



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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JENNIFER HUDSON, LUPE FIASCO AND TWISTA AMONG RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE ILLINOIS BUREAU OF TOURISM'S "MY ILLINOIS" CAMPAIGN

A "Dreamgirl," two rappers, a sculptor and a photographer reveal how their experiences in the state helped shape and inform their creativity.

CHICAGO — It's impossible for artists and entertainers *not* to thrive in a state that has produced some of the world's most renowned and celebrated music, dancing styles or one-of-a-kind pieces of art. The mélange of influences that come from being in the heart of the Midwest has produced powerhouse voices, pioneering rap styles and larger-than-life artistic expressions, as so evidenced by the new cadre of talented individuals who have been added to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism's (IBOT) "My Illinois" program.

Native Illinoisans Jennifer Hudson, Lupe Fiasco, Twista, Preston Jackson and Eric Werner have shared their stories of growing up in Illinois as part of the "Soulful Illinois" campaign. Their narratives, which tout what they love most about the state and the people, places and things that have had the substantial impact and influence on their creative endeavors, are featured on the Soulful Illinois Web site, www.soulfulillinois.com. They join a growing slate of "My Illinois" celebrities which includes notables such as actors Harry Lennix, LisaRaye and Irma P. Hall; former Chicago Bear Mike Singletary; Grammy award-winning vocalist Chaka Khan; and jazz legend Ramsey Lewis, among others.

Oscar-winning Hudson was a breakout star on season three of American Idol and is enjoying the success of her big screen debut as "Effie" in the highly acclaimed movie adaptation of the Broadway hit "Dreamgirls." Twista, whose unique style was recognized in 1992 when he was the first rapper to nab the Guinness Book of World Records "Fastest Rapper" title, has recorded numerous platinum-selling albums and continues to remain deeply devoted to his Chicago roots — he even served as "Principal For a Day" at Chicago's Choir Academy Charter school last year.

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Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

Lupe Fiasco has taken hip-hop by storm with his 2006 debut album, which has garnered acclaim from fans and critics alike. A devout Muslim whose influences include jazz, skateboard culture and urban realities and lifestyles, he has been credited with bringing fresh, distinctive perspective to hip-hop music and culture.

Jackson, a sculptor who is regarded across the country for his exemplary work with bronze casting, currently serves as a professor of sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Werner is an award-winning photographer whose works have both landed in the private collections of Michael Jordan and Gwendolyn Brooks and are featured in the public collections of entities such as the Chicago Urban League.

“The personalities featured in this campaign have made notable achievements in their respective industries. We are excited about having them join our effort to promote Illinois,” says IBOT Deputy Director Jan Kostner.

The “My Illinois” campaign is part of a multi-year, integrated program which promotes the rich ethnic, cultural and historical diversity of Illinois to the \$4.8 billion African-American travel market. IBOT is targeting this growing travel segment, which, according to the Travel Industry Association of America, is outpacing the overall U.S. travel market segment by 2 percent.

“We feel privileged to offer visitors a chance to see Illinois through the experiences of some of the state’s most recognized natives. I can’t think of a more winning combination than our attractive destination, coupled by this impressive star power,” Kostner adds.

To read these artists’ firsthand accounts of growing up in Illinois, and for more information about Illinois destinations and attractions, visit www.soulfulillinois.com or call **1-800-2-CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.

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