

#MYPERIOD!



The title 'SIRI ya MWEZI' is rendered in a highly stylized, hand-drawn font. 'SIRI' is in large, pink, rounded letters with a dark pink outline and a patterned interior. 'ya' is in a smaller, teal, rounded font. 'MWEZI' is in large, teal, rounded letters with a dark teal outline and a patterned interior. The text is set against a dark purple background. To the left of the text is a large, stylized yellow sun with black outlines. To the right is a stylized yellow fox head with black outlines. Below the text is a stylized yellow crescent moon with black outlines. The overall style is vibrant and illustrative.

SIRI ya MWEZI

WRITTEN BY **ABIGAIL ARUNGA**
ILLUSTRATED BY **NZILANI SIMU**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

POLYCOM GIRLS AND WOMANKIND WORLDWIDE PRESENT:
SIRI YA MWEZI

WRITER ABIGAIL ARUNGA

ILLUSTRATOR NZILANI SIMU

VOICE OVER ARTIST RAY MUTAI

PRODUCERS POLYCOM GIRLS AND WOMANKIND WORLDWIDE

REVIEWERS VINCENT MUINDE, YVONNE NDIRANGU, SALLY GIFT,
ANNE AGAR, JILL ANAMI, LYDIA ACHIENG, HANNAH COOMBS

COLLABORATORS

KAVINYA MAKAU, DISHA SUGHAND, DIANA NJUGUNA,
JANE ANYANGO, DINAH MUSINDARWEZO, CAROLE NYAMBURA

SPECIAL THANKS TO

ALL THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN KIBERA
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS WHO SHARED THEIR DIVERSE
EXPERIENCES ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH



EDITORS NOTE

DEAR READER,

WELCOME TO SIRI YA MWEZI, A STORY THAT HOLDS WITHIN ITS PAGES THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WAY WE VIEW ONE OF LIFE'S MOST NATURAL PROCESSES—MENSTRUATION.

THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR YOUNG HEROINE, HAKIMA, WE EMBARK ON A JOURNEY THAT NOT ONLY CHALLENGES LONG-STANDING TABOOS BUT ALSO CELEBRATES THE COURAGE IT TAKES TO ASK QUESTIONS, SEEK ANSWERS, AND STAND TALL IN THE FACE OF STIGMA.

THIS COMIC BOOK IS MORE THAN JUST A STORY. IT'S A CALL TO ACTION FOR EVERY GIRL, PARENT, TEACHER, AND COMMUNITY MEMBER TO FOSTER OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND TO SUPPORT THE IDEA THAT PERIODS ARE NOT A SOURCE OF SHAME BUT A SYMBOL OF GROWTH AND STRENGTH. THROUGH THIS JOURNEY, WE HOPE YOU FIND INSPIRATION, EMPOWERMENT AND THE COURAGE TO PASS ON THESE MESSAGES OF DIGNITY AND EQUALITY TO OTHERS.

AS YOU TURN EACH PAGE, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SEE THE STRENGTH IN VULNERABILITY, THE BEAUTY IN CURIOSITY, AND THE IMMENSE POWER IN KNOWLEDGE. TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A WORLD WHERE EVERY GIRL FEELS PROUD, SUPPORTED, AND UNAFRAID TO TAKE HER PLACE IN THE WORLD.

LET'S BREAK THE SILENCE. LET'S END THE STIGMA. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, LET'S EMBRACE THE TRUTH THAT YOUR PERIOD IS JUST A PERIOD—NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS. #MYPERIOD!

WITH GRATITUDE AND HOPE,

Vincent Mwinde & Yvonne Ndiqangu

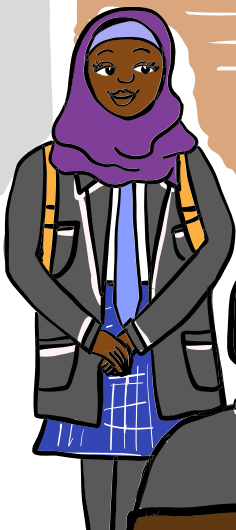
EDITORS, SIRI YA MWEZI



IT'S THE SECOND DAY OF SCHOOL, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MATHS LESSON. MISS JEAN COMES INTO CLASS WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

THERE'S A NEW STUDENT JOINING US TODAY, HER NAME IS HAKIMA.

HELLO HAKIMA!



MICH, YOU'LL SHOW HER AROUND, OK?



MICH NODS. HAKIMA SITS NEXT TO HER AND THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER.

HI, I'M MICH.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

OK, EVERYONE, BACK TO CLASS...



THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

DON'T FORGET, AFTER THIS CLASS, THE BOYS WILL GO TO THE FIELD, AND THE GIRLS HAVE A SPECIAL MEETING IN THE HALL.

WHY DO WE HAVE TO GO TO THE HALL?

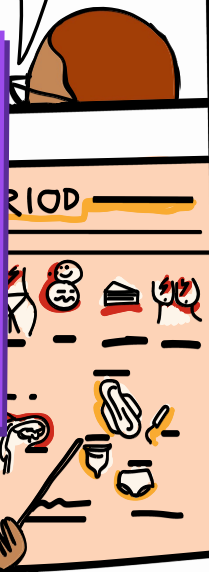
I DON'T KNOW WHY, THE TEACHERS JUST SAID THE GIRLS ARE HAVING A SPECIAL TALK TODAY.

THE STUDENTS PUT THEIR BOOKS AWAY AND WHILE THE BOYS START PLAYING, THE GIRLS ALL LEAVE THE CLASS.

