Transcript: U.S. Rodeo Rehab, broadcast on Al Jazeera English on 8 May 2014

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| Newsreader:Rodeos are a big part of rural life in the southern US. But in the state of Louisiana, one show stands out. Our correspondent reports now from the Angola prison rodeo, which many say is the most controversial even in the world. |  |
| Reporter:It’s billed as the wildest show in the south, and for good reason.Take convict poker, an event that pits nerves against the raw power of the raging bull.The last man sitting wins cash. But these aren’t trained cowboys: they are inmates of one of Louisiana’s most secure prisons. | Reporter not in view.Wild bull charges out of the pend and towards a group of black men sitting at a table in the middle of the dirt ring.The table is demolished and the black men are scattered and thrown to the ground. The next shot shows a huge bull tossing a seated, unarmed man by the horns. |
| Burl Cain, Louisiana State Penitentiary Warden:Today they can be king for a day. Now, the victims would say, who cares. But what’s important is, we gotta try to rehabilitate them so if any of them get out they don’t hurt you again. And this is part of the rehabilitation programme and part of our re-entry, is to do this rodeo. | A large white man is pictured.Shot of penitentiary, behind barbed wire. |
| Reporter:Locally, the prison is known as Angola, or more simply ‘the farm’. It houses some of the country’s most dangerous criminals, including murderers and rapists. But during the rodeo, the rules are somewhat relaxed.Inmates run their own arts and crafts stalls and are allowed to make money to keep their businesses going. But it’s the rodeo that attracts the most attention. | Reporter not in view.Shot of black man inviting rodeo visitors over to his stall, and of stalls of arts and crafts.Shot of brightly painted toy rocking horses. Children are welcome in this space. |
| Reporter:But there are those who says this is nothing short of an inhumane spectator sport. More than half of the prisoners in here are first-time offenders who will never see the outside of these prison walls. And injuries are commonplace.Staff here wouldn’t give us any information about just how many prisoners have been hurt over the years. They say every precaution is taken. And there’s little sympathy for convicted criminals. | Reporter (a white man) speaking to camera with packed arena in the background.Shot of gates opening and black men struggling to stay on top of bucking broncos. They don’t. |
| Young woman: They have noting to lose, I guess. Just something fun and different for them to do. | Unnamed white woman, speaking to unseen reporter. |
| Man:They got a choice, just like they had a choice what they was doing. They made a choice to come here. | White man in cowboy hat, speaking to unseen reporter.Shot of black man being repeatedly trampled by a raging bull. |
| Reporter: None of the prisoners are forced to take part in the rodeo. The $500 prize money for the grand finale known as ‘guts and glory’ ensures participation is high. And for many, it’s a highlight of life behind bars. | A black man wins a tackle and runs across the ring, arm held aloft in triumph, as the crowd screams its applause. |
| Travis Johnson, Angola inmate:I came out here... it’s been a joy for me, for my family. My family comes every year. | Young black man, speaking to unseen reporter. |
| Reporter:At Angola prison, the average sentence is 95 years. Most of these men will die and be buried here. For them, this rodeo is a taste of freedom. Even if it’s only for a few seconds. | A man is thrown from a bucking bronco. |