Black Lives Matter at the State Fair

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On Saturday, August 29th, 188,636 fair goers returned to the Minnesota State Fair grounds for a day of fun and food. Providing everything from great food to great learning experiences, this year’s fairgoers may have experienced a political demonstration spotlighting the Black Lives Matter movement taking place across the nation. Organized by Black Lives Matter - Saint Paul (BLM-STP), the notoriously dubbed “Black Fair” demonstration included close to 1000 multicultural participants who showcased posters, banners and chants that pointed out issues of disparity for people of color in the United States.

“Our goal, as always, was to mobilize the public around holding not only the St. Paul Police Department, but legislators and entities in a position of social and economic power over people of color, accountable for their actions and inactions,” said Rashad Turner, BLM-STP Organizer in an interview with The Metroplitan. “There can be no denying that there is endemic unjustifiable death of people of color around the country.” In the weeks leading up to Black Fair, organizers raised awareness by creating a Facebook Event page and utilizing other social media platforms to get the word out. Met with tremendous support, overwhelming backlash and a small amount of indifference many, including the Minnesota State Fair board and Minnesota Governor, Mark Dayton, publicly questioned the motivation and intention of the demonstration and expressed opposition at the idea. “St. Paul Police Department, the deadliest department in Minnesota, is certainly not exempt from that,” said Turner. Despite such strong opposition BLM-STP pushed forward. Capturing the support of various other social and racial justice organizations such as Black Lives Matter; In Minneapolis, Black Liberation Project, Native Lives Matter Minnesota, Asian-Pacific Islanders for Black Lives and more. “Our hope is that people who participated in the march or supported us through other means took away a sense of empowerment in that Black Lives Matter, Native Lives Matter, Brown Lives Matter, and that their voices matter in addressing issues such as race, gender, justice and poverty,” said Turner. “Together, we can and will effect transformative change in memory of Marcus Golden and all the other victims of an increasingly unjust and dangerous system.

The Metropolitan did attempt to reach the St. Paul police department for comment but did not receive a response.

Kare 11 reported that the protest lasted several hours. Protesters walked up Snelling Ave from Hamline Park to the fairgrounds. Police shut down traffic on the street for safety reasons.

Upon arriving at the fair, protesters were unable to enter, according to Kare 11. The Pioneer Press reported that gates were closed as BLM arrived. As a result, they chanted from behind the fences. A State Fair parade was also shut down because of the protest. While protesters ran into some hecklers, the event remained peaceful. Police did not arrest any protesters or counter-protesters.