

Rihanna's Bajan Creole [C1]

Le origini di Rihanna e qualche aspetto linguistico dell'isola di Barbados.



Barbados was a British colony from 1625 until 1966. Until around 1800, **enslaved** West Africans were taken there, and forced to work and learn English. Today, while English is **still** the official language used for formal occasions in Barbados, a unique language called Bajan is **widely** spoken.

CREOLE

The word 'Bajan' is a colloquial term for a Barbadian; that is, a person from Barbados. Bajan **creole** formed as different African languages mixed with simplified English. Its grammar is close to standard English, but there is no **set** written form and **spellings** can vary. Bajan developed as a way for African slaves to communicate. **Slave masters** couldn't understand it, and it became a form of resistance connecting Barbadians to each other and their African **heritage**.

BAJAN HERO

Rihanna is one of the most-celebrated Barbadians in the world. While her Bajan accent is mild, many features of the language are present in the way she talks. In 2021, Barbados honoured the singer as a national hero. In her speech, Rihanna uses Bajan terms such as 'ya know?' and 'y'all' (all of you) as well as 'gonna' to pay homage to her people and their shared language and culture. **Rihanna (Bajan accent): **I'm so proud to be a Bajan. I'm gonna be a Bajan till the day I die. This is still the only place I've ever called home. I love Barbados, I love you guys and I pray that the youth continue to push Barbados forward. I'm so proud of you. No matter if it's the accent, the sunshine, the people, man, the people! Y'all are the true heroes of Barbados and I take y'all with me wherever I go.

BAJAN TO THE BONE

Leaving the main verb out of a sentence or repeating words for emphasis are both Bajan traits. See if you can spot more ways Rihanna speaks Bajan: **Rihanna:** Prime Minister Mia Mottley, thank you so much for honouring me in this way. I have travelled the world and received several awards and recognitions, but nothing, nothing compares to being recognised in the soil that you grew in. This is a day that I will never ever forget. It's also a day that I never saw coming. Barbadians are proud people, you know? We are probably the proudest people I know, and no matter where I go in the world, I take that pride with me. No matter where we go, the world is gonna know that we Bajan to the bone.

BAJAN LANGUAGE

Bajan is similar to other Caribbean creole languages, but has its own characteristics. For example, the 'th' sound is replaced by 'd': so Bajans say 'de' instead of 'the'; 'dem' instead of 'them'; or 'dat' instead of 'that'. 'He' or 'she' are often used as possessives, instead of 'his' or 'her'. Some Bajan words

are recognisable in American English: adaptations such as 'dunna' (didn't) or 'gonna' (going to) are Bajan imports. The Bajan present tense drops the verb form and uses the word 'do' or 'does' with the infinitive: "I does guh church" is "I'm going to church". The past tense does the same thing but with 'did': "I did wun guh tuh church" is "I wanted to go to church".

BAJAN PROVERBS

Bajans are famous for their [wisdom](#). A few Bajan proverbs are: **"Cat luck ain dog luck."** Because something works for one person, doesn't mean it will work for another. **"Every [bush](#) is a man."** Always be aware of what you say because people are always listening whether you [realise](#) it or not. **"Every pig got a Saturday."** Eventually everyone will have to pay for their actions. **"De higher de monkey [climb](#) de more he show he [tail](#)."** The more you [show off](#), the more your inadequacies are revealed. Rihanna: Barbados' National Hero

Glossary

- **set** = stabilito
- **spellings** = ortografia
- **to push Barbados forward** = far avanzare, dare impulso
- **wisdom** = saggezza
- **enslaved** = schiavizzare
- **features** = caratteristiche
- **till** = fino a
- **wherever** = ovunque
- **bush** = cespuglio
- **heritage** = tradizione culturale
- **creole** = creolo
- **mild** = leggero
- **to pay homage** = rendere omaggio
- **No matter** = poco importa
- **traits** = peculiarità
- **saw coming** = prevedere
- **to the bone** = fino in fondo (lett. 'fino alle ossa')
- **widely** = ampiamente
- **tail** = coda
- **realise** = rendersi conto
- **spot** = individuare
- **soil** = terra
- **climb** = arrampicarsi
- **show off** = vantarsi
- **Slave masters** = schiavisti