

Atlantan Plans Business Mission, Five-City Cultural Tour in China

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An **Atlanta** businessman seeking to use culture as a bridge to business and government relationships is organizing a five-city business and cultural mission to **China** Dec. 4-14.

On the heels of momentum created by the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in **Beijing**, **Glendon Thompson** is recruiting dancers, singers, writers and visual artists for a tour that crisscrosses the country.

Mr. Thompson is managing director for **Arcom Group Inc.**, an Atlanta-based environmental technology firm with business in China.



Glendon Thompson

He is of **Jamaican** descent but his grandfather was Chinese, and last July, he opened a Jamaican restaurant in the Chinese city of **Hangzhou** to bring together two cultures that make up his background.

Two months later, he organized the **Chengdu Panda Arts and Business Forum**, which brought artists from the capital city of **Sichuan** province to Atlanta for a week of performances that celebrated the first birthday of Mei Lan, a giant panda born at **Zoo Atlanta**.

The forum also provided an arena for business networking.

This year's **One World Business and Cultural Exchange** plays on the Olympic slogan, "One World, One Dream," and marks Mr. Thompson's second endeavor to foster ties through a mix of cultural performances and business matchmaking.

"The title is business and culture. It's my belief that one needs the other," he told **GlobalAtlanta**.

On this year's trip, the group of some 30 American artists will perform alongside Chinese counterparts in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, **Guangzhou**, **Harbin** and **Shenzhen**.

Businesspeople on the trip will only go as far as Beijing and the northeastern city of Harbin, but Mr. Thompson said he would work with his Beijing partner to bring

in companies from around China to link up with American prospects.

Focus sectors are technology, manufacturing, environmental protection, agriculture, construction and renewable energy, he said.

Although business matchmaking services end in Harbin, Mr. Thomson hopes that companies wanting exposure to the Chinese consumer market will sponsor artists. If they do, they'll get priority ad spots at performances in the five cities, which have a combined population of around 65 million.

Many people know about the opportunities provided by better-known hubs like Beijing and **Shanghai**, but the wide range of cities gives a broader portrait of China's economic ascension and cultural richness, Mr. Thompson said.

"It's a nice blend from north to south of China and they are large enough cities that we can pull in the various companies to match with the American companies," he said.

Mr. Thompson is keen to build relationships with the countries that make up his ancestry. To introduce his homeland to China, he opened a Jamaican restaurant in the city of **Hangzhou**, the capital of the southeastern province of **Zhejiang**.

Artists looking to make the trip must have a DVD of the routines they plan to perform on the tour. As per government restrictions, artists must stay within the bounds of the performances they submit on their DVD.

The four-day business leg of the trip costs \$3,600. Potential business travelers, sponsors and interested artists should contact Mr. Thompson.