

# Jamaican Patois Bible Officially Launched in the UK

The Jamaican Patois translation of the New Testament of the Holy Bible had its official launch in London recently at the Jamaican High Commission.

General Secretary of the Bible Society of the West Indies, Reverend Courtney Stewart, said that the launch, held on October 9, was an acknowledgement of the strong ties between Jamaica and the UK.

Reverend Stewart, who is promoting the translation in the UK, said it was a bit like 'colonisation in reverse'. He noted that the Jamaican language came out of the country's British colonial experience, and that the patois translation was done by Jamaicans for Jamaicans in "our own language".

"We have come of age. We are doing the launch (in the UK) because of the strong ties. Our relatives live here and the Jamaican community is quite strong. So we thought it was appropriate that in the 50th year since our political independence, this was a most appropriate place to do the launch and to show that we have come of age and that we have a history and a language together," he said.

The promotions tour which has seen Reverend Stewart appearing on the BBC Radio, will include visits to Manchester, Bristol and Sheffield, as well as Brixton in London.

He said that the response has been very good and that it was wonderful to see the respect that is being shown to the Jamaican language.

An electronic audio version of the Bible is also to be launched in Jamaica on October 28 on iTunes, as well as mobile phone applications.

Director of the Bible Society in England and Wales, Pat Marks, speaking at the launch, said the audio edition is being produced by Faith Comes by Hearing, a global organisation based in the United States.

The launch was attended by members of the clergy from both the West Indian and British communities, during which Rev. Stewart, presented the Jamaican High Commissioner, Her Excellency Mrs. Aloun Ndombet Assamba, with a copy of 'Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testament'.

The patois Bible covers the life of Jesus to Revelation and the translation was done by a team from the University of the West Indies in partnership with theological institutions in Jamaica over a ten year period.

Rev. Stewart told the audience, that every language, if given the opportunity, could become a world class language.

"The DNA of every language contains the potential for each to become and do anything that Hebrew and Greek, French and English have done and are still doing," he said.

"All will understand what it means that we have two languages in our country, that is, Jamiekan, the mother tongue and Standard English, the second language, with bi-lingual education being the order of the day. Our children will leave school fluent and literate in both Jamiekan and English, the crisis of illiteracy will be passed and over," he said.

In the meantime, High Commissioner Assamba, said it was important that the debate continues in Jamaica over the teaching of patois and the benefits it can derive. She said the new translation was a very important piece of work as the Bible was bi-lingual with both Jamaican and English.