

Ms. Chairwoman Marilyn John, Vice Chair Bill Dean, Ranking member of the committee, Sean Brennan and all other members of the committee, my name is Latisha Lashay, I am a member of the NAACP, a poetry teacher for the Juvenile Detention Center Writers in Residence, and a human.

Lady members of the panel, do remember the first time you had to buy pads? Or to the men- when you had to buy them for you daughters? I was nine years old and my dad took me to Family Dollar to buy my first pack. I remember distinctly getting them and saying I'm going to grab a soda so I could hide, because I didn't want to be seen buying them. I was embarrassed and ashamed even, thinking I will never again be this embarrassed in my life.

That was until I was 20 years old in Jackson Pike County Jail, washing my underwear in the same sink where we all brushed our teeth and drank water from after I had bled on myself. I was praying that I wouldn't contract Hepatitis C, because bleeding accidents are common in the women's facilities.

Even still, this was not as embarrassing as when I was 26 years old while in Dayton Correctional Institution, sitting in the hole, banging on the door, and waiting for somebody to care enough to let me have pads and a shower. Being a dark-skinned, masculine appearing black woman, I faced many challenges with the CO's. The CO's would call me sir, belittle my womanhood, and use my sexuality as a reason to deny me feminine hygiene products and hygiene care. I was a woman before I got lock up and then suddenly it changed because of how I look. In our society, women and girls are raised to be ashamed of our bodies for menstruating.

Nothing was more embarrassing than having to walk up to a CO at 4 pm asking for pads, only to have them tell me they didn't have any as they sat in the box sitting next to them- Sometimes never even making eye contact. I'd have to wait for the 10pm third shift staff to come in, but only to be humiliated yet again, because they don't want to be bothered.

Today I'm simply asking you to not just give us humanity but to care. To simply care. This system is designed to take away our humanity, and to reduce us to a number. I ask you to care just enough to change that. I ask you to remember our humanity in a system that gets the pleasure of forgetting it.

Thank you,

Latisha Lashay