

# A Magical Diversity Tour

INVENTOR BOOK FOR CHILDREN SHOWCASES AFRICAN-AMERICANS' MANY CONTRIBUTIONS

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

**H**AVING SPENT the past 20 years writing about inventors and inventions, it's rare that I stumble upon an industry-related book that's worthy of notice. An inventor book for children is even more uncommon; an inventor book for children that also nurtures their imagination is golden!

"Jaxon's Magical Adventure with Black Inventors and Scientists," the first book of the "Just Imagine... What if There Were No Black People in the World?" series, takes readers on a tour of Jaxon's home while he learns about African-American inventors and scientists through common household inventions.

The lures for children, as author **TAMARA SHILOH** states, are "a magical necklace and magic words (that) are the keys to Jaxon's adventure."

It's been more than 50 years since I've read a children's book, so I was thrilled to interview Ms. Shiloh. A mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, she and her project are a perfect subject for this Mother's Day month.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT):** How did you get the idea for the book?

**Tamara Shiloh (TS):** I received an email about 18 years ago with a list of African-American inventors and scientists who I had never heard of before. I was pretty intrigued by it. I had recently learned how to use Microsoft Publisher and decided to write a little booklet for my grandson. It was close to his birthday.

Before I gave it to him, I decided I'd better check out the information, since I didn't recognize any of the names on the list except George Washington Carver. So I checked the internet—but because it was so new, I thought I'd better check the library, too. I went to the library and found a few books and was astonished at how long the list was. I was happy and (angry) at the same time. I couldn't believe there were so many African-Americans who had done so many great things and nobody knew about them.

So I decided to write a children's book about them. When I saw how big the book would be, I decided to break it up into a series.

**EGT:** Please tell us about your background.

**TS:** I was born and raised in Richmond, California. I got the entrepreneur bug after working about 10 years. I attended junior college and got my associate arts degree in small business administration. I had a consulting firm working as an affirmative action consultant for the City of Richmond and then various other businesses in small business consulting.

I started writing when a friend asked me to create a flyer for his business. Then I started writing brochures and newsletters for small businesses and organizations. Around this time is when I decided to write the children's book series about African-American inventors and scientists.

In 2005, I put down the children's books and started writing content for a website and a few magazine articles. I published a magazine for minority women while living in Las Vegas. I was the editor for an online magazine also, and wrote newsletters for various organizations. I lived in Las Vegas for eight years.

I returned home to Richmond. In 2016 I retired as an HR manager and decided, with the coaching of my daughter, to pick up the children's books again and rewrite them, making them more engaging by adding a bit of magic and fantasy.

**EGT:** Have you ever invented anything?

**TS:** No.

**EGT:** Have you written any other books before?

**TS:** I wrote a children's book about Kwanzaa and a few other black history booklets about African-Americans first, and African-American women inventors and scientists.

**EGT:** Did you have children serve as beta readers?

**TS:** Yes, I asked a few children to read and let me know what they thought about the book. They enjoyed reading it. All of them liked the idea that Jaxon can see and talk to the inventors and scientists.

**EGT: Who is the handsome young model representing Jaxon in the book?**

**TS:** That little guy is my great-grandson, Jaiden. The other characters are pictures my illustrator found.

**EGT: Did you self-publish this book? Have you had any help with PR?**

**TS:** Yes, I self-published. I've thought about using a traditional publisher—but I didn't want to haggle over using a different illustrator. I like the way Jo Ann Kairys illustrated the book digitally. I want to continue using that type of illustration.

I use Ingram Spark, a print-on-demand publisher. They have distribution to bookstores, schools and libraries, and they do really good work.

As for PR, I have a friend who is helping me with the social media. But for the most part, it's just me. I've learned a lot over the last year or so, and there's a lot of work involved in getting the word out about your book.

**EGT: Tell us about other books you are writing about inventors.**

**TS:** I also created a journal, activity book and coloring book. I wrote these to keep the kids engaged with the information they read. I figured the companion books would keep them engaged for a while longer and/or make them curious enough to want to learn more about black inventors and scientists. I am also hoping it will help get them interested in science, technology, engineering and math—the STEM programs.

The second book will be more about things inside the house and outside, like the signal light, golf tee, bicycle frame, and so on. The third book will be about African-American women inventors and scientists such as Sarah Boone, Alice Parker and Bessie Blount. The fourth book will be about African-Americans in aviation, such as Bessie Coleman, the Tuskegee Airmen and Mae Jemison. The fifth book will be about black cowboys, including Deadwood Dick, Bill Pickett and Mary Fields. I've added a sixth book that will be about African-American artists, painters and sculptors, like Edmonia Lewis, Archibald Motley and Robert Duncanson.

**EGT: What is your ultimate goal with your books?**

**TS:** I think it's unfair that African-American children grow up not knowing how much their ancestors contributed to the growth of this country. I also think it's unfair that other children grow up thinking that their ancestors are the only ones who contributed to the growth of this country. Learning about other cultures helps with creating and maintaining good relationships and respect for each other. Diversity starts in first grade, not in corporations.

**EGT: When will they be available?**

**TS:** I would like to have all six books published by the end of 2018. ☺

Details: [tamarashiloh.com](http://tamarashiloh.com)

Books by **Edie Tolchin** ([egt@edietolchin.com](mailto:egt@edietolchin.com)) include "Fanny on Fire" ([fannyonfire.com](http://fannyonfire.com)) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



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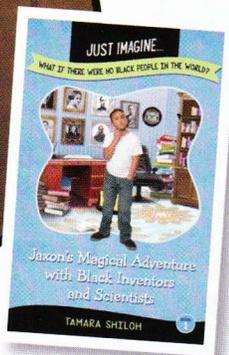
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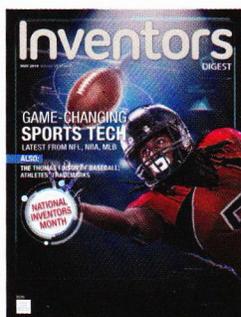
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