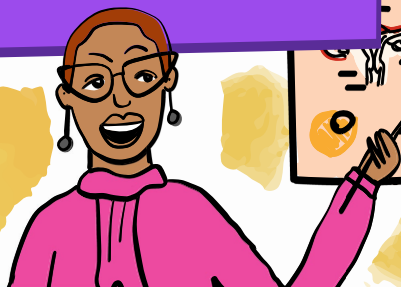


AS YOU GROW OLDER AND GO THROUGH PUBERTY, YOUR BODY CHANGES IN DIFFERENT WAYS, AND MENSTRUATION IS JUST ONE OF THOSE NATURAL CHANGES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE TOOLS THAT YOU NEED FOR THESE CHANGES. SOME OF THESE TOOLS ARE SANITARY PRODUCTS LIKE PADS.

MISS JEAN IS SHOWING THE GIRLS IN THE HALL A CHART THAT EXPLAINS MENSTRUATION, THROUGH ITS CYCLES. THERE IS A BANNER THERE OF A PAD COMPANY, AND A PILE OF PADS/PACKETS OF PADS ON A TABLE NEXT TO HER. ALL THE GIRLS HAVE THEIR BAGS WITH THEM. SOME OF THE GIRLS ARE SURPRISED, SHOCKED, FRIGHTENED, SHY, CURIOUS, AND EVEN BORED, A WHOLE RANGE OF EMOTIONS.



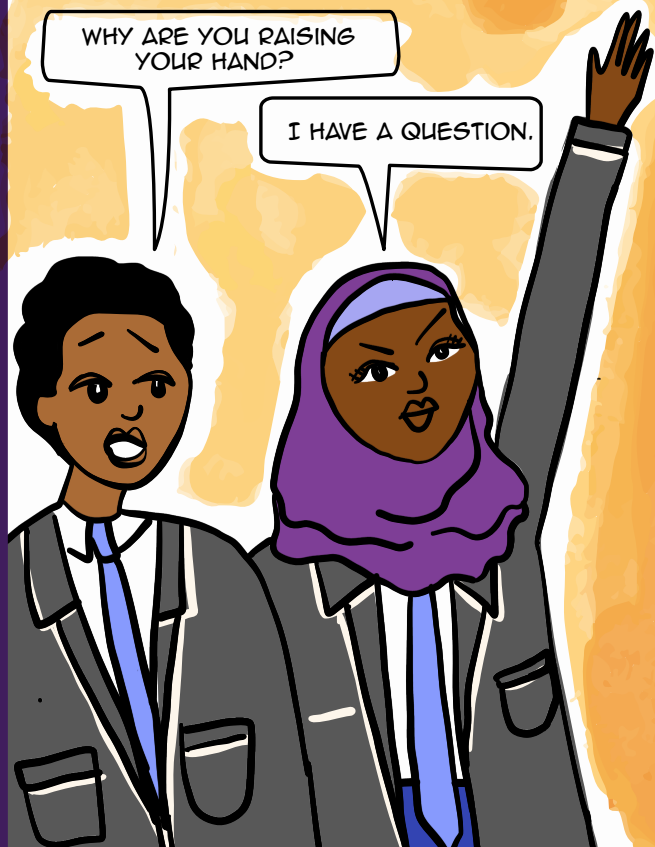
SO NOW, I'M GOING TO GIVE EVERYONE A PACKET OF PADS. REMEMBER I'VE SHOWED YOU HOW TO USE THEM, RIGHT? IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS, YOU CAN ASK YOUR PARENTS.



HAKIMA RAISES HER HAND, AS
MICH LOOKS AT HER IN SHOCK.

WHY ARE YOU RAISING
YOUR HAND?

I HAVE A QUESTION.

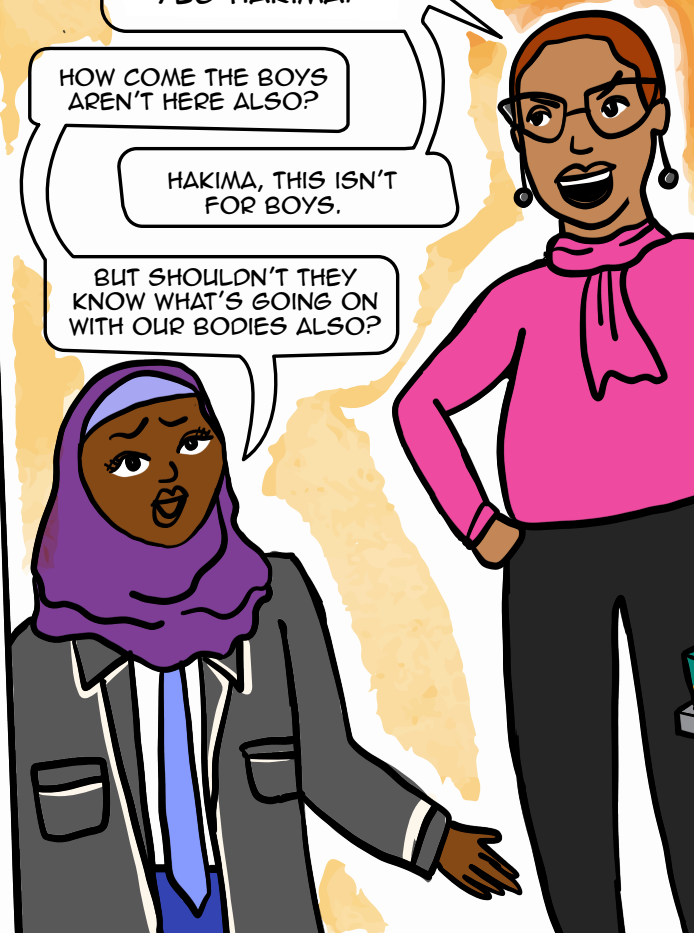


YES HAKIMA?

