

Charles R. Smith Jr.

Charles R. Smith Jr. is an award-winning author, poet and photographer. His awards include the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children (2025), the Knickerbocker Award in New York (2024), the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration (2010) for his photographs accompanying the Langston Hughes poem, *My People* and a Coretta Scott King Honor Author Award (2008) for his biography on Muhammad Ali, *Twelve Rounds to Glory*. Many of his books have made notable lists and garnered reluctant reader awards, proving that kids that don't like to read, do like to read his books.

Charles has combined his passions of writing and photography to create forty-five titles, covering a variety of subjects from basketball with the *Sports Royalty series*, featuring *Hoop Kings and Queens*, to Black history with *28 Days*, to diversity with *I Am America* and *I Am the World*, to Greek mythology with *The Mighty 12*, to biography with *Song for Jimi: The Story of Guitar Legend Jimi Hendrix*, *Bessie the Motorcycle Queen*, and *Major Taylor: World Cycling Champion*.

But Charles is more than an author of books. He has worked as a fitness trainer, studied martial arts, boxing, gymnastics and ninja obstacles, even appearing on the tv show *American Ninja Warrior* in 2017. He attributes those physical skills to his success as an author and believes in fighting ignorance with knowledge. In his school presentations, Charles discusses the importance of developing the mind, body and spirit and likes to remind students and aspiring authors: "If you feed the mind, challenge the body and ignite the spirit, you can achieve your dreams."

Charles R. Smith Jr. was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He graduated with a BA in photography from Brooks Institute of Photography and currently lives in the Hudson Valley in New York with his wife Jan and his dog Jake. You can find him on the web at **www.charlesrsmithjr.com**