

TWO **UNTAPPED**
TALENT POOLS

HOWARD ROSS: DON'T STOP WATCHING
AND DON'T STOP TALKING

THE LANGUAGE
OF **INCLUSIVITY**

INCLUSION

*Creating Globally Inclusive &
Culturally Competent Workplaces*

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US DEPARTMENT
OF ENERGY'S

DOT HARRIS

Leading the charge
on implementing
inclusive practices





La Doris "Dot" Harris, Director, Office of Economic Impact & Diversity, Department of Energy

Above: During a STEM Mentoring Café at the Reach Museum in Richland, Washington, Director Harris addresses 100 middle school students and their teachers from the Tri-Cities and beyond on April 22, 2015.

A former GE executive, La Doris "Dot" Harris was nominated to the director post at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) by President Obama and formally confirmed by the US Senate in March 2012. Bringing more than 30 years of leadership and management experience to her position at the DOE, Director Harris ensures that minorities and historically underrepresented communities have opportunities to actively participate in the department's programs.

She leads the agency's offices of Minority Economic Impact, Minority Education and Community Development, Minority Business and Economic Development, Diversity

and Inclusion, and Civil Rights. Additionally, she spearheads the DOE's Minorities in Energy Initiative; serves on the White House Council on Women and Girls; oversees the corporate funding strategy for minority institutions; develops and implements minority business contracting opportunities; and advocates for and protects the civil rights of employees and recipients of funding vehicles from the DOE.

Previously, Director Harris was cofounder, president, and CEO of Jabo Industries LLC, a minority-woman-owned management consulting firm specializing in the energy, information technology, and health-care industries. She holds a BS in electrical engineering from the University of South Carolina and an MS in technology management from Southern Polytechnic State University. She was granted an honorary doctorate of humane letters by Chicago State University and a doctor of laws degree *honoris causa* by Clark Atlanta University.

Inclusion: What ongoing or special initiatives is the Department of Energy engaging in now?

Dot Harris: Being an inclusive leader is all about leading consciously. If you don't intentionally include, you will likely unintentionally exclude. Currently, I am leading several initiatives focused on closing the participation gap of women and people of color not only at the DOE, but across the energy sector. For instance, in September 2013, we launched the Minorities in Energy initiative, a public-private collaboration model aimed at increasing minority and



Summer interns gather with Secretary Ernest Moniz, Director Dot Harris, and departmental senior leaders for a closing internship ceremony photo on August 3, 2015.

My team launched a robust external outreach campaign, which reached over 80 million people.

tribal participation in the energy sector through engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); workforce development; energy economic development; and climate change. In fiscal year 2014, the department provided \$71.9 million in grants to Minority Serving Institutions. Additionally, on behalf of the department and Secretary Ernest Moniz, my office leads several key White House Initiatives including the My Brother's Keeper Taskforce and the White House Council on Women and Girls.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story.

DH: One of my greatest success stories at the DOE is the White House and congressional support the department has garnered for the Minorities in Energy initiative. One of my key priorities at the DOE is to develop a strategically focused approach to promote the engagement of underrepresented communities in the energy sector. Within the department, a lot of collaborative efforts were already at play. However, externally, very few organizations, corporations, federal agencies, and small businesses were aware of the opportunities and resources within the department and our national laboratories to foster public engagement in energy economic development, STEM education, and research and development programs. Consequently, my team and I launched a robust external outreach campaign to include participation in over 300 events across the country and numerous publications, which afforded us the opportunity to reach over 80 million people on

the topics of diversity, economic development, and sustainability in the STEM workforce. We continually receive increased requests to collaborate on White House Initiatives in support of My Brother's Keeper and the White House Council on Women and Girls. Ultimately, our efforts received noteworthy praise from Congress and the White House.

IN: How do you measure success in terms of diversity and inclusion?

