TRENDING

Meet Winnie Harlow: Inspiring Supermodel with Vitiligo. “I’ve Been Fighting Beauty Stereotypes since Childhood”

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Vitiligo happens to one in a hundred people. This disorder is characterized by white skin patches on various body parts.

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Believed to be an autoimmune disease, vitiligo happens when the immunity begins destroying melanocytes, pigment-producing skin cells.

Vitiligo diagnosis comes with plenty of implications. The treatment is usually combined. It includes both alternative and traditional meds, as well as light therapy.

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Unfortunately, there's also an emotional side to having vitiligo. A lot of children with vitiligo are victims of bullying and teasing.

When unequipped to deal with such pressure, they can suffer emotionally and psychologically, resulting in anxiety, depression, stress, shame, and embarrassment.

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Young people with vitiligo are particularly prone to these issues. But, one young model-turned-beauty founder didn't allow vitiligo to stand in her way to success and happiness.

She shared her story and said that vitiligo may have made her famous, but it's not who she is.

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The Inspiring Story of Winnie Harlow: Vitiligo Made Me Famous, but It's Not Who I Am

This Jamaican Canadian never took no for an answer. She's all these things, but also so much more than what's going on with her skin. She began developing vitiligo at the age of four.

As a child, it felt very isolating. She remembers being in third grade and trying to become friends with two girls who ran away from her due to their moms not wanting them to "catch" what she had as if she was contagious.

However, the good side is that she grew up surrounded by family that made her feel loved and worthy. They put all of their energy into her and she thanks them for the confidence she possesses today.

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And, as a Jamaican woman who doesn't lack self-esteem, it's what helped her achieve great things, not the promise of popularity.

She Enters the World of Modeling

When Harlow started modeling, her entire life changed. All of a sudden, she became “the model with vitiligo”.

She also thought of becoming a YouTuber, but never became famous. She just wanted to do it because she loved it.

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Of the many firsts in her life, she was also the first runway model with the condition at the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show. she was also featured in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue. She has graced the covers of many worldwide magazines.

Today, she’s a brand ambassador for Puma. For her, it’s always been a goal to save money and be able to care for herself and the family. She finds traveling the world to be the coolest part of her job.

Excited about a New Chapter in Her Career

Despite all of her successes, Harlow explains that she’s mostly asked about vitiligo, bullying when she was younger, and how she was called names like “zebra” or “cow”.

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She says this frustrates her sometimes because she’s an adult who’s lived a full life. And, she’s had worse traumas than her skin problem. She is grateful to be able to do what she loves every day but also excited about her next chapter.

It’s one with balance, activism, and her becoming a founder of her own skincare brand. Her brand, Cay Skin, launched in March after three years of testing. The inspiration for this brand came from one photo shoot in 2018.

No one on set wanted her to reapply sunscreen due to the white cast it would’ve appeared in the photos. So, she got severely sunburned and had to get medical help for pain and inflammation.

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She says this trauma scarred her physically and emotionally and she knew that she had to make a better SPF. Harlow says her goal is to normalize differences. Reflecting the world in its true colors:

people of various body types, skin tones, cultural backgrounds, and abilities.

Sources:

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