

There's Pride Inside There's
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Illinois: *There's Pride Inside*

When the desire to retrace the path that led you to the present becomes a necessity, then Illinois will become your history and heritage destination. To unlock the shackles of Southern racism and poverty, many African-American families exited the South and settled in such cities as Cairo, East St. Louis and Chicago. Others made their way along the Mississippi to Alton and north to Quincy.

Illinois is the library to much of the African-American history that has never been written. Each city and town represents a new chapter with heroes and heroines alike. The majestic bronze statue of Victory and eagles stands in tribute to Reverend Elijah P. Lovejoy, the abolitionist lynched because of his public outcry against slavery. The monument on Alton's Monument Avenue is one stop along that city's Underground Railroad Tour, which also visits such places as the Alton Museum of History and Art's Black Pioneer Exhibit and Rocky Fork Church, which originated before the Civil War when free people and slaves crossed the Mississippi River to begin life in the "free" state of Illinois.

History doesn't always happen before your time. In fact, many of us have witnessed or have known someone who has personally been a part of history in the making. Well - Illinois is a destination where much of the African-American "story" is still being told. Dr. Charles Smith, in the Chicago suburb of Aurora, tells the story in his "off the beaten path" outdoor exhibit at the African American Heritage Museum and Black Veterans Archives. From slavery to civil rights and beyond, his intriguing art captures the Black experience in its entirety. No glimpse into Illinois' vibrant cultural history would be complete

without a visit to Chicago's "Black Metropolis." Visitors learn about the contributions of those who built a bustling and prosperous "Bronzeville," that made Chicago the nation's "Black business capital." Tour Black Chicago and Black Coutours guided tours allow visitors to experience sights and sounds rarely seen downtown. The burial grounds of the late Harold Washington, Chicago's first Black mayor; the national headquarters of the Nation of Islam; and DuSable Museum of African-American History, the nation's oldest Black History museum are only a few of the links that connect us to the past.

Continuing to recognize the importance of a culturally diverse state, Illinois' summer events bring life to the cultural scene. Rockford, Illinois' second largest city, is hosting the exhibit "A Slave Ship Speaks: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie," through the end of August. Joliet hosts its third annual Gospel Fest, June 26-28. Chicago will once again host its annual Summer music festivals, including a Gospel Fest, June 12-14, and Jazz Fest, September 3-6.

The multitude of heritage found across the state makes Illinois the perfect spot to rediscover your pride. For more information about these and other sites or hotel accommodations, call an Illinois travel counselor at 1-800-2CONNECT to plan your perfect getaway weekend and to get your copy of Illinois' new African-American travel and heritage guide.

