

# Reflecting Volatility, Fragility, and Diversity

## A Wide and Narrow Range of New York City's Political Culture Related to Madison Square Garden

**MINAMI Shuhei**

“So, when I talked with him, he was impressed by my sincerity, and I gave him a lot to read and explained the situation. And it was not only what I said, as an Indian, Bengali. When he read so many things from so many countries; France, Germany, England, Norway, and the American press, which was giving such good coverage of what was happening to millions of people, suffering so much—he was deeply moved and said he would be glad to help in the planning—even to participate.” Ravi Shankar<sup>1</sup>

“Ravi came to me and he said that if he was to do a concert he'd maybe play to so many thousand people. But with the size of problem, the fund that would be made would be just small. So that's why I came along. I can generate money by doing concerts and by making records. All I am trying to do is generate enough money and make sure the money is distributed in order to relieve some of the agony.” George Harrison<sup>2</sup>

“My kids are half American... My wife was American, born in New York. I have a lot of family here. But, most important, it's about what America stands for. Love it or hate it, it stands for freedom. And I get very emotional about that.” Paul McCartney<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

The events of 9/11 led many people to initiate some action... something to show support for New York City and the victims of the horrible attacks. Musicians, from all over the world, also began to come together along with the victims and survivors, calling support for them through making albums or holding charity concerts. Former Beatle Paul McCartney, who is a high-profile musician in music history, was a leading

artist making an effort to immediately organize the benefit concert called “The Concert for New York City” after 9/11 happened. Musicians, actors, actresses, comedians, athletes and politicians responded to McCartney’s proposal and were willing to join this event. The Concert for New York City was held at Madison Square Garden (hereafter MSG except when needed full name) in New York City on October 20, 2001.

Just 30 years before this concert, another benefit concert was held at the same place, MSG, on August 1, 1971. It was called “The Concert for Bangladesh,” in which George Harrison, also one of the former Beatles, and his Bengali friend Ravi Shankar, the famous sitar player, played a central role in organizing it. It is believed that this is the first benefit concert that put famous talented musicians together to perform for a humanitarian cause and paved the way for subsequent kinds of events, such as “Live Aid” in 1985.<sup>4</sup>

At a glance, it could be easy to assume that the two concerts had many features in common. The purpose of them was to raise a huge amount of money for victims who were facing very difficult situations. All performers voluntarily gathered at MSG in New York City and played expecting no financial rewards. The two concerts were respectively organized by legendary ex-Beatles, Harrison and McCartney. MSG was chosen as the main arena for both concerts to attract the attention of people around the world.

Looking into the historical contexts of these two events, nonetheless, reveals some very different aspects. In this essay, I will examine what the differences between them historically mean, focusing on what logic the organizers and participants used to appeal to the world. By doing so, this essay will also critically argue the prerogative of the image of diversity which New York City popularly holds.

Before thinking about the two concerts, however, this work describes MSG as a site representing the political culture of New York City. MSG is known for being the busiest and most famous arena for sports and entertainment in the world. The location and accessibility of it are very

convenient, and various events held there like sports, music concerts, and circuses have brought huge excitement to the public. The events at MSG have fascinated domestic and foreign people, and the messages radiating from there also have had a great influence on people in the world. The events held at MSG, however, are not limited to sports and entertainment. Contrary to popular images of MSG, it has worked out as a central arena for political events in not only New York City but even the country, which means popular culture like various entertainment programs fused with politics. Therefore, at first, by tracing a brief history of MSG, this essay will describe how MSG has presented various kinds of entertainment. Secondly, it will focus on MSG between The Great Depression and the eve of entering the war, which was the most turbulent time in the politics of New York City. Finally, referring to the differences of two benefit concerts, this article discusses the features of New York City's political culture.

### **The First and Second Madison Square Garden: Representing Popular Culture at the Turn of the Century**

From the beginning, MSG had the requirements that it would be the pinnacle of entertainment in New York City. Because key persons in American history were involved with the birth of MSG. Originally, the place where the first MSG (the present MSG is fourth) was built was not tidy but too messy. It was located between 26th and 27th streets in the block and between 4th and Madison Avenue. In its square, there were sheds for loading goods into freight cars, stables for horses hauling cars (at that time, the steam engine was only used north of 23rd street), and passenger depot, which were owned by Cornelius Vanderbilt's railroad company, the New York & Harlem Railroad.

