

In Midst of Holiday Shopping, Protesters Disrupt Business-As-Usual to Declare ‘Black Lives Matter’

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Protesters fill the rotunda of the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota Saturday, December 20. (Photo courtesy of Black Lives Matter – Minneapolis)

On one of the busiest commercial days of the year, in one of the largest malls in the world, protesters interrupted business as usual to send a message: “While you’re on your shopping spree, black people cannot breathe.”

An [estimated](#) 3,000 people on Saturday flooded the rotunda and partially shut down the Mall of America, located in Bloomington, Minnesota, demanding an “end to police brutality and racial inequities affecting Black and brown Minnesotans,” according to a [statement](#) from the Minneapolis chapter of Black Lives Matter.

“Today’s protest was our biggest success yet,” said Mica

Grimm, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Minneapolis. “Thousands of people stood together, refused to be intimidated, and disrupted business as usual on the busiest shopping day of the year at the biggest mall in the country. As long as innocent Black and brown lives are disrupted by police without consequence, we cannot go about business as usual.”

The crowd chanted “Black Lives Matter” and sang the [song](#) by the Bronx-based group Peace Poets that has resounded at street protests, die-ins, and direct actions across the country: “I still hear my brother crying I can’t Breathe. Now I’m in the struggle saying I can’t leave...”

Scenes from the protest are captured by filmmaker Jon Reynolds:

[#BlackLivesMatter @ MOA](#) from [jon reynolds](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Witnesses say that many workers left their stores to show solidarity with, and even directly join, the demonstration. The following [photo](#), by Angela Jiminez of *Minnesota Public Radio News*, shows a dozen employees at a cosmetics store called Lush supporting protesters by standing outside the establishment with their hands up.



Police shut down some areas of the mall for hours, with many marching through the commercial center donning full riot gear. According to organizers, 20 people were arrested, all of whom have since been released.

The Mall of America action was one of numerous protests to sweep the country Saturday—from Cleveland to New York—emerging from a groundswell of anger and mobilization in response to institutionalized racism in the U.S. and police killings of unarmed black people and other communities of color

“I stood with my wife and six year old son and dozens of clergy and many people of faith,” said Rev. Justin Schroeder, Senior Minister at First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. “I was disappointed to see the police meeting peaceful protesters in full riot gear. For my family showing up at this protest was the most important thing we could do this holiday season.”

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