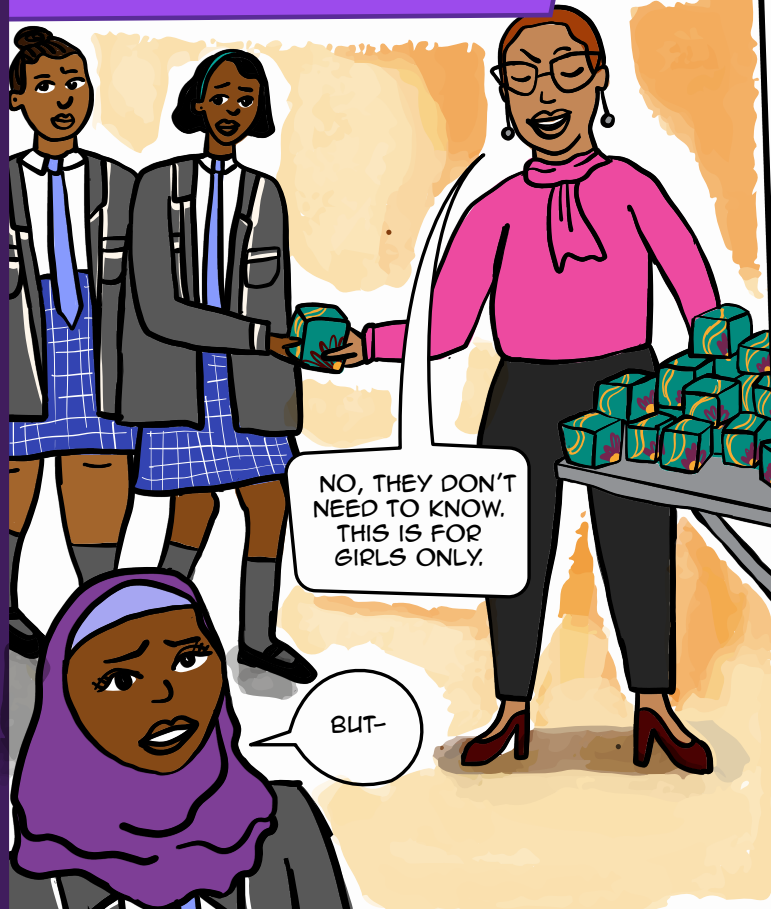
HOW COME THE BOYS
AREN'T HERE ALSO?

HAKIMA, THIS ISN'T
FOR BOYS.

BUT SHOULDN'T THEY
KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON
WITH OUR BODIES ALSO?



MISS JEAN IS GIVING OUT THE PAD PACKETS. THE OTHER GIRLS LOOK AT HAKIMA, CURIOUS ABOUT WHY SHE'S ASKING SUCH QUESTIONS.

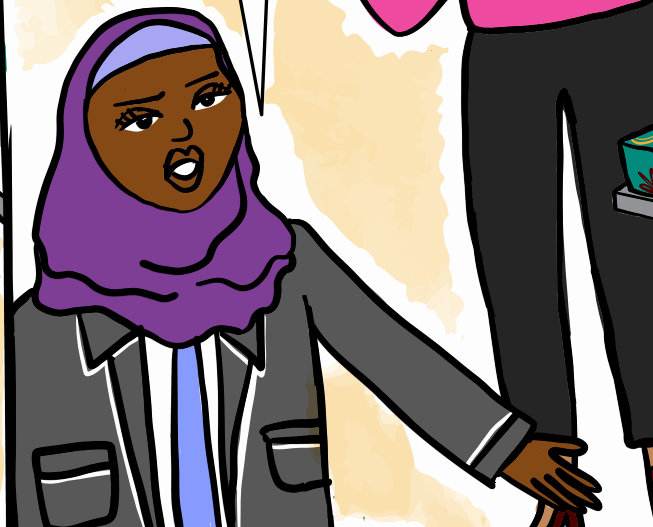


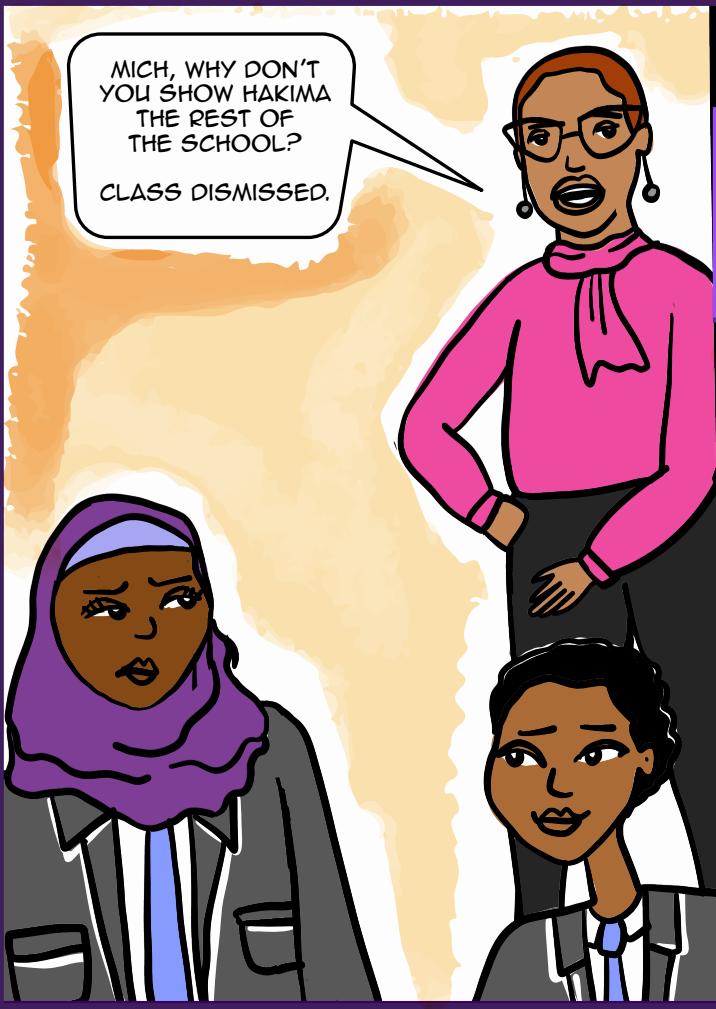
NO, THEY DON'T
NEED TO KNOW.
THIS IS FOR
GIRLS ONLY.

