

# The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR) '23, Heading to Oakland, Ca. "The Greatest Show on Dirt"

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After a brief hiatus due to Covid-19 in '20 & '21, The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR) returned 'Bigger, Better, Bolder' with sold-out shows touring across the USA. With a new vision, direction, more community focus, and the goal to maintain the legacy and vision of Lu Vason (BPIR Founder), The Bill Pickett Invitational BPIR's mission to educate audiences about the history of Blacks in the West, validate that Black cowboys and cowgirls are real, and educate audiences by showcasing the talents of current African American cowboys and cowgirls did not disappoint.

The BPIR has a long legacy and in 2021, BPIR was televised on CBS National Broadcast, the first and only African American Rodeo to air on a major network reaching millions of 1st time viewers. This was extremely historical because CBS aired on Juneteenth '21, the first year Juneteenth became a National Holiday. This was truly a major endeavor that BPIR was most



BPIR Oakland, 23



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honored and excited about.

To add to this, in 2022, BPIR was televised on CBS National Broadcast, the first and only African American Rodeo to air on a major network reaching millions of 1st-time viewers. The was extremely historical because CBS aired it on Juneteenth '22, the first year Juneteenth became a National Holiday. This was truly a major endeavor that BPIR is most honored with.



Also, in '21, BPIR made history again by partnering with PBR (Professional Bull Riders), pairing the rodeo with an elite bull riding series. This partnership brings the BPIR rodeo to television through Pluto streaming, which continued in '23 with the Texas Connection Series being streamed live for each of its performance dates.

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*Valeria Howard-Cunningham*

Additionally, in 2023 BPIR partnered with the USDA & Royalty ID providing additional scholarships in each city. BPIR/USDA/Royalty ID has presented 8 scholarships and 2 Rodeo Grants so far this year to some deserving students. Students such as JB Collins, Rosenberg, TX., Weston Blake Carter, Seminole, OK., Denesha Henderson-Magnolia, TX., Kennedy Johnson-Denver, CO., Ajiah Arceneax – Houston, TX, Kamryn Bailey, Fort Worth, TX., Denim Goff, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, Zacary J. White-Futrell, Memphis, TN. The rodeo grants were awarded to Jermaine Walker, Jr., Hempstead, TX, and Lindon Demery, Beggs, OK.

While BPIR 2021 & 2022 had many 1st time historic milestones, the first major legacy attribute began in 1984. In 1984, entertainment impresario Lu Vason had the vision to entertain and educate audiences and to create and preserve the historic contributions of African American cowboys and cowgirls. He named the rodeo after legendary Black cowboy, Bill Pickett, coined “Bulldogging” and dubbed it “The Greatest Show on Dirt.” At that time, Vason, who passed in 2015, had no idea that the rodeo would still be in existence, celebrating its 39th anniversary this year.

Under the direction of Vason’s wife, Valeria Howard-Cunningham (the 1st African American Woman rodeo producer) the BPIR has blossomed into an event that educates, inspires, and unites, bringing family joy to sell-out crowds in communities across America. The BPIR

experience teaches kids and adults about the important contributions of Black Americans in the development of the West.

Valeria says “It is absolutely critical to continue building on Lu’s legacy to educate and inspire our communities, and especially our youth by encouraging and supporting their rodeo aspirations. I love that we have expanded our rodeo to include our rodeo babies into the rodeo. They have been stealing the shows all across America?”

THIS YEAR, 2023, the nine-month tour, known as “The Greatest Show on Dirt” will hold 24 performances while traveling to various cities. Completed SOLD-OUT SHOWS included Denver, CO., Memphis, TN, 3 Fort Worth, TX. shows, and the NEXT stop is Oakland, CA.!

After Oakland, the rodeo continues to Los Angeles, CA., Atlanta, GA., and Fort Worth, TX., before its BPIR 2023 season culminates in Washington, DC/Upper Marlboro, MD in September as it celebrates its BPIR National Rodeo Finals, while crowning its 2023 event champions and All-Around Cowboy and Cowgirl.

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The Oakland, CA. BPIR takes place Saturday, July 8th, 2023, and Sunday, July 9th, 2023 at Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park located at 9725 Dublin Canyon Road, Castro Valley, CA 94552. Doors open both days at 2:30pm. Tickets range from \$22 to \$38 and can be purchased online at <https://www.billpickettrodeo.com/index.php/schedule/oakland-ca>. For box seats call 925-230-8032.

\*Please note, third-party tickets will not be honored as they are not official!

\*\*Parking lot opens at 11:00 am and gates open at 12:00 pm. Arrive early to avoid traffic delays due expected sold-out crowd. Parking is \$10.

Activities include:

Bareback/Ranch Bronc Riding

Ladies Breakaway

Bull Dogging

Calf Roping

Ladies Steer Undecorating

Ladies Barrel Racing

Bull Riding

Jr. Barrel Racing

Pee Wee Barrel Racing

Jr. Breakaway Rope

Relay Racing

## Youth Awareness Series

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The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Oakland '23 is sponsored by National Presenting Sponsors Ariat & Crown Royal, National Sponsors Yeti & Border Patrol, and Crown Royal has created a National Promotion with BPIR, tipping their hats and honoring the BPIR Staff who have been committed to BPIR.

Local sponsors include: Safeway, East Bay Community Energy, Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Department.

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