

Jamaican Patois

Jamaica's official language is English, but we also speak Jamaican or Patois (or Patwa) - a colorful, descriptive and emphatic creole dialect that has been shaped by our African, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English colonial heritage. A beautiful symbol of our resilience, patois is the crafting of the expressions of a people, forced into a society with a different language, to express themselves in their own way, and to give meaning to it.

Today, speaking Patois fills us with immense pride, as it has become a symbol of our vibrant Jamaican culture, recognized and cherished across the globe. At the forefront of this movement was the renowned poet, the Honorable Dr. Louise Bennett-Coverly, affectionately known as Miss Lou, considered to be the mother of Jamaican culture. Her influential works have allowed Patois to transcend barriers, captivating hearts both locally and internationally. Her tireless efforts have played an important role in establishing Patois as an integral part of our nation's language. Today Patois has been incorporated into academic linguistic programs, offering formal education in our cherished language, further solidifying the significance and enduring legacy of Patois in Jamaican society.

The indomitable spirit of reggae music, carried forward by iconic figures like Bob Marley have propelled Patois into the mainstream, permeating every corner of the world. Even today, the Jamaican language is constantly evolving, heavily influenced by dancehall culture.

Accented by our signature lilting sing-song style of speaking, Jamaicans are easily recognized by our language world-wide. We are a passionate people, and so you can often hear us speak Patois when we can get loud and animated.

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