

#BeautifulNews: “I’m not ashamed.” The model embracing her scars after tragedy

Things were looking up for Nelisiwe Zuma. The Durbanite had just been offered a job in California. Unable to contain her excitement, Zuma joined her friends to celebrate her big break. But on her way home, their car flew off the road. Zuma woke up three weeks after the crash in ICU. Her friend who’d been driving didn’t make it. The emotional and physical trauma seemed insurmountable. “I thought I was never going to recover,” Zuma says. “I lost hope.”

In the months that followed, Zuma had to undergo multiple surgeries, including a spinal fusion and a skin graft on her stomach. She was also dependent on a colostomy bag. As her body changed, Zuma became increasingly depressed. “I felt not good enough,” she says. But in the process of recuperating, she began to realise how incredible it was to have survived. Her scars were a symbol of life, a reminder to cherish her body and her second chance.

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