

Book on Sam Sharpe Launched in London

A novel on the life of National Hero Samuel Sharpe, written by Jamaican Fred Kennedy, was launched in London recently.

The launch, held at the Jamaican High Commission, was part of the month-long Caribbean Book Explosion in the United Kingdom (UK) organised by Kingston-based Ian Randle Publishers.

The Jamaican-born educator said that his book titled: 'Daddy Sharpe - A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Samuel Sharpe, A West Indian Slave, Written by Himself, 1832' was more than 10 years in the planning.

"The book started off as an historical chronicle and then it really became too dry, so I felt that I had to somehow, in order to tell the story, breathe life into the characters, and one of the best ways I found, was to adopt the voice of Samuel Sharpe, which was a hard thing to do," he pointed out.

'Daddy Sharpe' is a riveting account of the National Hero's life, and is based on his diaries while he was in prison, awaiting a sentence of certain execution. The story tells of Sharpe's life from his boyhood days at Cooper's Hill in St. James, ending with his surrender to the authorities after the Christmas 1831 rebellion.

Kennedy described Sam Sharpe as a great and intelligent man, whose death was a sacrifice for freedom. "The last chapter (of the book) is a description of him walking to the gallows and a lot of the descriptions there are eyewitness accounts from people, who witnessed the execution," he told JIS News.

"It's a moving account of how bravely he faced the execution and the words he said before they put the noose around his neck. He was a great man. He was very intelligent and those who knew him, said that he was one of the most intelligent persons they had ever met," he added.

Also speaking at the launch was noted Caribbean author Michael Anthony, who commended Kennedy for recognising the contributions of Sam Sharpe. He also praised Kennedy's style of using historical facts to create a very informative and enjoyable book.

Sam Sharpe is best known for his leadership role in the 1831 Christmas Rebellion on the Kensington Estate in western Jamaica. Historians agree that this rebellion was largely responsible for the passing of the Act to abolish slavery less than a year later in 1832.

Sharpe was tried and hanged for his role as organiser of the rebellion. "I would rather die in yonder gallows than live for a minute more in slavery," Sharpe famously declared before he was hanged. Source: JIS