

## **Diversity Statement**

### **Dr. Leo Gilling**

My journey in academia is deeply intertwined with my personal experiences of overcoming systemic exclusion, a testament to the resilience and determination shaped by my upbringing in Oracabessa, Jamaica. At age 12, I faced rejection from entering traditional high school due to the Common Entrance quota system, a colonial remnant that sought to limit opportunities for children like me. This challenge was pivotal, as it inspired my enduring commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals.

In my teaching, I reject superficial approaches to diversity and instead embrace critical co-creation. My courses, such as Contemporary Issues in Domestic Violence and Forensic Psychology, are transformed through the integration of Caribbean feminist praxis and community-engaged methodologies. These efforts enable students to develop tangible solutions, like safety plans for LGBTQ+ survivors or critiques of racial biases in criminal profiling. My use of ungraded reflection portfolios, Diaspora Labs, and multilingual resources further ensures inclusivity and equity in the learning experience.

My scholarship focuses on decolonizing knowledge production, exemplified by the R.I.C.E. Framework, which audits systems for anti-Black exclusion. As Executive Chair of JDTAN, I have successfully translated research into impactful programs, including mentorship, a research lab, and emotional literacy initiatives for students, as well as the annual Advancement in Education Summit for Caribbean educators.

Leadership and advocacy define my approach within academic and entrepreneurial spaces. From founding the Caribbean Institute of Criminology & Justice to establishing scholar fellowships, I consistently work towards building bridges and breaking chains of inequality. At the university level, I am eager to launch initiatives such as the Diaspora Justice Lab and Keys to Liberation fellowships, which will foster pathways for students into academia.

Ultimately, my mission is to turn exclusion into empowerment, providing students the keys to generational liberation that were once denied to me. Through integrating diaspora wisdom, critical pedagogy, and institutional courage, I aim to transform aspirations of equity into actionable realities, building liberatory futures in justice education.