

**INTERVIEW WITH ALICE
RANDALL, AUTHOR OF 'THE
WIND DONE GONE'**

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Alice Randall's latest book is *The Wind Done Gone*, a parody of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* told from the perspective of a black slave. It was scheduled for publication by Houghton Mifflin, but the Mitchell Trusts have petitioned the court to prevent publication, claiming that Randall's book is an infringement of copyright and that the parody would hinder efforts to license more sequels of *Gone With the Wind*.

CNN Moderator: What are the main differences between your book and *Gone With the Wind*?

Alice Randall: *Gone With the Wind* in certain ways divides the nation into white and black. My book unites the nation. Ultimately, most of the characters in my book turn out to be black, which is a way to make that line invisible. So, my book is a critique of *Gone With the Wind* in the form of a parody.

Question from chat room: What sorts of reactions have you had from readers?

Alice Randall: I've received letters from Maine to Georgia, and phone calls from people in Chicago on a Sunday morning. I received a call from a woman who said she's been waiting all of her life to read this book. By that, I took her to mean that she had been waiting all her life to hear someone rebuke *Gone With the Wind* in printed prose.

Q: Why did you think it should be told through black eyes?

Alice Randall: One, I am a black woman, and I have read *Gone With the Wind* and had something to say about that book. I think it was the time has come for America to understand how an African-American woman, and many African-Americans, view the book that has influenced our country's culture and how we view ourselves as a country.

Q: All who have seen *Gone With the Wind* can remember the comic portrayal of the slaves. How do you treat that topic in your parody?



Alice Randall: Well, I think those portrayals are poisonous, and I've tried to create an antidote to the poison. Cynerae is the main character, and she's highly intelligent, refined, yet a passionate woman. Mammy and other house servants have complex minds and complex motivations in my novel. As I've said, this is an antidote to the poisonous portrayal of blacks in the first novel, as one-dimensional childlike or animal-like stereotypes.

Q: Did you or your publisher anticipate this legal battle?

Alice Randall: I can't really speak for them, but I know I didn't anticipate one. I don't think they did.

Q: How did you react when people thought this book shouldn't be published?

Alice Randall: Well, I don't know how many people didn't think the book should be published, I just know that the Mitchell Trust thought that. In fact, the support for the book has been so extraordinary that I was more touched by that support. There have been people who are upset that I would criticize *Gone With the Wind*, but in America, you are allowed to criticize a book.

CNN Moderator: Are you concerned that having *The Wind Done Gone* be a parody of a book

detracts from it standing on its own?

Alice Randall: No, I'm not concerned. Parody is an old and honored literary genre. There are great examples in the 18th century. Fielding, one of our greatest writers, wrote a book called "Shamela," which was a parody of Richard Richardson's novel *Pamela*. That is the tradition in which I am working. I'm excited to think that I may be rejuvenating a tradition that some people seem to have forgotten. I think it's obvious to all that have a chance to read my book that it is a serious literary and political work.

The tradition of American parody is vital to the African-American experience. There's a dance called the cakewalk that mocks the dancing of the white folks. It appears to be one thing, and it's another. Parody is very important in the African-American tradition. For those who are wondering about parody and my novel, they should be reminded that my original title was *The Wind Done Gone: A Meaningful Parody*. I also use many symbols to alert the reader to different aspects of the parody, including the mention of cakewalks.

Q: Do you feel that you would have sold the same number of books without the media attention?

Alice Randall: I have no idea. My ambition was artistic, to create something, to make a statement. My ambition was not to sell books. I'm certainly glad that the book finds all the readers it can find.



Randall parodied *Gone with the Wind* (above) for its negative and stereotypical portrayal of African-Americans.

Q: I hear you are speaking at the Margaret Mitchell House. How do you justify your appearance?

Alice Randall: I believe in free speech. I believe in cultural dialogue. I believe that we have to be brave, and not just speak to the converted and people who believe like we believe.

Q: Can you comment on the sequel aspects of *The Wind Done Gone*, since you did take the actions of the characters beyond the story of *Gone With the Wind*?

Alice Randall: My book is not a sequel, and I have given no thought to any additional book with this novel right now.

Q: *Gone With the Wind* was written in the early part of the last century? How can it compare to modern times?

Alice Randall: It was written in the early part of the century, but many of the ideas it puts forth influence us to this day. One of the ideas that troubles me most greatly is the notion of black intellectual inferiority. *Gone With the Wind* suggests that blacks are inherently intellectually inferior and different. In my book, "*The Wind Done Gone*," Cynerae's very words argue that blacks can be brilliant and insightful, and intellectually competent.

Q: To what degree do you think *Gone With the Wind* represents a revisionist version of the Civil War?

Alice Randall: I think *Gone With the Wind* represents a point of view. I think *Gone With the Wind* in fact is more significantly understood as propaganda for the perpetuation of Jim Crow segregation that existed in the 1930s. It's more about that than it is about the Civil War. It's as much about what the future should be, than what the past is. And that is why it's so important to take the novel on.