



## *Interview of the Month*

# PROUD OF MY PERIOD

*Interview with Kasey Robinson  
Founder of Proud Of My Period (POMP)*

INTERVIEWED BY VIBEKE THOMSEN, SHECANHECAN

1) You are a period equity activist and founder of #ProudoofmyPeriod (POMP). Can you tell us more about what you aim to achieve with POMP?

I started the instagram page 'Proud of My Period' in January 2020 (pre covid-who remembers what that was like?!) in response to several things. With SheCanHeCan, I co-launched the Red Box Project in Monaco. In order to do this, I had to learn a lot about periods and I realised that at the ripe old age of 30, there was very little I actually knew about them - and by extension my own body! My learning journey also made me realise that in period education or period activism I didn't really see myself represented. It felt like it was always the same people with the mic, so taking the sentiments of my favourite author Toni Morrison "*If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.*" - so I started POMP.

For me, POMP doesn't have a 'goal.' It is a small space in the corner of Instagram where you can openly talk about periods (and all that comes with it). I hope one day, there will be 1000 pages like pomp and that everyone regardless of their identity can feel included in period talk.



2) In the book “Grown: The Black Girls Guide to Glowing Up”, you wrote a part called ‘10 things you didn’t know about periods’. What have you learned about periods that might interest our readers?

Oh my gosh - so much! I mean mostly just how incredible our bodies are and how well they communicate with us when we learn how to listen to them. The most surprising thing for me was learning just how deep these period stigmas go. In some ways, I never really thought about my own period, it just ‘happened’. However, it’s both shocking and sad to learn just how disgusted people are by periods. I understand that they are a private matter but they are also kept such a secret, people recoil in horror almost at the mere mention of them. It got me thinking about my own relationship with my body and that if I had had a real period education growing up, I might not have had to unlearn so many things along the way.

3) Period poverty and period inequity are terms that many are still unfamiliar with. Can you tell our readers more about why they are important and how we can help tackle this?

I think both of these terms are important because very few folks understand just how prevalent these issues are. Period poverty speaks to the fact that millions cannot afford the period products they need each month. According to research done by Bloody Good Period, the average lifetime cost of having a period is £4800. While today there are many reusable products on the market, they come at a hefty upfront cost. Reusable cups, period pants, and pads can be helpful to lower lifetime costs, however you also have to have regular access to clean spaces to change, wash dry them [often meaning you may need a couple pairs of pants or pads and therefore increasing that upfront cost] which sadly many people across the world don’t have the privilege of. Even in my home country of the UK, poverty is still a huge issue - it isn’t simply a “third world problem” like many think.

Period inequity goes further than poverty, even for folks who have better access to products ie. less financial barriers we still don’t see them being provided. Think about it, you go to a bathroom in a restaurant, cinema even in a fancy 5\* hotel and there are many products provided for you; toilet roll, soap, hand cream, [in hotels] a sewing kit, shampoo/conditioner, shoe polish, bottled water, coffee pods... but never period products!

There is also still the issue of lack of knowledge and understanding about periods. In schools, students get some education around a period, but usually only about the days when you period comes as opposed to learning about the whole menstrual cycle, the hormonal changes, how to listen and take care of your body and the types of products you use and what’s in them eg. organic vs non organic.



*I hope that everyone regardless of their identity can feel included in period talk.*



4) In collaboration with Freda, SheCanHeCan will launch its first period kit in selected local French schools: an information brochure along with 14 period products for young girls aged 13. What can parents, community or educators do to help young girls be knowledgeable and proud of their periods?

A lot! Ultimately period education starts at home, you see a parent, family friend, sibling go through it or talk about it and so this is a great place to ask questions. This openness will of course vary from culture to culture but talking about periods doesn't mean shouting from the rooftops about it, it simply means feeling comfortable asking the questions, knowing that your period is 'normal' and a sign of good health and being able to get the answers you need.

I think schools should really take an active role in this too and provide students with the resources to understand periods better. It's such an important thing in our lives and especially with regards to our health. There are many people living with health issues like PCOS, endometriosis, etc. who weren't diagnosed early enough or simply ignored the problem because it was their 'normal' and so with a better foundation, hopefully those problems decrease in the future.

What can we do as a community? Talk about periods! No more coded language, no more 'tummy aches' or headaches rather than saying it's period cramps, no more shaming women for being 'hormonal' and no more hiding tampons up our sleeve when we got to the toilet. Yes, periods are a private thing, but they're not shameful or embarrassing and certainly aren't something we should ever make each other feel bad about.

5) #ProudoofmyPeriod aims to create a space to talk about periods and how they affect our lives. How do you hope things will change in the next 10 to 20 years in terms of talking about periods?

I really, really hope we'll look back at this conversation and say 'Whaaaat... Did we really think like that?'. I hope that people will openly talk about periods and menstrual health like they do the weather. I hope the students get the support and product they need to have happy and healthy periods and to be a support to one another.

In these conversations, I also hope that we expand the conversation around period and recognise that communities are still being excluded. It feels like a basic human right to retain your dignity and have control of your health and so it is my hope that pages like POMP won't need to exist in the way they do now because we will have solved our own problems. Period poverty will no longer exist in the way it does and education around period will be the norm. I am usually quite pessimist but it feels like with a little bit of effort we can make so many positive changes around the way we talk about periods and I'm super excited to continue to be a part of that.



*What can we do as a community? Talk about periods! No more coded language.*



**6) Can you tell us what is in the pipeline for #ProudofmyPeriod in 2022?**

When I started POMP I always envisioned that somehow one day I would set up events for young people to come and learn together. Periods can be a pain sometimes and so to be able to make that less of a chore, I wanted to add a little bit of fun. I would love to set up a panel of medical experts and fellow activists to demonstrate how to open up these conversations and take charge of our health, to give young people a book with all their questions answered inside and of course one mega goody bag filled with a range of period products for them to try out. Maybe that's wishful thinking, but I hope it'll happen one day!

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*About POMP*

*POMP is an Instagram page started in January 2020 that seeks to open up conversations around periods and make everyone feel part of the conversation, particularly Black women. It is a movement that supports others in our journey towards a truly equitable society when it comes to periods. One thing that is important: "You don't have to lead a march, write a book or have a degree to be a period activist. If you care about period equity, self reflect and do what you can to help those around you learn and do better then you're a period activist. This space is yours, you don't have to ask permission to be here and your voice counts."*

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