

IAAQLI

Reclaiming the Reins:

The Black Rodeo Takes Center Stage on the Far Eastside

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On the Far Eastside of Indianapolis, history isn't just stored in textbooks—it walks, trots, and rides. As part of its annual Soul Food Sundays summer series, the Community Alliance of the Far Eastside (CAFE) hosted a vibrant Black Rodeo event, celebrating a legacy deeply rooted in the local culture.

Made possible by a transformative grant from the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI), the event serves as a living extension of CAFE's broader mission to provide historical accounts of Black history. Through activations like these—alongside an upcoming dedicated museum on the second floor of their building—CAFE is ensuring the rich heritage of the community is both preserved and experienced.

While urban landscapes might not immediately bring cowboys to mind, the Far Eastside has long held a rural connection. "This is not anything that's new," explained Kendra Nowell, President and CEO of CAFE. "We have what could look like somewhat rural in the city, but we've always had cowboys in the city in this culture, especially on the Far Eastside."

For Nowell, the Black Rodeo is about grounding the community in identity

and pride. "The whole idea behind it is community focus and education. Because when you know something, it will help you learn about it, but also the importance of preserving it as well. This is in our DNA when it comes to the cowboy movement."

To bring that heritage to life, CAFE partnered with Broganville Farms. Owner Kadeem Brogan brought six horses to the event, offering residents—many for the first time—a hands-on introduction to equestrian life. Attendees learned horse grooming, how to saddle a horse, and got the rare chance to ride.

"A lot of our inner city kids, our inner city people know nothing about the(cowboy) lifestyle," said Brogan, emphasizing the importance of reclaiming history. "We are the original cowboys... We need to get back to the roots where we come from."

The day featured a panel conversation with local Black cowboys, line dancing, games, local Black-owned vendors, and a grand Black Rodeo parade down 38th Street. For Brogan, the impact goes far beyond a single afternoon. "It teaches them discipline. It teaches them hard work, and it gives them a sense of pride," he shared. "Our kids need this... get our hands in the dirt, wash the horses, clean them up, and we ride, baby."



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