

National Western Stock Show and Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Announce Transition

National Western Stock Show and Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Announce Transition for 2026 MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions

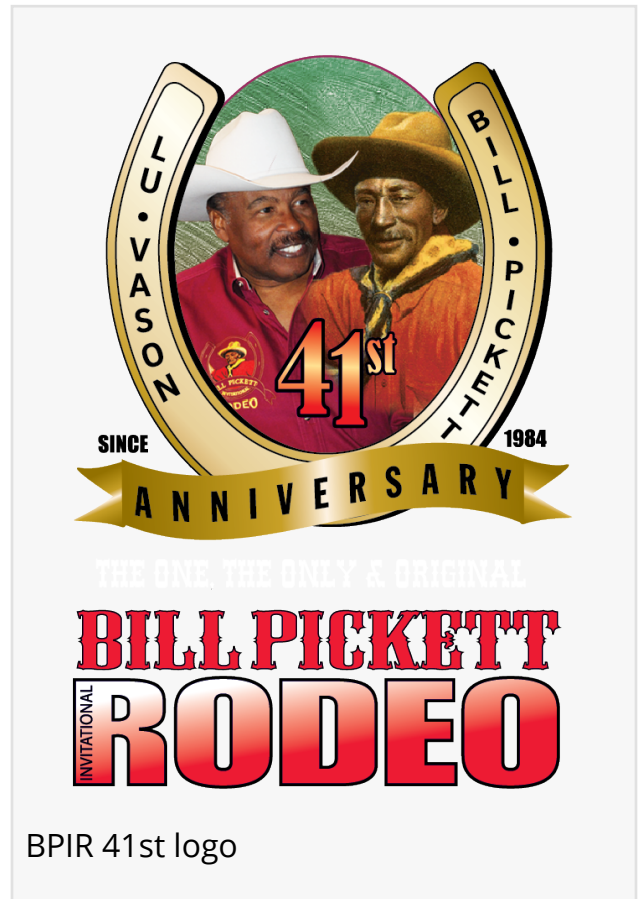
DENVER, CO, UNITED STATES, October 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [National Western Stock Show](#) (NWSS) and the [Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo](#) (BPIR) announce a transition in production for the annual MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions, held during the National Western Stock Show.

After nearly two decades of partnership, both organizations have agreed to part ways for the upcoming season due to scheduling constraints that could not be reconciled. Originally established in 2006 by BPIR founder Lu Vason in collaboration with the National Western Stock Show to commemorate the NWSS's 100th anniversary, the MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions has brought together exceptional African American cowboys and cowgirls to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr. and celebrate their enduring contributions to the Western way of life.

"The National Western Stock Show is deeply appreciative of the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo's long-standing partnership and the strong foundation it helped build for this special event," said Wes Allison, President & CEO of the Western Stock Show Association. "As we looked ahead to 2026, it became clear that the event's expanded production schedule could no longer be accommodated within our broader rodeo lineup. We are proud of what we've accomplished together and look forward to continuing to honor Dr. King's legacy through future collaborations and programming."

Valeria Howard-Cunningham, President & CEO of the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, added: "While we are disappointed that the BPIR will not be hosting the 2026 MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions due to schedule constraints, we are grateful for nearly twenty years of partnership with the National Western Stock Show. BPIR remains committed to celebrating, educating, and showcasing the extraordinary contributions of African Americans to



the Western way of life as we look forward to an exciting 2026 season.”

The National Western Stock Show will continue the tradition of hosting the MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo in 2026 with a new production partner, Black Rodeo USA (BRUSA). Together, NWSS and BRUSA will carry forward the event’s mission to honor African American rodeo athletes, preserve Western heritage, and inspire future generations through the message and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The 2026 MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo is taking place Monday, January 19, 2026, at 6 p.m., inside the Denver Coliseum as part of the National Western Stock Show. Tickets are available at www.nationalwestern.com.

National Western Stock Show

Danielle Lewis

dlewis@nationalwestern.com

303-299-5566

About the National Western Stock Show

Established in 1906, the National Western Stock Show is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides college and graduate-level scholarships in agricultural science, business, and rural medicine. Our mission is to serve producers and consumers worldwide by being the premier annual livestock show and center for year-round events. The 16-day show in January also serves as an entertainment arena, hosting one of the world's richest regular-season professional rodeos, world-class horse shows, family educational events, and Colorado's largest western trade show. For more information, visit nationalwestern.com.

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR) is the nation’s only touring African American rodeo association, dedicated to celebrating and preserving the legacy of Black Cowboys and Cowgirls and their significant contributions to the American West. For nearly four decades, BPIR has delivered a premier, family-friendly experience that both educates and entertains through professional rodeo competition, cultural exhibitions, and historical interpretation. Committed to honoring Black Western Heritage, BPIR engages diverse audiences nationwide while offering partners a meaningful opportunity to align with a respected and enduring American cultural institution. Learn more at www.billpickettrodeo.com.

Michelle R Johnson - BPIR Media Relations Director

Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

press@billpickettrodeo.com

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