



Apropos of Running: A Memoir

Charles Moore

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The runner's memoir Apropos of Running takes a mighty stride in diversifying the writer-runner literary canon.

Academic and art collector Charles Moore's memoir *Apropos of Running* covers his struggles to complete all six World Marathon Majors.

As Moore muscled his way through the marathon circuit, he began to puzzle out the obstacles that face contemporary Black runners—including the revelation of a 2011 survey: that only 1.6 percent of marathon runners were Black. Still, he donned his running clothes and hit the streets of New York, Chicago, Berlin, London, Boston, and Tokyo. With little training, he broke down barriers, becoming one of the few Black runners who showed up on race day, hoping to inspire others to do the same. Outside of the marathon circuit, he continued his advanced degree studies at Harvard while married and with a child on the way.

Throughout the book, Moore's home and professional lives do not often intersect with his running life. And the prose often verges into didactic territory, enumerating inequalities and describing America's racist history—sometimes at the cost of narrative growth. Still, the text is clear, straightforward, and concise. Each chapter focuses on a single marathon and Moore's internal questions about related concepts, including diversity. Not all such questions are answered fully—including the question of Moore's particular dissatisfactions with how DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility) is represented in marathons or his notions of what should be changed. More clear is the sense that it is necessary to focus on diversity and accessibility issues in marathons and running culture as a whole, even when Moore's experiences with such issues are kept somewhat vague on the page.

Indeed, Moore's personal life is eclipsed in the end by the book's long discourses—such that when the book introduces his wife and her pregnancy, such intimate details feel jarring. Beyond Moore's sense that he is privileged, little is revealed about him beyond his opinions; even this privilege is explored in terms of the broader privilege involved in marathon running itself. The missing pieces of Moore's life—including details about his career, education, and family—are filled in at a gradual rate, though many such topics remain underexplored by the book's end. Still, his memoir *Apropos of Running* takes a mighty stride in diversifying the writer-runner literary canon and fires an important starting gun for discussions of DEIA in the field.

NICK GARDNER (November 7, 2023)

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