It was in 1871 when the change occurred to an untidy place. Completing the Grand Central Station at 42nd street led Vanderbilt to move

the main terminal station from the messy and old buildings to the splendid and new edifice. As the result of it, the bleak but spacious lot was to lease out to an ebullient showman, Phineas Taylor "P.T." Barnum. Even though he had already achieved fame and commercial success as a promoter of entertainment, Barnum, an inexhaustible showman, wanted a permanent place for his most famous circus, The Greatest Show on Earth in Manhattan (he had lost his own theater American Museum in 1865 by fire). He built a new theater on the deserted lot in April 1874 and named it Barnum's Monster Classical and Geological Hippodrome.

The shows were held at the huge tent pitched in the yard, the size of which was 425 feet by 200 feet and circled by a 28-foot brick wall. It had a capacity of 15,000, each of whom had to pay a dollar to enter it. Barnum presented his spectacular shows there, however, it was not long before some fatal trouble came out. When Barnum returned there from his entertainment tour, he realized it was too cold for holding shows at the theater with no roof during New York City's fierce winter. Thinking MSG did not work well as the source to gain the revenue, he soon passed the lease of MSG to another showman. After some impresarios leased it from Barnum, William Vanderbilt, who had succeeded to the railroad business from his grandfather, took control of the yard as the owner of it. He renamed it Madison Square Garden on May 30, 1879.<sup>5</sup>

After assuming the management of MSG, Vanderbilt still struggled to make profits from MSG's events because it had no roof. He brought some new events such as bike races, horse shows, and boxing matches in addition to the existing shows like the circus and dog shows. The National Horse Race had been held at MSG every year since 1883 and John L. Sullivan, recognized as a first heavyweight boxing champion (of bare knuckle fight!), also fought there.

In spite of Vanderbilt's attempts, he could not solve the problem of lack of year-round events. In 1884, he made a decision to look for a new

owner or group, who were to renovate the open-air structure of MSG to enable it to be useful through the year.<sup>6</sup> In the end, a syndicate of wealthy businessmen was founded to buy and manage MSG, which included J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, W. W. Astor, and P. T. Barnum.<sup>7</sup> They asked a very talented, energetic and young architect, Stanford White to design the new MSG.

The second newly-built MSG extended from 26th to 27th street. As *New York Times* said that “There is no trace of the circus, the walking match, pugilism, or the dog show about this new Garden,” the appearance was totally new and different from the first one. The structure of it was 200 feet by 485 feet, including a minaret with 32 stories (320 feet), which was the second tallest building in New York City at that time (second to the Pulitzer Building). White designed even his apartment in the tower and often stayed there to enjoy a variety of shows. (He was shot to death by a millionaire, Harry Thaw at the roof theater of MSG in 1906 because of a love affair with Thaw’s wife, an actress, Evelyn Nesbit Thaw). The main hall in the new MSG was so large (measured 200 feet by 485) that it could accommodate 8,000 guests with fixed seats plus floor space, which was the largest in the world. In addition to it, it had a theater with seats for 1,200, a concert hall with 1,500, a huge restaurant (the largest in the city), and a roof garden cabaret from where the guests could overlook Madison Avenue. At the opening ceremony to the public, on June 16, 1890, the hall became full with 14,000 people in the audience and many leading persons of the city such as Comptroller, Police Commissioner, Fire Commissioner, and even Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman attended.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to the gorgeous exterior, the new MSG suffered from financial deficits. Even though some performances like Adelina Patti’s opera recitals or Richard Mansfield’s readings on Shakespeare could pack the hall with a full house, they were still not enough to make up for the cost to run the theater, rentals, mortgage. In January 1910, the president of Madison

Square Garden Corporation, Frank K. Sturgis denied the rumor saying MSG would pass into a syndicate of capitalists soon. The board of governors of MSG, however, had already decided to put the management of it on the market in 1908. After all, the New York Life Insurance Company holding MSG's \$2,000,000 mortgage became the new owner.

