

Dr. Leo Gilling

Criminologist | Author | Broadcaster | Diaspora Advocate | Education and Community Development Consultant

Dr. Leo Gilling is a distinguished criminologist, educator, broadcaster, and global diaspora leader whose transformative work bridges public policy, education, and community development across Jamaica, the Caribbean, North America, and beyond. For more than three decades, Dr. Gilling has built a legacy of service, innovation, and impact, particularly through his commitment to harnessing the power of the diaspora to uplift and empower communities at home and abroad.

Originally from Oracabessa, Jamaica, and currently based in Miramar, Florida and Toronto, Canada, Dr. Gilling is the Founder and Executive Director of the Jamaica Diaspora Taskforce Action Network (JDTAN)—a groundbreaking initiative that began with a single education task force in 2013 and has since evolved into a multi-sectoral global platform. Today, JDTAN mobilizes over 400 diaspora professionals across fields such as education, health, technology, agriculture, crime prevention, youth development, and mental health.

Under his leadership, JDTAN has:

- **Hosted 10 Annual Advancement in Education Summits (2013–2025), impacting thousands of Jamaican and Caribbean educators in Jamaica, New York, California, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale.**
- **Launched five national education task forces (Early Childhood, Primary & Secondary, Tertiary, Special Education, and Instructional Leadership) with dedicated leadership teams.**
- **Created enduring partnerships with the Ministry of Education, Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA), UTECH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT), and North American universities including FAU, Marymount Manhattan College, Broward College, University of Miami, Loma Linda, and La Sierra.**
- **Founded the EXSEED Project (2014–present), which awards five annual STEM scholarships to Jamaican teachers for training in classroom technology and digital tools.**

Dr. Gilling has pioneered multiple programs that speak to his core belief that education is the most powerful tool for nation-building:

- **Virtual Mentorship Models:** Connecting Jamaican high school students (Grades 10–12) with diaspora mentors to support exam readiness and post-secondary transitions.
- **Emotional Literacy Program:** Equipping 7th-grade teachers and students with tools to improve behavior, academic outcomes, and emotional well-being.
- **ACT (Adopt a Child Today):** A three-year initiative providing books and sustained academic support to primary school students (Grades 4–6) preparing for the PEP exams.

A visionary in virtual engagement, Dr. Gilling initiated diaspora-government teleconferences (2013–2018) long before global shifts to virtual communication. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he led over 300 virtual training sessions, reaching over 200,000 participants on topics such as digital learning, mental health, and instructional leadership. JDTAN also supported the Clinton Foundation’s CGI Caribbean initiative, delivering education and health content through online platforms.

Dr. Gilling’s extensive diaspora leadership journey began in California where he served as Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, and President of the Jamaica Awareness Association of California (JAAC) from 1990 to 2018. He has since led several prominent grassroots initiatives:

- **Sam Sharpe Teachers’ College Past Students Association (2004–2009):** Coordinating medical missions and education camps in Jamaica, New York, and Florida.
- **Celebrate Jamaica Los Angeles (2007–2012):** Culminating in Jamaica’s 50th Independence celebration.
- **Oracabessa Homecoming and Reunion (2009–2016):** Reconnecting diaspora members with their roots through community giveback.
- **Miramar Civic Engagement:** Served as a board member on the Parks & Recreation Board (2017–2020) and Economic Development Board (2020–2022), and helped draft the Sister-City Policy between Miramar and Kingston (2018–2019).

He was the Diaspora Advisory Board Member to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (2013–2015) and Alternate Board Member (2008–2012). Since 2025, he has served as Chair of the Education and Culture Committee for the Jamaica Canadian Association (JCA), where he leads the Scholarship Program, Saturday Morning Tutor Program (SMTP), and the Citizenship and Digital Literacy Initiative.

Dr. Gilling is also a respected public speaker and conference presenter, with appearances at:

- **6th, 7th, and 8th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conferences (2013, 2015, 2017)**
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM) Conference in St. Lucia (2014)**
- **Clinton Global Initiative Caribbean (2020)**
- **Community College of Mandeville Conference (2021)**
- **Early Childhood Commission PDI (2021–2025)**

He has also delivered keynote speeches at:

- **Jamaica Ex-Soldiers Association (2022)**
- **Guys Hill High School Graduation (2023)**
- **Dunrobin Christian Academy, Kingston (2024)**
- **Clarendon College Alumni Association, Canada (2025)**

A published author and media personality, Dr. Gilling released his memoir *From Shadows to Sunshine: My Jamaican Boyhood in 2025* and is currently completing his second book, *From Sunshine to Storms: My Journey into American Life*. His writing on crime, education, diaspora development, and civic engagement has been published in Medium, South Florida Caribbean News, Our Today, Caribbean National Weekly, Jamaica Observer, Jamaica Gleaner, and Old Harbour News.

Known for his charismatic broadcasting style, Dr. Gilling uses radio and digital platforms to connect, inform, and inspire Jamaicans and Caribbeans around the world. He is preparing to launch a consultancy practice specializing in education reform, diaspora engagement, nonprofit strategy, cross-cultural leadership, and virtual learning design.

Dr. Gilling holds a PhD in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Keiser University, an MSc in Criminal Justice, a BSc in Accounting from National University, and a Diploma in Education from Sam Sharpe Teachers' College. His personal journey, rooted in overcoming educational barriers in rural Jamaica, fuels his enduring mission to create systems that provide every child, regardless of background or geography, with a pathway to opportunity.

“If a child’s future hangs on a quota, then I will spend my life changing that system. Starting with teachers.” — Dr. Leo Gilling