DH: Research has highlighted direct correlations between an organization's inclusive environment and its ability to retain employees, increase productivity, and decrease absenteeism, so we track all these areas. Realizing the full potential of our workforce's diversity also requires the DOE to employ effective management practices. We have to understand how our inclusion efforts are influencing the behavior of our managers and employees. We measure progress through employee surveys. We want to know whether employees perceive the DOE's organizational culture to be fair, open, cooperative, supportive, and empowering, because we know that these five key areas lead to an engaged workforce.

IN: How has the accelerated globalization in recent years affected your D&I strategies?

DH: Increased globalization means more demand for STEM talent during a time when talent, especially diverse talent, is lacking. The DOE has committed resources to strengthening the STEM pipeline. However, it is not enough

to increase STEM education outreach or aggressively recruit women and people of color. We must also expand our focus to address the crucial areas of workplace inclusion and employee engagement particularly as they relate to women and people of color.

IN: Has the DOE put an emphasis on developing STEM educational and work opportunities?

DH: The DOE is the world's largest contributor to basic research, and we are commonly referred to as the "STEM Agency." For example, we partner with the Department of Education, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Association of Science and Technology Centers to host STEM Mentoring Cafés across the country. We partner with federal agencies to host STEM Volunteer Fairs that aim to match the needs of the STEM and educational community in the Washington, DC, area with federal workers who are seeking STEM volunteer opportunities. We leverage the DOE's technical expertise to design lesson plans and activities for K–12 teachers. We organize competitions in STEM fields such as the National Science Bowl. We manage a STEM Mentor Program whereby, annually, we match DOE-headquartered employees with local undergraduate STEM students. Additionally, we've launched a Women @ Energy series on our corporate website to showcase talented DOE and lab female employees who are helping change the world through transformative science and technology.

IN: How does the fact that you are a government agency affect your ability to cultivate a diverse talent pipeline? Does it help or hinder?

DH: Federal government careers are known to offer great benefits and unmatched job security.

I love leaders who seek out team members unlike themselves.

Harris convenes leaders from the Department of Commerce, Department of Energy, and corporations, and students from North Carolina AT&T State University to participate in a Domestic Trade Tour of Oakridge National Laboratory.

Federal agencies also offer competitive salaries and a wide array of job opportunities in a variety of locations around the globe. Agencies have the platform to impact an industry through regulation, funding, and policy, which has a reciprocating impact on the development of training for that industry. All of this—in addition to targeted outreach to diverse communities—has positively impacted our ability to cultivate diverse pipelines.

IN: Presumably, when you hire, you want to be sure the potential candidates are a good fit for the department and its mission. What factors do you take into consideration?

DH: When I hire leaders, I look for those who bring a razor-sharp subject-matter expertise, a passion to serve others, an openness to change and innovation, and a willingness to stand and be bold for the mission of our office. I love leaders who seek out team members unlike themselves in order to harness the richness, uniqueness, and diversity of their backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. On top of all of that, I seek leaders who simply enjoy a job in which they help change lives every day!

IN: If you think the DOE can improve, what are some of the challenges?

DH: The DOE can always improve. Women and people of color are underrepresented in STEM fields in both the private and the public sector. This lack of women and people of color impacts the DOE's workforce. In order to have a high-performing organization in an increasingly globalized society, diversity in leadership ranks is essential. DOE has an opportunity to improve the diversity in our senior executive service. Closing this gap is central to our overall strategy to cultivate a safe and inclusive workforce that empowers all contributors.

IN: How will your role change in the next five years? Will more be expected of CDOs?

DH: The role of the chief diversity officer has evolved during my time with the DOE, and it will continue to do so. D&I is now recognized as a business imperative in both the public and the private sector. It has been proven that a more diverse organization is a more effective organization. I expect that within the next five years the CDO will play an even greater role in key decision-making and strategic planning processes. CDOs will be expected to understand the data to convey how diversity and inclusion can enable an organization to achieve a more competitive and sustainable advantage. **IN**

