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Write the Vision and Make it Plain: College Friends Launch 'L.A.M.B. Cosmetics' and Receive Placement in Kmart, Other Outlets

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Products of L.A.M.B. Cosmetics and founders Shanelle King (left), and Katrece Boyd.
By. L.A.M.B. COSMETICS

[Loving All My Body's](#) (L.A.M.B) "Bel Tifi" lipstick line hit K-Mart stores on St. Croix and St. Thomas in July of 2022, a decade and a half after two college friends - Shanelle King and Katrece Boyd – only dreamed of creating a cosmetic brand that would revolutionize the way women feel about themselves.

“My business partner, we were friends in college and we would just sit in our dorm rooms and talk about things that we would want to do and one of the things that came up is that we wanted to start

a cosmetic line, and she grabbed a piece of paper, started writing it down all the ideas we had,” Mrs. King told the Consortium during an interview Tuesday.

In 2005, in a college dorm room at Tuskegee University, Alabama these young adults thought that they could create innovative beauty solutions that celebrate women and would encourage them to be their authentic selves. It was a “crazy idea” that would not materialize for 15 more years until what some may consider a God-ordained step that took them to a Christian women’s conference Colorado.

“As we graduated from college, recession happened and life hit and we kind of just forgot about everything until 2019,” recalled Mrs. King.

In 2019, the pair had initially thought of attending their college homecoming in Alabama but decided instead to attend the conference. “Something on the inside told me no, it’s not the season to go back to homecoming, how about we attend this women conference in Colorado and at the time that’s where I was living.”

According to Mrs. King, Ms. Boyd flew out to Colorado and they drove to the mountains where they were “ambushed with amazing stories with women and their accomplishments and things that God did in their lives, and healings and it brought us back to when we were in our 20s when we were innocent, when we were ambitious.”

“So, let’s start this company,” they eagerly decided, not even knowing where to begin. Mrs. King and Ms. Boyd began at the unlikeliest of starting points — at the height of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

“Everyone thought we were crazy,” Mrs. King recalled, admitting that they knew “absolutely nothing” about how they wanted to begin but after prayer and fasting, the women, who are Christians, started reaching out to various international companies to learn about the cosmetic industry.

“We really wanted to start a skincare line but we knew that we were not there yet as far as scale-wise and financial-wise, so we knew that we had to take a step back and I just came up with this idea, let’s start with something as simple as lipsticks,” she shared.

And so, a line of lipstick was born.

Born on the island of St. Croix and raised in a home with St. Lucian parentage, Mrs. King shared that the lip stain line Bel TiFi which translates to ‘Beautiful Girl’ was inspired by island culture and the traditions taught by her grandmother.

It should be no surprise then that the six most popular colors currently on Kmart shelves - Ayo Reddy, Love City, Central High, Cocoa Tea, Guava Jam, Frangipani – are named after St. Croix slangs, places and delicacies. Top seller, the bold red in the universal ‘Ayo Reddy’ lip stain may seem like just a statement color that a person wears to look good, but in actuality it opens up conversations for women and empowers them to speak up.

“It was really a way for us to empower women, encourage women, and hear women’s stories,” Mrs. King said, as she highlighted the company’s tagline – Your beauty! Your Way!

“We realized that in starting a lipstick line, it really opened up conversations with women. And women would share their insecurities and why they couldn’t wear certain colors because they

thought their lips were too big or they were too dark-skinned to wear certain reds," she said.

Mrs. King added, "As vain as cosmetics may seem to a lot of people, it opens up the door to conversations because when we were at the women's conference, we were so empowered that our first thought was how can we empower, encourage and reach women, exhort women to let them know you have gifts, you have plans and we decided to use that and open up those conversations through makeup."

‘Write the Vision Down, Make it Plain’ - Habakkuk 2:2

Their journey to now began and culminated in scripture, reciting Habakkuk Chapter 2, verse 2 for inspiration: "And the Lord answered me: Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he who reads it may run. When it is written down and then implemented, those we lead can 'run' with it and we will see it succeed."

"I always tell people before you start anything in life, you always want to make it plain; make sure that you write down exactly the vision as far as how you see this company because when we actually launched, we launched in the beginning of a pandemic," said Mrs. King.

With a clear idea of what they now wanted to accomplish in December 2019 and a launch date anticipated for 2020, not even a pandemic would allow these ladies to relent, despite the whispers from skeptics who thought it was simply not the right time.

"We decided that we're still going to do this; we're still going to launch because we knew that things were going to change for the cosmetic industry and people thought we were crazy because they were like everybody's going to be wearing masks," she said.

As a testimony to their commitment, in its first month on offer Bel TiFi raked in \$5,000 in sales.

Mrs. King said the obstacles showed them ways to maneuver remarking "You're always going to have things come up in life – famine, disasters – that's never going to change."

"But as long as you have what you have on the inside of you written down plain to remind you on a day-to-day basis, this is what we're doing and that's the goal then it doesn't matter if the sky falls. You just have to believe that God is going to show you step by step what is going to happen."

‘Never let the outside voice triumph you on the inside’

Mrs. King recalled being deterred by so many people who thought they shouldn't start the line during the pandemic but they were convinced that the timing was indeed right.

"It made perfect sense to the natural mind why we should not release lipsticks during a pandemic, but we knew that God never does anything normal," she chuckled.

"If we had waited for the pandemic to be over, we would just now be releasing. If we'd waited, we wouldn't be in K-Mart today, we would be trying to find our foot hold and it would have just been a mess," Mrs. insisted.

The opportunity to sell at four K-Mart locations, two in St. Croix and two in St. Thomas presented itself at another Christian conference in Florida, where unknowingly Mrs. King was speaking about her company with one of her husband's friends (her fiancé at the time) who turned out to be

an executive at K-Mart. Mrs. King is newly wedded to Enoch King, pastor at Way of the Cross Baptist Church on St. Croix.

“It all happened so fast that we couldn’t even wrap our heads around it,” she told the Consortium.

Two months after meeting the executive, L.A.M.B. signed a deal for their Bel TiFi line to be sold at K-Mart stores in the USVI and the rest was glossy (pun intended).

The timing worked out perfectly for L.A.M.B.'s business model, as the cosmetic industry is focusing more on infusing makeup with skincare, offering cosmetics to people who want more of a natural yet polished look.

In the short term, the company wants to focus on catering to a younger population of women who seem to prefer lip glosses as opposed to lip stains. Currently, top buyers of the lip stain are women from the age of 26 and older but to appeal to a younger audience, L.A.M.B. will launch a line of tinted lip gloss before the 2022 Christmas season.

Looking further into the future, Mrs. King and Ms. Boyd want to create light skin-like makeup that is beneficial to the skin such as tinted-moisturizers and gradually expand into their skincare line.