BUT-

MAKE SURE YOU
KEEP THESE
SAFELY, IN A
SECRET PLACE.
THESE THINGS ARE
PERSONAL THINGS,
OK?

WHY ARE THEY
SECRET? EVERYONE
KNOWS GIRLS HAVE
PERIODS.



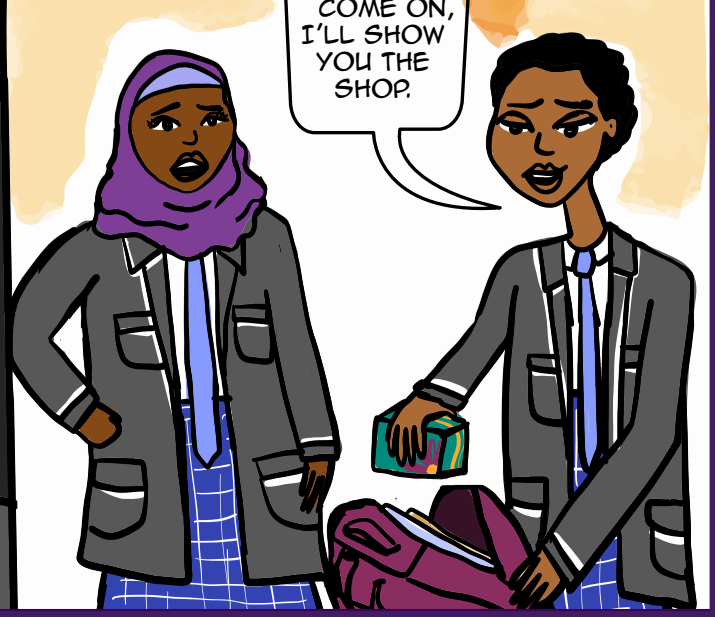


MICH, WHY DON'T
YOU SHOW HAKIMA
THE REST OF
THE SCHOOL?

CLASS DISMISSED.

HAKIMA WANTS TO ASK MORE, BUT
EVERYONE HAS ALREADY STOOD
UP AND STARTED LEAVING.

MICH PUTS HER PACKET OF PADS
IN HER BAG.



COME ON,
I'LL SHOW
YOU THE
SHOP.



HAKIMA TAKES OUT A PAD AND PUTS IT IN HER POCKET. SHE PICKS UP HER BAG, HOLDING THE REST OF THE PAD PACKET IN HER HAND, AND FOLLOWS MICH, WITHOUT HIDING THE PACKET IN HER BAG. SOME GIRLS POINT AT IT AND GIGGLE BEHIND THEIR HANDS. HAKIMA MEETS THEIR GAZES, AND KEEPS WALKING.



MICH IS IN CLASS AGAIN, WITH HAKIMA NEXT TO HER, AND A DIFFERENT TEACHER IS TALKING. MICH IS SQUIRMING IN HER SEAT, IN PAIN.



MICH PUTS HER HAND UP.



EXCUSE ME SIR,
MAY I BE
EXCUSED?

YOU GIRLS
ARE ALWAYS
GOING TO THE
BATHROOM!

I NEED TO
GO, SIR.

FINE.

HAKIMA WALKS
INTO THE BATHROOM.



MICH? MICH, ARE YOU IN
HERE? THE TEACHER IS
ASKING WHY YOU'VE BEEN
GONE SO LONG.

HAKIMA CAN HEAR
MICH MOANING
IN PAIN.

WHAT'S
WRONG?
WHAT CAN
I DO?

I...I THINK MY PERIOD
HAS STARTED.

OH, OK.
DO YOU
HAVE A
PAD?

NO...THAT'S
WHY I'VE
BEEN HERE
FOR SO LONG.

HAKIMA TAKES THE PAD OUT OF
HER POCKET AND GIVES IT TO
MICH OVER THE DOOR OF THE
BATHROOM STALL.



MICH COMES OUT,
STILL LOOKING
MISERABLE,
BUT A LITTLE
RELIEVED.

OH! CONGRATULATIONS.

IT'S MY
FIRST TIME.

CONGRATULATIONS??

YES, OF COURSE,
CONGRATULATIONS.
A PERIOD IS A
COMMON EXPERIENCE
AT OUR AGE, AND IT'S
A NATURAL PART OF
LIFE, RIGHT?

I GUESS...

IT JUST
MEANS
THAT YOUR
BODY IS
CHANGING.

IT'S SO UNCOMFORTABLE!

YES, THAT'S THE ANNOYING PART. BUT
THE PAIN SHOULD NEVER BE SO
MUCH THAT YOU CAN'T MOVE. IF IT
GETS LIKE
THAT, YOU
SHOULD SEE
A DOCTOR
AND EXPLAIN
THE PAIN
YOU ARE
FEELING.

MICH AND HAKIMA WASH THEIR HANDS.

**YOUR PERIOD IS
YOUR PERIOD, AND
IT'S JUST A PERIOD.**

THE MORE YOU
KNOW ABOUT IT,
THE BETTER YOU
CAN HANDLE IT.

