



HEALTH SPOTLIGHT



INTERVIEW

# 601 for Period Equity



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This quarter, Atlanta GLOW’s Health Spotlight shines on two extraordinary sisters from Mississippi who have taken a bold stand against period poverty. Laila and Asia Brown, founders of 601 For Period Equity, have dedicated themselves to addressing a pressing issue that affects countless individuals in their community and beyond. Through their grassroots organization, they work tirelessly to provide menstrual and hygiene products while striving to eliminate period stigma, especially within the Black community.



## Introducing Laila and Asia Brown

Laila Brown, a rising sophomore majoring in sociology and anthropology at Spelman College, and her sister, Asia Brown (Spelman Alumna), a nursing student at Emory University’s Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, are the dynamic duo behind 601 For Period Equity. Their academic pursuits reflect their deep commitment to understanding and addressing societal issues, a commitment that is vividly manifested in their advocacy work. When asked about their personal interests, Laila shared that her favorite ice cream flavor has been mint chocolate chip since she was five, while Asia expressed her dream of traveling the world once she graduates from nursing school. These fun facts provide a glimpse into their personalities, showing that they are relatable, passionate young women who balance their advocacy work with personal dreams and goals.

## The Mission of 601 For Period Equity

601 For Period Equity is dedicated to fighting period poverty and eliminating period stigma, particularly within the Black community. "Since our organization’s creation, we have provided direct in-kind donations of tens of thousands of period products, wipes, and pain relievers to shelters, schools, community centers, free clinics, colleges, and other community partners across the state of Mississippi," they explained. Their community distributions through Rosie’s Pantry in Vicksburg, Mississippi, include a wide array of period products, diapers, personal and baby wipes, and sexual health kits. They also offer personal deliveries for emergencies and for those unable to access the hygiene pantry. "We have continued to do specific outreach to schools and institutions of higher learning and advocating for the installation of free-vend period product dispensers in the Vicksburg Warren School District high schools," they added.

## Inspiration and Motivation

The idea for 601 For Period Equity originated with Asia, inspired by their time as student ambassadors for The Pad Project, a global period equity nonprofit. "Asia was the mastermind behind our organization!" Laila shared. "We were both inspired by our time as student ambassadors for global period equity nonprofit, The Pad Project, where we learned about period poverty and realized how Black menstruators, nonprofits, activists, and conversations about medical racism are often left out of the mainstream menstrual equity movement." The impact of the 2020 pandemic and racial unrest on the Black community in Mississippi further motivated them to address menstrual equity and reproductive justice issues affecting Black Mississippians.

Their focus on menstrual health product access was driven by the discovery that Mississippi has one of the highest luxury sales taxes on period products at 7%. "This tax contributes to the inaccessibility that people struggle with each month," they explained. "It is the reality of some Mississippians, especially Black ones, that they have to choose between period products and housing, food, and other basic necessities." Laila and Asia's personal experiences of witnessing girls in school asking for pads or tampons highlighted a broader social issue that they were determined to address. "As young Black girls, we both had experiences growing up in both elementary, middle, and high school of girls asking if anyone had a pad or tampon in the restroom. We understood that these memories were reflective of a broader social issue that we then sought to remedy."



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Achievements and Impact

Through their dedicated work, Laila and Asia have achieved remarkable accomplishments. "We have donated to countless community partners, made lasting connections to important brands and community organizations, connected with other organizers, and created relationships with the people we aim to serve," they said. One of the most rewarding aspects of their work has been fostering a sense of community among Black menstruators and women in their area through mutual aid. "Since opening Rosie's Pantry, we have consistently distributed period and diaper products to between 150-200 pantry goers each month."

Their educational efforts have also garnered significant attention. "We've also been able to do a great deal of educational work by spreading awareness about period poverty through media appearances with CVS Health, Always x Walmart, Refinery29, and we have been grateful to receive media coverage from The New York Times, NBC News, Mississippi Today, Ms. Magazine, The Vicksburg Daily News, and more!" they proudly shared. "Always x Walmart named us Period Heroes in 2022, giving us recognition on their websites and donating 50,000 pads and liners to go toward our work!"



# ADVANCING THE WORK

## Continuing the Mission

Despite the challenges, their passion for their community keeps them going. "Our love for the people in our community motivates us to keep going along with our understanding that people in Mississippi who are struggling and who are in need are often left behind by the rest of the world, and unfortunately, by our state governments," they explained. "Our work is a labor of love that comes from our passion for giving back to our people."

Looking ahead, they have exciting plans for expanding 601 For Period Equity. "We hope to create partnerships on Spelman's campus and get students throughout the Atlanta University Center and Atlanta involved! We are also looking into bringing Rosie's Pantry to the West End in partnership with Beulah Baptist Church," they shared.

## Advice for Aspiring Nonprofit Founders

Laila and Asia also offered valuable advice for other young women looking to start their own nonprofits. "Always check in your area to make sure that people are not already doing the work! It's okay to join an organization that's established if you align with their mission," they advised. "If you are looking to start a nonprofit, reach out to people who you trust or who are doing similar work and do plenty of research first! Also, asking for help is important, especially in the beginning stages. Find a team of people who you trust and who are passionate about the mission to help you along the way! In our beginning stages, we did all the work ourselves, but we learned that we work best when we delegate tasks to people who are eager to help!"

Laila and Asia Brown's dedication to fighting period poverty through 601 For Period Equity is a testament to the power of grassroots activism and community support. Their work not only provides essential resources but also inspires others to take action in their own communities.



## FOLLOW THE MISSION



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## Contact Information

[www.atlantaglow.org/](http://www.atlantaglow.org/) | [info@atlantaglow.org](mailto:info@atlantaglow.org) | 678.870.4569  
109 Anderson St SE | Suite 101 | Marietta, Georgia 30060