

Every Variable of Us

Charles A. Bush

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In Charles A. Bush's young adult novel *Every Variable of Us*, Alexis, a high school basketball star, dreams of receiving a college scholarship and pursuing a professional basketball career. Both are her ticket out of West Philadelphia; both are within reach before a gang member's bullet shatters them.

When Aamani, a new Indian student and a STEM nerd, meets Alexis, she sees her as much more than an ex-athlete. And Aamani sees the self-limiting beliefs and false loyalties that keep Alexis tied to her childhood friends and risky behaviors. She sees Alexis's potential. With Aamani's help, Alexis channels all the drive and dedication she'd given to basketball into qualifying for their school's STEM team.

As the eclectic team prepares for a national competition, some harbor doubts that Alexis will be an asset to their group. But her commitment and steady progress win them over. Then, with both the championship and academic scholarships at stake, Alexis is caught back up in neighborhood loyalties that put her blossoming relationship with Aamani, and indeed her life, at risk.

Charles A. Bush reveals that his early life was much like Alexis's. As a young, Black, queer kid raised by a single mother, knowing the pain of hunger, he too was told that being an athlete was the only way he could ever get a taste of wealth, and that being queer disqualified him. His characters, born of lived experience, are engaging and relatable. The book's events and their repercussions are intense, the emotions are authentic, and the story's conclusion is satisfying.

Every Variable of Us is a young adult novel about how every person is worthy of love and respect, no matter how they identify, or what neighborhood they come from.

KRISTINE MORRIS (March / April 2022)

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