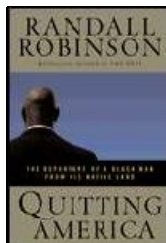


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Book Review
Quitting America
by [Randall Robinson](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: March 18, 2005

I read an advance copy of Randall Robinson's new book *Quitting America* few months, and I expected a pretty big splash when it was actually published. I may have missed it, but I don't think that happened.

Quitting America doesn't make a single tight argument as *The Debt* did, but it's a very powerful book -- all about the reasons that drove Robinson to leave the US and live in St. Kitts, his wife's home island in the Caribbean. There is a chapter on Iraq and one on Robinson's friendship with Aristide that has become a lot more topical in recent weeks. But what sticks with me is Robinson's feeling of alienation from the US, a country that he tried to love and couldn't.

At times *Quitting America* seems to paint St. Kitts and the rest of the Caribbean as a paradise on earth where everyone is more concerned about neighbors and the quality of life than about money. I don't think that all political violence and repression of women and gays in the Caribbean can be attributed to US influence -- and Robinson might have a somewhat different experience of St. Kitts if he weren't financially well-off. But the book still offers many troubling reflections on what's wrong with American culture.

About the Reviewer


Geoff Wisner is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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Brooklyn, NY | Posted: Nov 30, -1 - 12:00 AM
So -- what specifically does he see as being the problem(s) with America, and where is he right or wrong? I'm shamed to admit that I have yet to read any of Randall Robinson's stuff, despite hearing his praises sung by Jenn and many others.

Geoff | Posted: Nov 30, -1 - 12:00 AM

Well, the faults Randall Robinson sees in America probably won't surprise you much: racism, materialism, imperialism. What's impressive is the fire with which he writes about them. *The Debt* is probably still his best book: an argument for repaying black Americans for the generations of free labor that built up the wealth of corporations, universities (including Brown and Harvard Law School), or eminent white families. He also gives an illuminating sketch of what life is like for a man in a "typical" black family for each generation in the last couple of hundred years -- a nice antidote for people who would like to argue that hardcore racism is far in the past.

As a white person, the most embarrassing passages for me in *Quitting America* are those about the white Americans who have settled in St. Kitts to run hotels and other businesses and have taken advantage of the local ethic on money and work, in which people trust each other's word and don't insist on written documents and cash on the barrelhead.

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