

# Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Excellence, Community Spirit, and Cultural Legacy Rolls Through the Bay Area

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OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From edge-of-your-seat competition to heartfelt community impact, the [Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo](#) (BPIR) delivered two thrilling shows in Castro Valley this past weekend, captivating audiences with its signature mix of cultural celebration and cowboy grit.



BPIR Oakland Rodeo in Castro Valley, CA

Now in its 41st season, BPIR remains the only African American touring rodeo association in the world honoring the legacy of legendary cowboy Bill Pickett while shining a spotlight on today's Black rodeo athletes. Thousands gathered at Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park on Saturday, July 12 and Sunday, July 13 for the third stop of the 2025 Legacy Tour, which includes Denver, Memphis, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Atlanta.

"Every time we return to the Oakland area, we feel the deep roots and unwavering pride of this community," said BPIR President and Producer Valeria Howard-Cunningham. "It's more than a rodeo, it's a homecoming that celebrates our legacy, uplifts our youth, and keeps our culture alive in the heart of the Bay."

This year's competition in Oakland featured record-breaking times, crowd-favorite matchups, and young talent ready to make history:

- Ranch Bronc Riding

Marcus Verser proved unstoppable, taking first place both Saturday (79 pts) and Sunday (76 pts) with powerful, controlled rides.

- Ladies Breakaway Roping

Kanesha Jackson swept the weekend with lightning-fast times—3.80 seconds Saturday and an incredible 2.37 seconds Sunday.

- Junior Breakaway Roping

Harrel Williams impressed the crowd with a 5.19-second run, showing poise beyond his years.

- Steer Wrestling

Tony Aska (5.13 sec, Sat) and Tory Johnson (4.87 sec, Sun) muscled their way to victory in this high-intensity event.

- Calf Roping

JB Collins IV came out on top with a clean, 9.12-second run.

- Ladies Steer Undecorating

Kanesha Jackson (1.52 sec, Sat) and Kortnee Solomon (1.67 sec, Sun) each delivered decisive wins.

- Ladies Barrel Racing

Paris Wilburd blazed through with a 17.827-second run, thrilling the crowd with her speed and precision.

- Junior Barrel Racing

Zoey Wilburd showed talent runs in the family, clocking in at 18.573 seconds.

- Pee Wee Barrels

The youngest competitor, Kendall Henderson, stole hearts with a brave 22.136-second finish.

- Team Roping

Jeremy Johnson and Lance Bernard displayed seamless teamwork with a 7.06-second win.

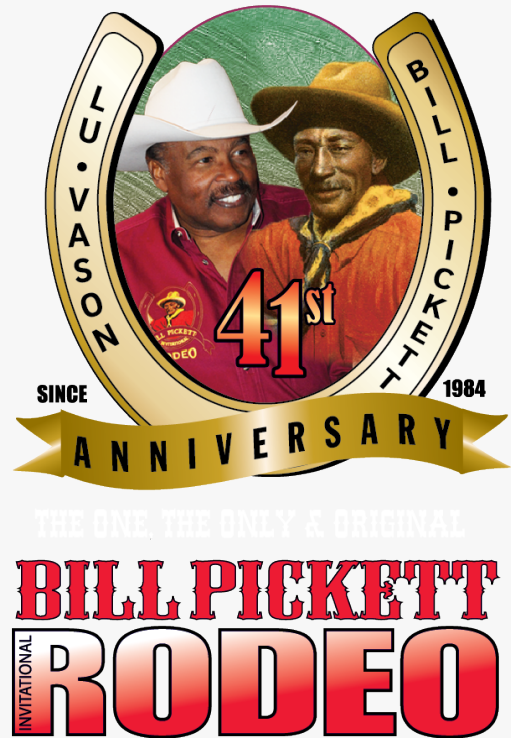
- Bull Riding

Anthony Smith Jr. (76 pts, Sat) and Au'Vion Horton (73 pts, Sun) held on for crowd-pleasing victories.

- Relay Race

The Oklahoma/Texas Connection took home bragging rights, finishing the high-stakes bareback baton race in just 57.077 seconds.