HAKIMA WALKS OUT, LEAVING MICH IN THE BATHROOM,
HOLDING HER STOMACH AND REPEATING...

IT JUST MEANS THAT YOUR
BODY IS CHANGING....

IT JUST MEANS THAT
YOUR BODY IS CHANGING...

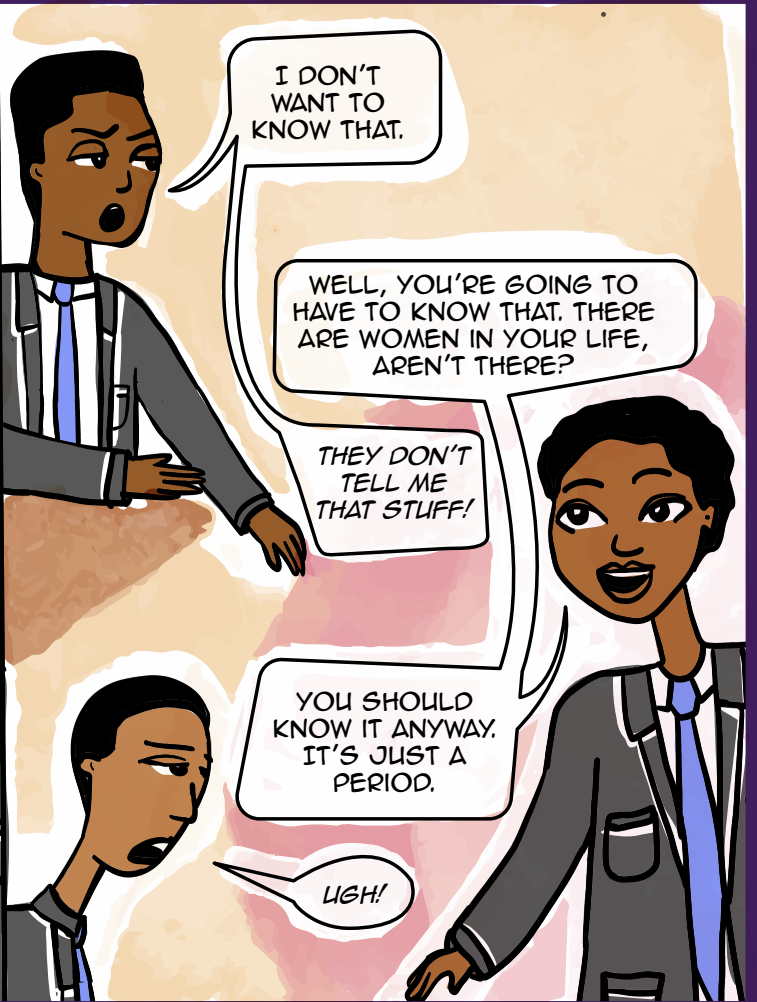
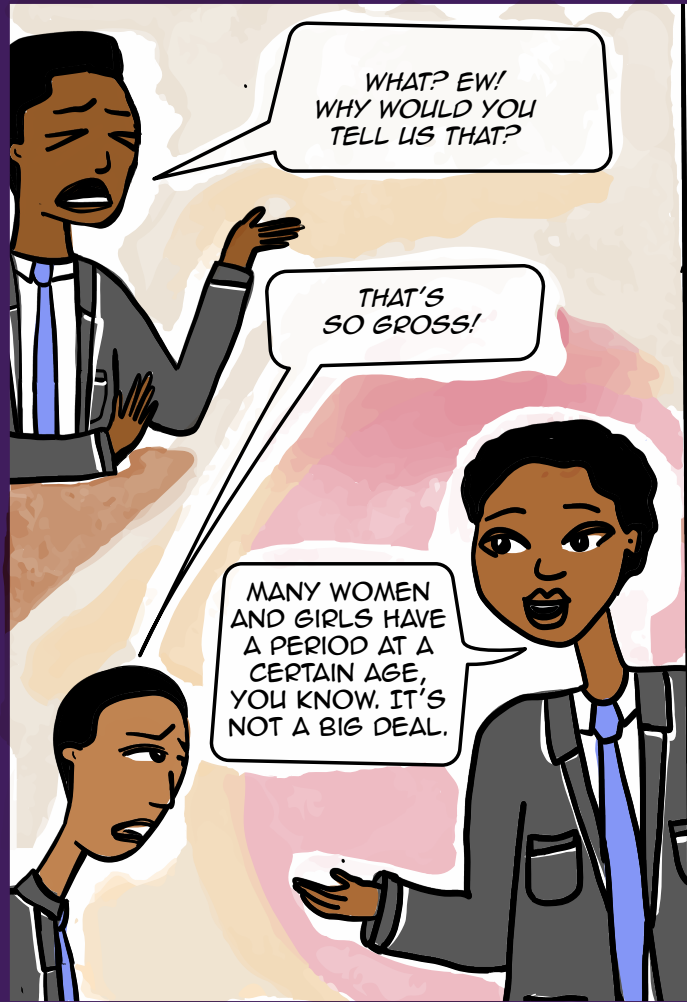
MICH WALKS BACK INTO CLASS AND THE CLASS IS ON A BREAK BETWEEN LESSONS. STUDENTS ARE READING, OR WRITING, OR PLAYING GAMES.

WHY WERE YOU GONE SO LONG DURING THE SCIENCE LESSON?

SHE WAS PROBABLY JUST RUNNING AWAY FROM CLASS, MICH IS SO BAD AT SCIENCE.

THE BOYS LAUGH AT HER. MICH IS GETTING ANNOYED. SHE GLANCES OVER AT HAKIMA, WHO LOOKS AT HER, GIVING HER A LOOK THAT SAYS, WELL?

