

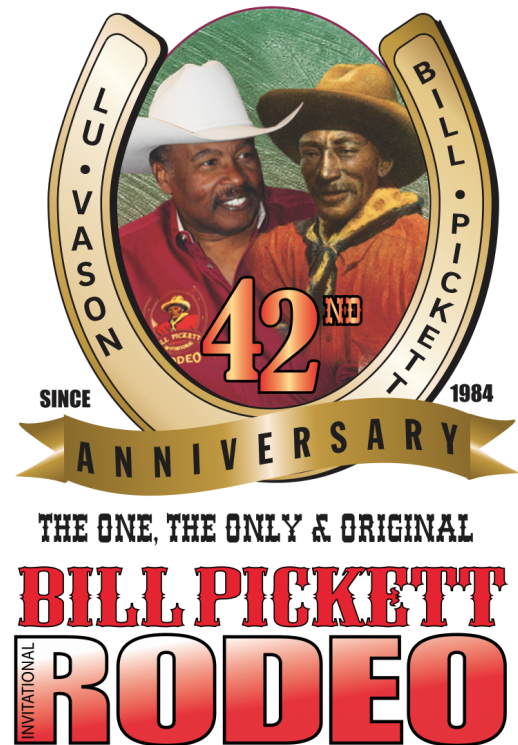
Valeria Cunningham Honored as a 2026 Power 50 Woman of Influence; Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Returns to Los Angeles

42nd Anniversary Legacy Tour Brings Championship Rodeo, Soul Country Music, Community Impact, and a 30-Year Leadership Milestone to Los Angeles

WASHINGTON , DC, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Valeria Howard Cunningham, President and CEO of the [Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo](#) (BPIR), was honored today at the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. Power 50 Women of Influence Luncheon at The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C. The recognition comes as BPIR, the nation's longest-running African American rodeo association, builds on the momentum of its sold-out Oakland, California, performances on July 11 and 12, and prepares for one of the most anticipated stops of its 42nd Anniversary Legacy Tour. The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo returns to Los Angeles on Saturday and Sunday, July 18 and 19, at the Industry Hills Expo Center.

"Receiving this recognition from the U.S. Black Chambers is an incredible honor, but it truly belongs to everyone who has helped build and sustain the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo association over the past 42 years," said Valeria Howard Cunningham, President and CEO. "Our mission has always been to preserve the rich legacy of Black cowboys and cowgirls while creating opportunities through rodeo, education, music, and community partnerships. As we return to Los Angeles, we celebrate not only our history but the bright future of Black Western heritage."

As the 42nd Anniversary Legacy Tour continues, the road to the 2026 BPIR National Finals leads back to the DMV on Friday and Saturday, September 18-19, 2026, at Show Place Arena in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. BPIR will once again present Rodeo for Kidz Sake on Friday morning, followed by the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo on Friday evening and the Championship Finals Rodeo and celebration on Saturday.



BPIR 42nd Anniversary Logo Horz White

The BPIR excitement continues in Los Angeles on July 18th "The Greatest Show on Dirt," will present a weekend celebrating championship rodeo competition, Black Western heritage, soul country music, and community impact. Doors open at 2:30 p.m., followed by the [Soul Country Music Star](#)™ Los Angeles Regional Competition and Concert at 3:30 p.m. hosted by national soul country recording artist Kirk Jay, before the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo begins at 7:00 p.m. The celebration continues on Sunday, July 19, with another afternoon of world-class rodeo competition featuring many of the nation's top African American cowboys and cowgirls competing in bull riding, barrel racing, steer wrestling, tie-down roping, breakaway roping, team roping, ranch bronc riding, ladies' steer undecorating, and popular youth events.

The Soul Country Music Star™ Los Angeles Regional Competition showcases rising country music artists from across the nation as they compete for a coveted place in the 2026 Soul Country Music Star™ National Finals and Festival, October 31 through November 1, at the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles. One outstanding Los Angeles regional winner will advance to compete for the \$10,000 grand prize, industry recognition, and the opportunity to perform as part of the 2027 Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo national tour.

Adding to the excitement, the Los Angeles weekend will welcome an outstanding lineup of influencers, celebrity guests and distinguished honorees celebrating Black excellence in



USBC 2026 Honoree Valeria Howard Cunningham
BPIR CEO



Valeria Howard Cunningham, President of the BPIR
with Ronald Busby, Sr. President of the USBC

entertainment, sports, and Western heritage. Legendary actors Glynn Turman and James Pickens, Jr. will serve as Grand Marshals, joined by actor and producer Reginald T. Dorsey along with additional special guests. Their participation reflects the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo's long-standing tradition of bringing together leaders from the worlds of film, television, music, sports, and business to celebrate the enduring legacy of Black cowboys and cowgirls.

This year's Los Angeles celebration also honors Margo Wade LaDrew, National Development & Partnerships Director for the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, as she celebrates 30 years of service with the organization. Throughout three decades of leadership, LaDrew has helped forge national partnerships, expand sponsorships, produce signature events, and elevate awareness of Black Western heritage across the country. "Thirty years ago, I joined the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo as a volunteer because I believed in preserving an important piece of American history. Today, I remain just as inspired by the people who make this organization extraordinary, our contestants, fans, sponsors, volunteers, partners, and the communities that welcome us each year. The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo Association has always been about more than rodeo. It is about honoring our heritage while creating opportunities for future generations, and I am grateful to have been part of that journey," said Margo Wade LaDrew.

Tickets for the Soul Country Rodeo Experience and the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo are on sale now. For schedules, and additional information, visit the BillPickettRodeo.com or SoulCountryMusic.com websites.

About the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo



BPIR LA Bull Rider



Margo Wade LaDrew, BPIR National Development & Partnerships Director, Executive Producer of Soul Country Music Star

The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR) is the nation's premier African American touring rodeo association. Founded in 1984 by Lu Vason to celebrate and preserve the legacy of Black cowboys and cowgirls and their contributions to the American West, BPIR is proudly led today by President and CEO Valeria Howard Cunningham, making it the only African American touring rodeo association in the world owned and operated by a Black woman. Touring major cities across the United States annually, BPIR presents world class rodeo competition while serving as a powerful cultural platform advancing national and global awareness of Black Western heritage.

About Soul Country Music Star™

Soul Country Music Star™ is the premier national country music competition dedicated to discovering and developing the next generation of Soul Country artists. Produced by Wade & Associates Group in association with the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, the competition travels to select cities across the country, providing emerging artists the opportunity to perform before live audiences and industry professionals. Regional winners advance to the Soul Country Music Star™ National Finals and Festival, where they compete for a \$10,000 grand prize, career development opportunities, and the chance to perform on the 2027 Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo national tour.

Michelle R Johnson - BPIR Media Relations Director

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