



## LENORA BILLINGS-HARRIS

Consultant, international speaker, and author of *The Diversity Advantage: A Guide to Making Diversity Work*

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

**L**enora Billings-Harris founded her own corporate training firm 22 years ago—but it was during a single, powerful moment in South Africa that she discovered her true calling.

"I was presenting a customer service workshop in Johannesburg two months before Nelson Mandela was elected, and the tension in the country was palpable," she remembers. "After the workshop, a woman who had been sitting in the back of the room came up to me, gave me a bear hug, and started crying. She said, 'I'm an Afrikaner. My husband, brothers, and sons are looking for ammunition to kill every black person they see. When I saw that you were the speaker, I couldn't think of a reason to stay in this room. But now I know my real reason for being

here today was to experience your presence, and I must go home and convince my family to put down their guns and work for peace."

Since that time, Billings-Harris has helped scores of Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations embrace diversity and build healthier, happier workplaces. She works with organizations to develop comprehensive diversity strategies and has spoken on the topic to groups throughout the United States and around the world. Wherever she goes, audiences love her humorous, lighthearted approach: she's been known to use characters from *The Wizard of Oz* as a teaching metaphor, for example. As she says, "The topic is serious, but I make it really fun and upbeat so people can go on that journey without feeling judged."