



BPIR Press Kit ~ Frequently Asked Questions

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

What is the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR)?

The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR) is the world's only touring African American rodeo association, celebrating the legacy, excellence, and cultural contributions of Black cowboys and cowgirls. Founded in 1984 by Lu Vason, and is currently owned and operated by his widow, Valeria Howard Cunningham, President & CEO of the BPIR. The BPIR tours major U.S. cities showcasing elite rodeo competition alongside history, culture, and community engagement.

Who was Bill Pickett?

Bill Pickett (1870–1932) was a legendary African American cowboy, rodeo innovator, and Wild West performer best known for inventing the rodeo event known today as steer wrestling. He was inducted into the National Rodeo Hall of Fame and is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in rodeo history.

Why was the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Association Created?

Lu Vason created the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Association to address the exclusion and marginalization of Black cowboys and cowgirls in mainstream rodeo, despite their deep roots and excellence in the sport. Its purpose was to:

- Create access and opportunity for Black rodeo athletes who were often denied fair entry, equal treatment, and visibility in predominantly white rodeo circuits
- Preserve and honor Black Western heritage, ensuring the history and ongoing contributions of Black cowboys and cowgirls are recognized and protected
- Provide a safe, supportive competitive space where Black families and communities can participate without discrimination
- Build community and legacy by enabling multiple generations to compete, mentor, and pass down skills, culture, and pride
- Control the narrative around Black rodeo excellence—showcasing talent, professionalism, and cultural significance on their own terms

Why is the rodeo named after Bill Pickett?

The Founder Lu Vason named the rodeo after Bill Pickett to make sure that everyone would learn the legacy and fearless contributions that Bill Pickett, the cowboy, ranch hand and entertainer made to the rodeo world and Western culture.

Rodeo Events & Competition

What events are featured at BPIR?

BPIR features professional rodeo competitions including:

- Bull Riding
- Ladies Barrel Racing
- Steer Wrestling
- Ranch Bronc Riding
- Calf Roping
- Team Roping
- Ladies Steer Undecorating
- Pee wee & Junior Barrel Racing
- Junior Tie Down Roping

Who competes in the rodeo?

BPIR showcases professional Black cowboys and cowgirls from across the United States, including multi-generational rodeo families and rising youth competitors. Many athletes also compete in PRCA, IPRA, PBR and other professional rodeo circuits.

Cultural Experience & Community Impact

What makes BPIR different from other rodeos?

BPIR pioneered Black rodeo on a national level by creating larger platforms for Black cowboys and cowgirls, bringing them into major venues, increasing visibility, and offering greater competitive opportunities and added money. As a catalyst for today's Black rodeo movement, BPIR uniquely blends professional rodeo competition with Black Western history, music, fashion, food, and cultural storytelling, making it both a premier sporting event and a cultural celebration.

Are there activities beyond rodeo competition?

Yes. BPIR events often include live music, DJs, cultural showcases, vendor marketplaces, food experiences, line-dancing, workshops, community resources, and family-friendly educational activities celebrating Black Western heritage.

Why is BPIR culturally significant?

BPIR preserves and amplifies the often-overlooked history of African American cowboys and cowgirls who helped shape the American West. It serves as a platform for representation, education, and community pride.

Youth, Education & Legacy

Does BPIR offer youth or educational programming?

Yes. The rodeo offers events to Pee wee age 5 to 7 to showcase their talents along with the Junior events, age 7 to 12 to showcase their talents. Through the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation, BPIR supports youth rodeo events, educational outreach, workshops, and cultural preservation initiatives designed to inspire future generations.

Is BPIR family-friendly?

Absolutely. BPIR is a family-oriented event welcoming audiences of all ages and requiring all to take pride in their heritage in an inspiring and uplifting manner. The rodeo also allows you to obtain autographs and take pictures with our Rodeo Clown, Bull Fighters, Cowboys and Cowgirls. It is a family affair.

Tour, Tickets & Attendance

Where does the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo tour?

BPIR tours major cities across the U.S., including 5 stops in Fort Worth, Memphis, Oakland, Los Angeles, 2 stops in Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. The updated tour schedules are available at www.billpickettrodeo.com.

How can fans purchase tickets?

Tickets are available through the official BPIR website www.billpickettrodeo.com and authorized ticketing partners. Some venues offer on-site ticket sales, subject to availability.

Media, Sponsorship & Partnerships

How can media request credentials or interviews?

Media inquiries, interview requests, and credential applications should be directed to: press@billpickettrodeo.com

Where can media access photos, logos, and press materials?

Press kits, high-resolution images, logos, and additional assets are available upon request or via the official website www.billpickettrodeo.com.

How can organizations support or sponsor BPIR?

Sponsorship and community engagement opportunities are available for brands and organizations aligned with BPIR's mission. Inquiries can be submitted to the BPIR at the email billpickett.rodeo@gmail.com.