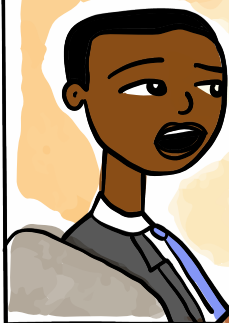
I WAS IN THE BATHROOM BECAUSE MY PERIOD STARTED.



YOU BOYS
SHOULD HAVE
BEEN AT THE
TALK TODAY.

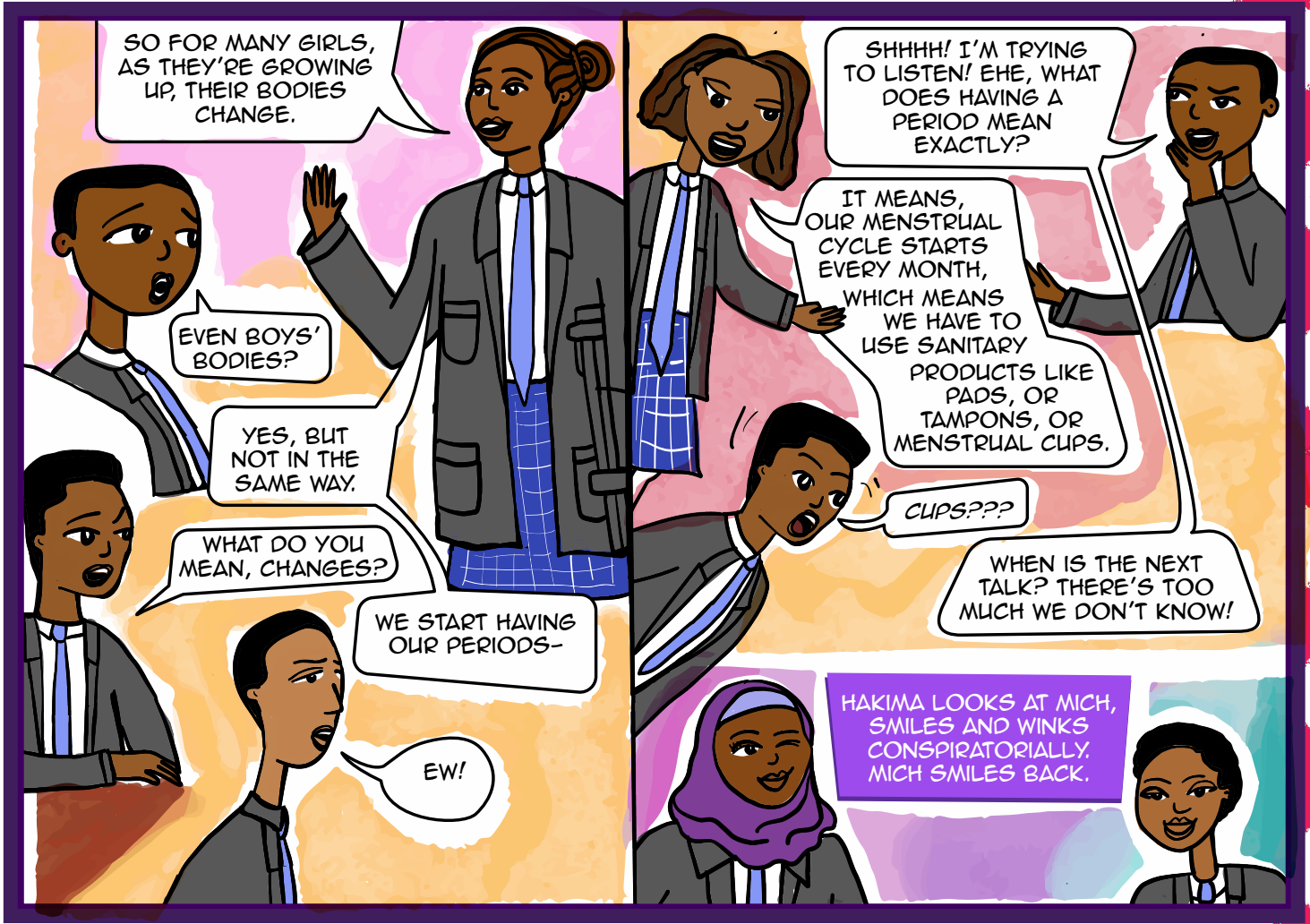


WHAT WAS IT
ABOUT?



THE BOYS AND GIRLS IN CLASS START
TALKING ABOUT WHAT THE GIRLS WERE
TAUGHT IN THE HALL. THERE IS A
MIXTURE OF FEAR AND CURIOSITY IN THE
AIR AS THEY DISCUSS...





SO FOR MANY GIRLS,
AS THEY'RE GROWING
UP, THEIR BODIES
CHANGE.

EVEN BOYS'
BODIES?

YES, BUT
NOT IN THE
SAME WAY.

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, CHANGES?

WE START HAVING
OUR PERIODS--

EW!

SHHHH! I'M TRYING
TO LISTEN! EHE, WHAT
DOES HAVING A
PERIOD MEAN
EXACTLY?

IT MEANS,
OUR MENSTRUAL
CYCLE STARTS
EVERY MONTH,
WHICH MEANS
WE HAVE TO
USE SANITARY
PRODUCTS LIKE
PADS, OR
TAMPONS, OR
MENSTRUAL CUPS.

CUPS???

WHEN IS THE NEXT
TALK? THERE'S TOO
MUCH WE DON'T KNOW!

HAKIMA LOOKS AT MICH,
SMILES AND WINKS
CONSPIRATORIALLY.
MICH SMILES BACK.

