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A female athlete with dark skin and long, dark hair is captured in a moment of intense celebration. She is wearing a bright green athletic singlet with a white bib that reads "TWILIGHT 2000" and the number "220". She is also wearing green athletic shorts with a white New Balance logo. Her arms are raised high, and her mouth is open in a shout or yell. She is wearing a colorful patterned headband and red-tinted sunglasses. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators on a track at night, illuminated by warm, golden light.

WUNC
Here & Now

Ericka Charles was a track star in high school and earned a scholarship to East Carolina University. Unfortunately, her college career didn't go nearly as well and the disappointment almost made her hang up her running shoes.

But after the death of her beloved uncle NC State basketball champion Lorenzo Charles, Ericka Charles re-dedicated herself to pursuing her dreams. Now the 34-year-old is running some of her best times yet.



Leoneda Inge

Ericka Charles at the WUNC studios

As Charles trains for the 2024 Olympic trials, she also has a job as a middle school cross country coach. Charles is on the autism spectrum and tells co-hosts Leoneda Inge and Jeff Tiberii how coaching kids pushes her to challenge herself in ways that extend well beyond the race course.

Guest

Ericka Charles, Women's 30-34 800m National Champion and Durham School of the Arts middle school cross country coach

Due South