

In With Beauty, and Out the Door

WOMAN'S READY-TO-WEAR HAIR PIECES FOCUS
ON SAFETY AND EASE OF USE **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

AFTER I COMPLETED the manuscript for my forthcoming book, "Secrets of Successful Women Inventors" (October 2023, Square One Publishers), more female inventors have been surfacing—but it was too late for me to add their stories.

If this keeps up, it may lead to a sequel!

Here's a wonderful line of ethnic beauty products created by Tiffini Gatlin.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): What is the "Latched and Hooked" concept? Why is it different from other ethnic hair styling products?

Tiffini Gatlin (TG): Latched and Hooked is where innovation meets self care.

On average, black women spend 45 minutes, daily, in the mirror styling their hair. Latched and Hooked was created in part to offer ready-to-wear hair pieces that blend with kinky, curly and coarse hair textures and get you out the door in 60 seconds or less.

Our hair products are different because our polymer fibers are formulated free of soluble heavy metals, lead content,

phthalates and formaldehyde (the latter two, potentially harmful chemicals). This helps keep your scalp and skin free of toxins.

EGT: What is your background?

TG: I am a former corporate bank executive turned entrepreneur and digital influencer. In 2015, I became a pioneer in the hair and beauty industry after turning my side hustle into the first patent-pending process of pre-curved and looped synthetic hair, after growing concerned that I might burn my clients if they are rolling and dipping the hair in boiling water.

Since launching Latched and Hooked, I continue to create options for all women to safely look and feel beautiful. I reside in Georgia with my husband and four children.

EGT: How did this line come about?

TG: This company came about after my oldest daughter suffered from scalp irritation, and braids became unbearable to wear. I knew I wanted to create a company that didn't make you compromise beauty for pain.

EGT: Where are you manufacturing? Any problems with logistics?

TG: I manufacture in China and Bangladesh. Since COVID, we have experienced factory shutdowns because of the strict COVID laws in China that require 14 days of quarantine if there is a breakout. We've also experienced import fees that are three times higher than what we've been used to paying, and forced us to import via ocean freight.

EGT: What is your experience with intellectual property for your various products? Do you hold any patents?

Latched and Hooked pieces are about fullness while being absent of harmful chemicals.



TG: I do not currently hold any patents. I had a provisional design patent on a product I created in 2016, but I could never get the full patent approved.

It's a very difficult, long and expensive process, and in the process I had my original designs (down to the packaging and copy) duplicated and mass produced by other beauty manufacturers.

EGT: How many products are you featuring? What is your most popular product?

TG: I currently have five unique SKUs. My most popular is our colorful braiding hair. We are selling on our website, Amazon and, recently, on QVC.

EGT: Have you ever considered applying for "Shark Tank" or done any crowdfunding?

TG: I have considered applying to "Shark Tank." I've even gone to an open casting. I have not done any crowdfunding, but I've done a "friends and family raise" of over \$40k.

EGT: Have you had any problems fulfilling orders during the recent pandemic?

TG: During the pandemic, we were actually performing at our best. I received a \$100k cash award from Google For Startups and used part of the money to purchase enough inventory to actively ship, regardless of if our manufacturing partners had to shut down. Beauty supply stores at that time were not considered "non-essential," so we had a high demand from consumers looking for our products.

EGT: Have you had any other issues in developing your product line? Has being a woman been an issue?

TG: I'm in a Korean-dominated market, so it's been extremely difficult to research information that's been kept secret for so long. I've had to hire sourcing agents to make deals on my behalf just so I can compete with similar profit margins.

EGT: What is next for Latched and Hooked?

TG: With our recent launch on QVC in February 2023, I hope we are able to secure additional purchase orders at other national retailers, making it easier and more convenient for our



"My oldest daughter suffered from scalp irritation, and braids became unbearable to wear. I knew I wanted to create a company that didn't make you compromise beauty for pain." —TIFFINI GATLIN

customers to purchase their hair in the same place they purchase their milk and other household goods.

EGT: Has anyone been instrumental in helping you bring your products to market?

TG: Lisa Price, CEO and founder of "Carol's Daughter" (carolsdaughter.com), has been a mentor to me in the beauty space. Whenever I have a question, she makes herself available to help me.

EGT: What do you advise inventors seeking to develop a beauty product?

TG: If you define a problem and you are passionate about solving it, don't seek validation. Solve the problem, and the rest will come. 📌

Details: latchedandhooked.com

Edith G Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



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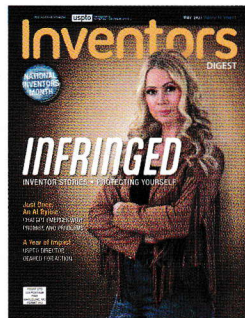
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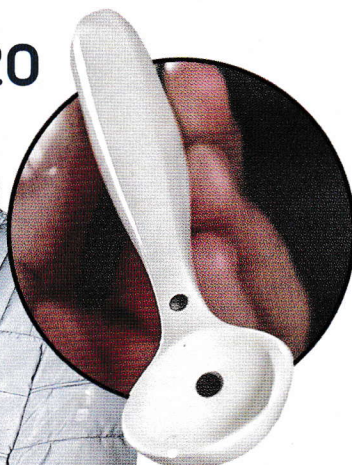
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