MICH IS AT HOME, EMPTYING OUT THE CONTENTS OF HER BAG. SHE PULLS OUT THE PAD PACKET. SHE LOOKS VERY PROUD OF HERSELF AS SHE PUTS HER PAD PACKET, UNHIDDEN, ON A DESK IN HER ROOM, NEXT TO HER SCHOOL BOOKS. SHE GOES TO HER MIRROR, AND REPEATS THE WORDS TO HER REFLECTION..

YOUR PERIOD, IS
YOUR PERIOD...AND
IT'S JUST A PERIOD.

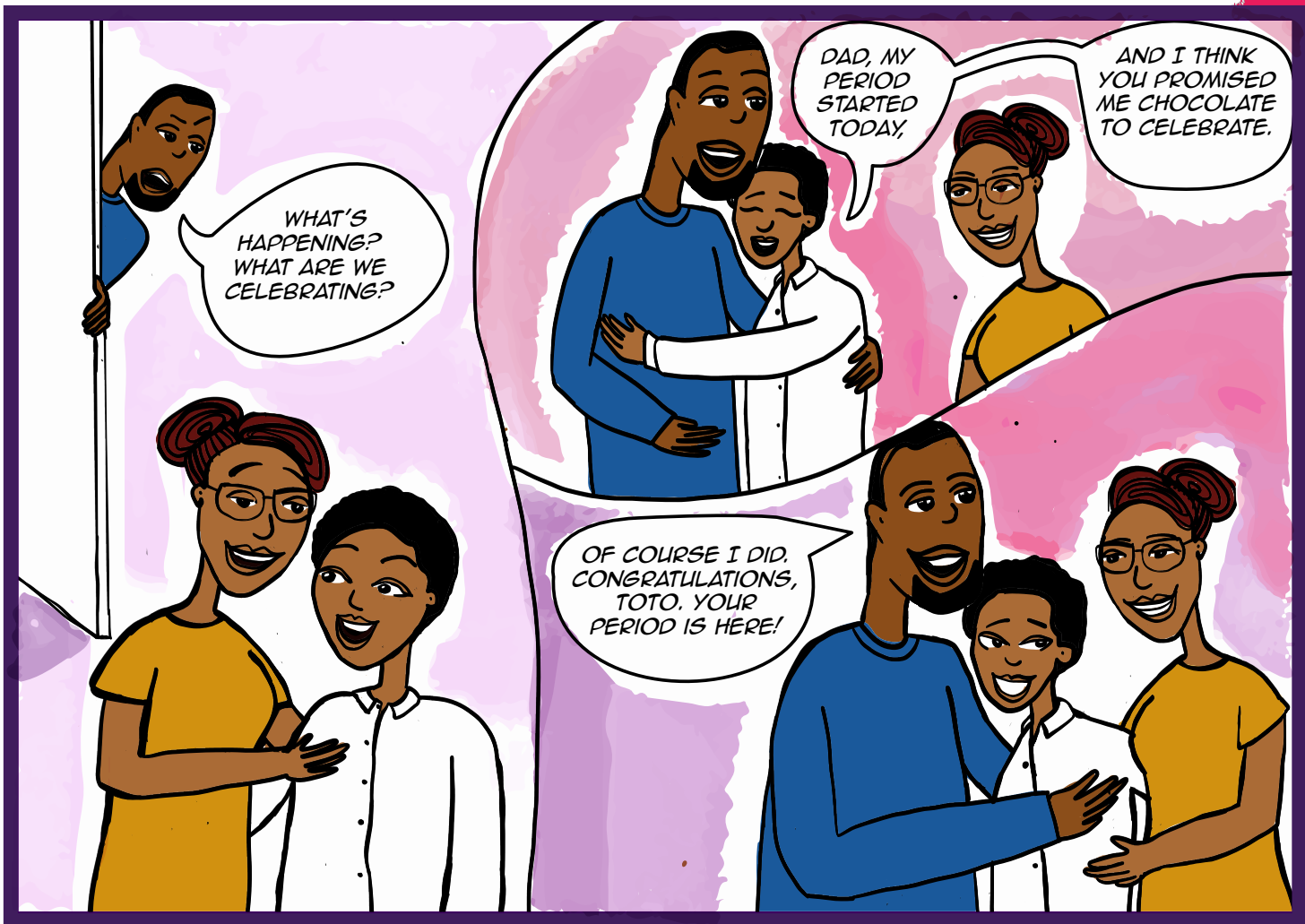
MICH IS BEAMING AT
HER REFLECTION
WHEN HER MOTHER
OPENS THE DOOR
TO HER ROOM TO
GREET HER.

HI MICH, HOW WAS
SCHOOL TODAY?

GUESS WHAT
HAPPENED
AT SCHOOL
TODAY,
MOM?

MY PERIOD
HAS STARTED!

WOW
MICH,
YOU'VE
HAD A
FULL
DAY!
ME AND
YOUR
DAD WILL
BE SO HAPPY
TO SUPPORT YOU
THROUGH THESE
CHANGES. THIS
CALLS FOR A
CELEBRATION,
MY CHILD!



