

# Multiethnic Surge Alters Product Landscape

By Andrea Nagel and Chantal A. Gordon

**NEW YORK** — For years, when someone talked about a new ethnic line, thoughts immediately went to products for African Americans, and specifically what new relaxer or specially formulated conditioning cream would be hitting the market.

Not anymore.

Recently, perhaps as the market responds to the rising numbers of people of mixed background and Hispanics in the population, a smattering of products targeting these demographics is scheduled to hit salons and drugstores next year.

Case in point is Mahisha Dellinger, the former Intel marketing manager who, after years of searching for the right product for her long, naturally curly hair, took matters into her own hands.

In April, Dellinger, who is part African-American and part Creole, launched Curls, a professional hair care line formulated for women of mixed races. Curls, which is the first line from Curls LLC, based in Sacramento, Calif., is compatible with the characteristics of mixed-ethnicity locks, which tend to be dry, Dellinger said, adding that she believes Curls, along with its kids-focused counterpart, Curly Q's, are the first of their kind.

The Curls line of cleansing, conditioning and styling products contains ingredients such as silk amino acids, avocado oil and a patent-pending lipid derivative. Curls avoids using petrolatum and mineral oil, ingredients commonly found in ethnic products, which Dellinger said "suffocates" the hair.

And, formulas are designed to work regardless of a person's specific racial makeup.

"Whether [you are] a combination of white and black, black and Hispanic, etcetera, most [biracial] hair has a natural curl," said Dellinger.

Curls includes Truly Hydrated shampoo, Deep conditioner with essential oils, Curl Enhancer styling lotion, Essential Element hair moisturizer and Pure Avocado oil.

Curly Q's consists of a hydrating shampoo, a conditioner, a styling lotion, a hair moisturizer and an oil for ultrahydration.

Prices for Curls products range from \$4 to \$10, and prices for the



**Curly Q's is formulated for multiethnic kids.**

Curly Q's line range from \$4 to \$8.

Initially, the products were sold exclusively online at curls.biz, but now are available in four West Coast salons, including Total Beauty Experience in Sacramento and California Naimies in Los Angeles. Dellinger hopes to bring Curls and Curly Q's to at least five New York-area salons by early next year.

While Dellinger declined to speculate on an exact sales estimate, industry sources predict Curls could pull in \$350,000 in first-year sales.

Curls may be aiming at a narrow niche, but, said Dellinger, "The 2000 Census reported that there are 1.7 million people mixed with black and another ethnicity. The national demographic of hair is changing."

Thus, the trend for hair care lines targeting specific ethnic groups is becoming more prevalent. And Hispanic women appear to be the next group on the radar. And that has triggered a surge of product launches.

Formula Latina, a shampoo, conditioner and styling line from Joss Claude Products in Miami, targets Hispanic women and is slated to enter mass stores in February.

Progressive Beauty Brands, in a joint venture with Beautopia, is planning a mass Hispanic line for next year, too.

In the professional market, there's Sueños, a new line and company founded by former chief executive officer and president of Sebastian International, Steve Goddard.

Sueños targets Latinas, whose hair, the company said, is prone to frizzing. The five-item line uses extracts and essential oils derived from papaya, mango, ginger, avocado, shea and coconut, and includes an Ultra Smoothing shampoo and conditioner, Deep Smoothing treatment and Anti-Humidity control spray. There's also a Smooth and Control lotion, which is applied before blow-drying, that combines avocado oil, vitamin B5 and shea butter to defrizz hair and block humidity. Sueños products are currently available at select beauty supply stores and salons in Florida, Georgia, Texas and California, and are scheduled for nationwide rollout next spring. Sueños retails between \$7.99 and \$8.99.

But Hispanic hair care is not foolproof. Hair stylist Sam Brocato launched Latina, a professional hair care line for Hispanic women, four years ago. Latina never met expectations and is being discontinued.