Beyond the competition, BPIR continued its commitment to education and community engagement. In partnership with AVV (Anti-Violence Ventures), USDA, and Safeway, the BPIR Foundation hosted a hands-on youth workshop for more than 90 local youth. The interactive session tackled issues such as bullying, anti-violence strategies, emotional intelligence, and agricultural literacy, empowering young leaders through dialogue, healing, and connection to land.



BPIR 41st logo



Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation logo



A poignant moment of the weekend came with a tribute to Jeff Douvel Shiflet, longtime BPIR media consultant and Oakland coordinator. A beloved member of the BPIR family for over three decades, Jeff's powerful voice, dedication, and historical insight helped shape the narrative of Black rodeo in the Bay Area and beyond.

Also announced was the release of a compelling new biography, *Lu Vason: From Dreamer to Visionary to Pioneer*, now available in hardcover, softcover, and digital formats on Amazon and at BPIR souvenir booths. The book chronicles the life and legacy of Lu Vason, BPIR's founder and a trailblazer in Black Western and entertainment culture.

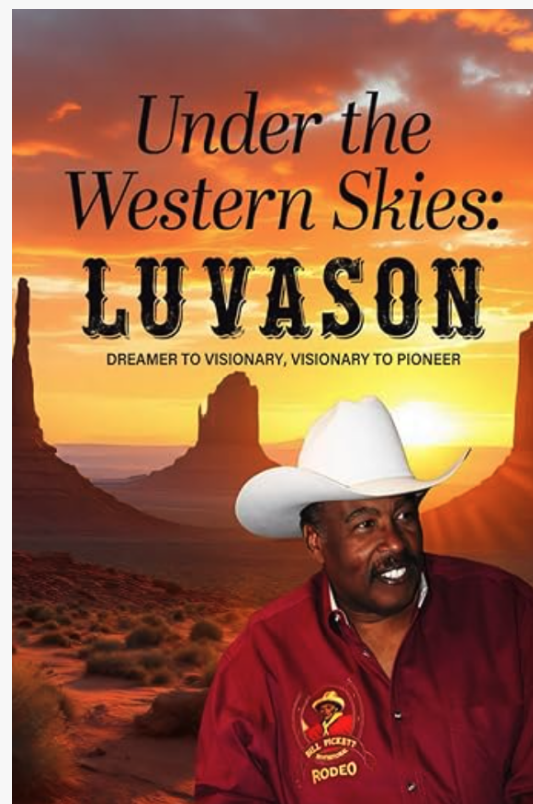
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The BPIR tour next stop is Los Angeles as it continues with a special Soul Country Rodeo Weekend, featuring music, culture, and more rodeo thrills:

Friday, July 18 – Soul Country Music Star™ Competition



Valeria Howard Cunningham, President & CEO of the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo



Powerful new biography: *Lu Vason: From Dreamer to Visionary to Pioneer*

Autry Museum of the American West, Griffith Park – Doors at 6:30 PM

Saturday, July 19 – Rodeo Performance

Industry Hills Expo Center, City of Industry – 7:00 PM

Sunday, July 20 – Rodeo Performance

Industry Hills Expo Center, City of Industry – 3:30 PM

For tickets, visit: [www.billpickettrodeo.com](http://www.billpickettrodeo.com)

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR): Founded in 1984 by Lu Vason, the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo is the nation's longest-running African American touring rodeo association in the world. Created to honor the legacy of legendary cowboy Bill Pickett, BPIR showcases the history, culture, and contributions of Black cowboys and cowgirls, while providing a national platform for today's top Black rodeo athletes.

About the [Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation](#): The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Foundation is the nonprofit arm of the BPIR, dedicated to preserving the legacy of African American cowboys and cowgirls while empowering future generations. Through educational programming, scholarships, youth engagement, and community partnerships, the Foundation promotes cultural pride, leadership development, and opportunities both in and beyond the rodeo arena.

About AVV (Anti-Violence Ventures): AVV is a nonprofit organization focused on ending cycles of violence in Black communities by creating safe spaces for healing, dialogue, and emotional growth. Through workshops and community engagement, AVV empowers Black men and youth to build healthier futures rooted in understanding, accountability, and connection.

Michelle R Johnson - BPIR Media Relations Director

Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

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