



# BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 14, 2016

*“Live in the Bay Area!”*

## EXHILARATING BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO RETURNS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

*July 9-10, 2016 • Rowell Ranch, Castro Valley, CA*

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA:** To the delight of thrilled audiences and rodeo fans, some of the nation’s most skilled and entertaining Black cowboys and cowgirls will ride into the San Francisco Bay Area to compete in the nation’s only touring Black rodeo competition—the thrilling Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR). Celebrating its 32nd year, BPIR will proudly showcase its athletes performing and competing in Castro Valley, California’s Rowell Ranch Rodeo Arena (9711 Dublin Canyon Rd., Castro Valley, CA 94552) on Saturday and Sunday, July 9 and 10, 2016.

At 2:30 p.m. each day, hard riding competitors will choke dust as fans and novice spectators cheer for their favorite competitors as they battle to be named the best in the Bay Area. Contest performances include thrilling Calf Ropin’, exhilarating Bareback Ridin’, Bull Doggin, Ladies Barrel Racin’, Junior Barrel Racin’, Ladies Steer Undercoatin’, and gripping Bull Ridin.’ [Tickets are priced from \\$18.00 to \\$30.00.](#) Call (510) 357-3667 for discounted group ticket pricing.

### **ABOUT BILL PICKETT:**

Known as the "Dusky Demon," Bill Pickett (1870-1932) was the best-known African American rodeo performer of all time. He invented the rodeo sport of bulldogging—now known as steer wrestling—and entertained millions of people around the world, showcasing his bronco- and bull-riding and roping skills in Wild West shows, circuses, and world's fairs. The professional cowboy and rodeo champion was small in stature but he was a larger-than-life Western legend in his own time. His rodeo career spanned more than 40 years. In 1989, he was inducted into the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA), and in 1996, Bill Pickett was the first rodeo athlete inducted into the Black Cowboy Walk of Fame in Denver, Colorado.

~ **MORE**

Retired since 1916, Pickett died in April 1932 following a roping accident. His funeral was one of the largest ever held in Oklahoma. He was buried high on a hill at White Eagle Monument, where the Cherokee Strip Cowboy Association set up a limestone marker in his memory. According to Frank Billings, Colonel Zack Miller of the 101 Ranch called him "the greatest sweat-and-dirt cowhand that ever lived."

**ABOUT BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO (BPIR):**

Lu Vason, president and producer of the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (BPIR), long-ago challenged the false perception of the absence of Blacks in the development of the West., while molding his touring rodeo into an unquestionable success. A former entertainment producer, media impresario and marketing consultant, founded the BPIR in 1984. Sadly, the rodeo's founder, passed away last year. His wife, Valeria Howard-Vason, Producer, is carrying on the rodeo and his legacy.

BPIR is an innovative, educational and exciting perspective on the history, challenges and excitement of Black Americans in the Western United States. BPIR celebrates the life of the legendary Black cowboy Bill Pickett and other Blacks who greatly contributed to the development of the West.

The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo celebrates and honors Black Cowboys and Cowgirls, highlights the irrefutable global appeal, and tells stories behind a sub-culture that is still strong today. BPIR also serves as a cultural event and opportunity for families to enjoy and embrace the cowboy culture, while being educated and entertained with re-enactments, history highlights and western adventure.

To learn more about the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, its history, competitors and tour calendar (Memphis, TN – Denver, CO – Castro Valley, CA - Los Angeles, CA - Washington, DC - Atlanta, GA), please visit [billpickettrodeo.com](http://billpickettrodeo.com).

*Since March 1987, the **Bill Pickett Memorial Scholarship Fund** (a non-profit organization - tax ID #84-1064797) has demonstrated an abiding commitment to the rodeo and the arts. Our steadfast focus has been providing educational opportunities. Through a 12-month strategic planning process, the Fund has clarified the vision that will guide us in the coming years and support our heritage scholarship, arts for kidz sake, kids' rodeo and educational programs.*

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**EDITORS:** Obtain high resolution rodeo images at [photos.billpickettrodeo.com](http://photos.billpickettrodeo.com) To schedule interviews with BPIR producers or rodeo competitors, or to RSVP to attend a competition, **Contact:** Sheri Vason | [svason@billpickettrodeo.com](mailto:svason@billpickettrodeo.com) | 510.357.3667 or Toni Beckham | [Toni@PRetCetera.com](mailto:Toni@PRetCetera.com) | 209.832.8020 / 408.499.3664 c