GLOSSARY



INSTEAD OF...	CONSIDER...	WHY
FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS	PERIOD PRODUCTS	PERIODS ARE NOT UNHYGIENIC
SANITARY PRODUCTS	PERIOD PRODUCTS MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS PERIOD CARE MENSTRUAL CARE PERIOD PADS	PERIODS ARE NOT UNSANITARY
ASSUMING ALL PERIOD PAIN AND SYMPTOMS ARE COMMON OR DISMISSING PERIOD PAINS/ CRAMPS	LISTEN TO THE PERSON EXPERIENCING PAIN AND OFFER YOUR SUPPORT. ENCOURAGE THEM TO RESEARCH AND SPEAK TO A DOCTOR OR SPECIALIST IF THEIR SYMPTOMS ARE SEVERE	MANY PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SYMPTOMS LIKE MENSTRUAL CRAMPS DURING THEIR CYCLE. HOWEVER, MORE SEVERE PAIN AND SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH PERIODS CAN BE AN INDICATION OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONDITIONS SUCH AS ENDOMETRIOSIS, POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME OR FIBROIDS.
"NORMAL" AND "ABNORMAL"	COMMON OR UNCOMMON TYPICAL OR ATYPICAL	NATURAL VARIATIONS IN MENSTRUAL CYCLES CAN OCCUR AND DESCRIBING SOMETHING AS EITHER NORMAL OR ABNORMAL CAN CONTRIBUTE TO FEELINGS OF SHAME AROUND PERIODS.
"BECOMING A WOMAN"	STARTING PUBERTY	PROMOTING GENDER-AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
ONLY TALK TO GIRLS AND WOMEN ABOUT PERIODS	TALK TO ALL GENDERS ABOUT PERIODS.	EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS

ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES DOING THE WORK FOR INCLUSIVE PERIODS

BLOODY GOOD PERIOD – [HTTPS://WWW.BLOODYGOODPERIOD.COM/](https://www.bloodygoodperiod.com/)

CLUE – [HTTPS://HELLOCLUE.COM/ARTICLES](https://helloclue.com/articles)

GLOSSARY FOR THE GLOBAL MENSTRUAL MOVEMENT – [HTTPS://COCKPIT.MHHUB.ORG/STORAGE/UPLOADS/2022/01/21/61EB0A01392546GLOBAL-GLOSSARY-FOR-THE-MENSTRUAL-MOVEMENT.PDF](https://cockpit.mhhub.org/storage/uploads/2022/01/21/61EB0A01392546GLOBAL-GLOSSARY-FOR-THE-MENSTRUAL-MOVEMENT.PDF)

MAISIE HILL'S BOOK 'PERIOD POWER'



WHY ARE THEY SECRET? EVERYONE KNOWS THAT GIRLS HAVE PERIODS.

When we talk about reproductive health rights, particularly menstrual health and period poverty for young women and girls, we're coming from a space long filled with silence, stigma, and struggle. For too many girls, menstruation is still treated as something to be hidden—shameful even. Access to basic sanitary products is limited, conversations about their bodies are scarce, and the emotional weight of managing their periods often goes unaddressed.

Period poverty—when girls lack access to essential sanitary products—forces many to miss school, compromises their health, and robs them of the dignity they deserve. At the same time, misinformation and stigma have kept these important conversations behind closed doors, excluding boys and men and leaving girls to navigate this natural part of life alone. But the tide is turning. Young women are

standing up and challenging the secrecy around menstruation. They're asking why boys aren't included in these discussions and pushing for menstruation to be openly talked about, normalised, and recognised as a vital aspect of gender equality and human rights. This conversation is about more than just pads—it's about dignity, education, and the right to live without shame or barriers.

This comic book delves into the often-overlooked yet critical topic of menstrual health and period poverty. Through relatable storytelling, it highlights the societal stigmas, challenges, and misconceptions surrounding menstruation. By presenting real-life experiences, it encourages open dialogue and education, helping to break the silence. The goal is to empower young readers to see menstruation as a natural, essential part of life and to foster dignity and confidence. The #MyPeriodt Campaign is about disrupting the stereotypical, outdated conversations about periods:



- Encouraging more **girls in all their diversities** to share their stories and experiences - if you are struggling, the chances are so are others and they would really appreciate hearing your experiences and ideas for how to do things differently together - who could you talk to?
- Inspiring **parents, guardians and teachers** to have a different type of conversation about menstruation with girls and boys - how would you start the conversation replacing the stigma and the shame with dignity and confidence?
- Challenging **policy-makers and governments** to listen to girls and combat period poverty - what can you differently to ensure more girls have access to essential sanitary products and to change the narrative around the stigma associated with menstruation?

We are excited for you to meet Mich and Hakima, the central characters of the comic book who were inspired by what the girls we talked to told us - you might recognise some of your story as they try to navigate what the grown-ups are telling them about periods and start to question the secrecy and stigma. We hope they leave you with hope that by coming together we have the power to change things.

So let's start talking. Let's make a change—because every girl deserves to manage her period with pride, safety, and dignity, and together, we can build a future where menstrual health is recognised and respected for what it truly is—a human right.

Anne Agar,
Managing Director, Polycom Girls

Disha Sughand,
Co-CEO, Womankind Worldwide

***Use of language.** We have used 'girls' as a shorthand term but refer to all people in all their diversities.

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT HAKIMA AND MICH WHO INVITE US INTO THEIR MENSTRUAL HEALTH JOURNEY. HAKIMA HAS JUST JOINED THE SCHOOL AS A NEW STUDENT AND IS BOLD IN QUESTIONING SOME OF THE EXISTING STEREOTYPES AND CULTURAL TABOOS AROUND MENSTRUAL HEALTH. SHE CONFRONTS THE SCHOOL CULTURE FROM HER CLASSROOM TEACHER TO BOYS IN THE SCHOOL SHOWING SUPPORT TO HER FRIEND MICH WHO'S FEELING ISOLATED WITH THE ONSET OF HER MENSTRUATION JOURNEY.

ARE GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN NAVIGATING THEIR MENSTRUATION JOURNEY WITH DIGNITY? DO THEY FEEL SUPPORTED? ARE SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY DOING ENOUGH TO PROTECT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN FROM MARGINALISATION?

#MYPERIODT!

