



It's Only Blood: Shattering the Taboo of Menstruation

Anna Dahlqvist

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Anna Dahlqvist's powerfully argued book *It's Only Blood* explores how menstruation taboos affect women in different cultures around the world.

Every day, eight hundred million people menstruate, yet most of them are shamed in some way for what is a natural, healthy process. *It's Only Blood* includes anecdotes from women whose monthly routine includes hiding menses, staying away from other people, and not participating in normal activities like school, exercise, or religious life. Silence is the rule, and almost every country has a euphemism for menses: it's called "ketchup week" in France and "communists in the luth house" in Denmark. What's behind this taboo, and how does it negatively impact people who menstruate?

From days lost at school to insanely high prices for sanitary products, menstruation affects people in significant ways. For example, in Uganda, in the Bwaise neighborhood of Kampala, many people live on less than a dollar per day—"also the price of eight menstrual pads in Kampala. An estimation of how much that would be for me [in Sweden]: around 90 US dollars"; in Sweden, however, the same product costs only two dollars. Yet without pads, girls can't go to school, which means they miss valuable days of education.

Dahlqvist dives deeply into a rarely explored phenomenon. Her writing is lively, humane, and smart, tying in ancient taboo laws and current Instagram phenomena. From free bleeding to employment laws, *It's Only Blood* shines a light on every conceivable aspect of menstruation. Dahlqvist points out that women are not the only people who menstruate and also discusses people who are not women but are also affected by the taboo.

It's Only Blood is intimate, provocative, and often funny, shattering the stigma of menstruation for people all around the world.

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