Cashless and foodless everywhere
My flow the least of all problems
No one cared but me*

*Sore hands
Sleepless days and sleepless nights
Heart beating
Surely the pandemic had my cycle in the picture*

- Elemuren Adekemi Immanuela, 21



WHEN SHE BLEEDS

*When she bleeds, She bleeds seeds,
Every single one, Capable of breathing of being born,
But ...She hates it,
That super power to make life or take it, She is ashamed,
Because she went out and didn't know she was stained.
There she is walking down the road,
Huffing and puffing with her really heavy load,
She passes a mallam and he snickers,
She passes some young men leaning on a car filled with stickers,
They stop talking and stare, She tries to walk past like she doesn't care,
The moment she walks past, It's like she releases laughing gas,
They laugh like little imps,
She breathes and struggles not to weep,
"I'm almost home" she thinks,
"Wait up!" says a voice "open oh ground let me sink" she thinks,
"I'm sorry they're laughing but you are stained" he says,
"Ugh!" She thinks "I'm wearing lots of greys!",
He takes off his sweater "Tie it round your waist",
Mortified she does so with alot of haste,
He says "I'll walk you home so you don't feel alone,
",He takes some of her load as they set of on the road,
He says "Y'all are lucky, you know?,
That blood it's meaning do you know?,
It means life can live in you.....not just live but grow,
Y'all are like mini god's!,
Y'all can make armies or hordes,
That blood is a gift,
And trust me that makes you a gift,
So hold your head up high
Why they laugh i don't know why"
So she does, she holds her head high.
"I am amazing!!" She cries,
"I will make life when I am a wife,
I am a queen bee who will build her hive
!"In that moment she realizes she is a god,
Because of her blood.*



BLOOD RED, RED BLOOD

*Blood red, red blood
When the blood first appeared
I was frightened, I was excited
11 year old child
Yet already a woman
And so began a tireless cycle
Month after month
Sometimes twice a month
The red blood flows
Soft and slow
Hard and fast
Diarrhoea it's constant companion
Pain a well known visitor
As my womb tears itself apart
Uncomfortable sanitary pads
Chafing at sensitive skin
Pimples on my face
Emotions all over the place
The fear of being stained
Is this, I wonder,
What it means to be a woman?
One day,
Ohhh! It seems so far away
The red blood will stop flowing
And finally
Peace, rest, freedom
Until the next round of troubles begin.*

- Oded Ucheagwu, 20



HER RED MORNING

*Her red morning begins with a twist of pain,
A heavy heart and an aching waist.
She dreads the time that has come to stay,
And looks forward to the passing of these trying days.*

*Her red morning arrived, not a day's delay is met.
Unexpectedly to the she who keeps it not in check.
Her confidence is swayed, she longs to look over her head,
On a plain white skirt, hoping not to see red.*

*Her red morning is here, but the world is not at its end.
Her responsibilities awaiting, her duties ahead.
So the brave 'she' steps forward and faces it instead.
Never swaying dignity, courageous and fierce.*

- Jessica Ibironke,18



WHEN SHE BLEEDS

*When she bleeds
Her heart dips
Unhappiness seeps
Her frame gets weak*

*Her hands quivering
Her stomach uneasy
The price she pays dearly
To be cleansed in her ovaries*

*Many times she would question
"Why did life bless me with this horror?
Why do I get these monthly tortures?
Does this only get worse?"*

*And every time she would bow to pray
She has very little to say
But the Lord knows that she craves
Inner ease, now and always*

- Akinyemi Temiloluwa Emmanuella, 17



WHEN SHE BLEEDS!

*The Innocent Child she was,
Mother never told her but a glimpse she grasp by learning,
A day arrived, after Mum's demise:
When she bleeds!
The sudden arrival of her visitor,
Instantly followed by excruciating pains...
Her constant prayers, now is she ready?
To accept, even When she bleeds!
No Mom to care, no hands on deck,
No one to call..
Everyone minding their businesses,
even When she bleeds!
Maidens proudly wear tampons,
Though sometimes in pains;
Worse than even Imaginations,
Still go about the day,
even When she bleeds!
It is a Cross she carries,
A symbol of Womanhood,
The flow of legendity, warrior is she,
Even, When She bleeds!*

- Ajadi Deborah Morenikeji, 19



WHEN SHE BLEEDS

*When she bleeds, no one else sees it
No one else feels it, only her feels the beauty in her blood
when she bleeds*

*When she bleeds, It doesn't come with a warning
She has no choice, the pain she bears bleeding out
when she bleeds*

*It seems scary, it feels disgusting
The pain, unbearable. But it's a must.
It's part of her. Her pride...
When she bleeds*

*The first time, the fear not to worry
It means maturity.
Hurray!.. she bleeds. She is a woman.*

*You learn to love your blood
You learn to defend ur blood
You learn courage, You learn positivity*

*You learn the beauty of womanhood
The cramps, the smell,
She was restricted from somethings
she accepted it was her pride. 'cause when she bleeds
Her pride and dignity as a woman shines brighter than the sun*

*Is there a river more beautiful
than the bright Red River when she bleeds?*

*Ohh!... how she feels
when she hears the drop of her blood
Her pride. Her strength
It's like a flow of blessing
Some might hate it, Some might feel uncomfortable
But every woman should know that it's her Pride
Ohh... what a beautiful feeling
When she bleeds!*



WHEN SHE BLEEDS

Menstruation practices still face many social, cultural, and religious restrictions which are big barriers in the path of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). In many parts of Nigeria (especially in rural areas), girls are not prepared and aware about menstruation so they face many difficulties and challenges at school, home and work. In rural and suburban areas, majority of young women and girls do not have access to sanitary products. They know very little about the types and method of using them, or are unable to afford such products due to high cost.

Periods don't stop regardless of pandemic. Access to clean running water, soap for handwashing, clean toilets and sanitary products are critical needs for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in these critical times. For millions of girls who menstruate, Covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges. This poetry compilation looks at how girls and young women's period were affected by the pandemic.

Poems selected by
Ms. Nkechi Mordi
Mr. Olutunde Fadairo