It was not a suitable time to run an entertainment business for profit when New York Life bought MSG back again. Both World War I and Prohibition hindered MSG from gaining economic success through holding shows. Thus, New York Life shrewdly started to plan the transformation of MSG, which meant MSG would be razed and in place of it, a new office building or some property would come as a master of the land. An ambitious plan, however, faced quite a few stir from the public who didn't welcome "a new master" coming instead of MSG.<sup>9</sup>

Repeating the postponements of the plan, in the midst of uproar, a famous boxing promoter, George Lewis "Tex" Rickard came out to revitalize MSG on the scene. Knowing that boxing games could be the most exciting events for the public, he presented prizefighting events one after another. Among other things, a heavyweight match, Jess Willard vs. Frank Moran brought the biggest gate of \$152,000 in the history of MSG.<sup>10</sup> As soon as Rickard contracted a lease for ten years with New York Life in July 1920, he tried to bring more sports heroes, typically a legendary heavyweight champion, Jack Dempsey, and an invincible Olympian with the new world records, Paavo "Flying Finn" Nurmi, to the MSG. Their powerful performance drew a large audience there, especially, with the passing of Walker Law, which legalized boxing in the State of New York again, boxing games gripped the high popularity among the public. In June 1921, Rickard who knew well how to give enjoyment to the public brought a huge facility inside of MSG. It was the largest indoor swimming pool in the world. At the opening day of the pool, some exhibitions by a juvenile team comprised of 6 to 16 year old swimmers and top amateur swimmers were presented. A crowd of 6,000

enjoyed watching the spectaculars. However, fascinated by the beautiful pool, they could not keep on sitting in the seats any longer and many of them asked Rickard to let them bath in the pool. In the end, he gave in to the request, which changed the pool into a usual scene of a beach in the summer.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that athletic events took the central position at MSG didn't mean the established ones were decaying. As Rickard announced in the signed statement that "During the next decade every tradition and sentiment which has been associated with New Yorkers Madison Square Garden will be preserved,"<sup>12</sup> he kept on having circuses, horse shows, and of course a six-day bike race. Moreover, he succeeded in hosting the Democratic National Convention by offering it rent-free.

While devising new plans, an astute showman, Rickard knew there was no way to look for a new site for MSG. The second MSG grew so old that it would become unsuitable for holding many kinds of athletic events, even though Rickard thought sports as main entertainment there. And New York Life also never discarded its original plan that would demolish old MSG and build a high-rise office building in place of it. Even though Rickard had a lease agreement with New York Life on MSG for ten years, it included a clause that New York Life could cancel the agreement whenever it felt the lease not profitable.<sup>13</sup> The day after the final event, a lightweight boxing match held on May 5, 1925, the second MSG was closed, and the statue fixed at the top of the minaret, the goddess Diana, a symbol of the second MSG, was given to New York University.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Third Madison Square Garden in the Great Depression to World War II**

Demolishing the old car barns, the construction of the new theater started on Jan. 9, 1925. The third MSG was situated along 8th Avenue between 49th and 50th street, away from Madison Square where two former

MSG used to be. As the third MSG was called “the House that Tex built,” it represented Tex Rickard’s blended feeling. When the closing of the second MSG became unavoidable, he came up at the demolition site of it and stated the valedictory speech with the emotional sentiment, which mingled his regret with pride as follows.

“I am sorry to say good-bye to the old place. It has been good to me, and I have had a lot of fun in it. I am also rather proud of the fact that I am the only man who made it pay.”<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, Rickard also promised the public that the newly planned MSG would “continue as a sport and exhibition center.”<sup>16</sup> He desired the third MSG to be a principal arena for every sport. In addition, he had a grand design that established a total athletic club for only top professional athletes at MSG, putting the highest value on boxing.<sup>17</sup> In reality, he made a statement to the media, in which he said “I want to make the Garden the permanent home of the world’s greatest sporting club.”<sup>18</sup> To carry out his schemes, he mulled over new ideas enthusiastically, putting his energy on securing support and funds from millionaires, businessmen, and politicians.

The construction of the third MSG took only 249 days and cost about \$5,600,000. As New York Times said “Old Madison Square Garden is dwarfed in size and scope by the new plant,” in all aspects, the new Garden was larger, longer than the old house. The main arena measured 110 feet by 245 and it could accommodate more guests for a variety of events, 17,000 for the six-day bike race, 14,290 for the rodeo, and 18,500 for the boxing. In addition to the amphitheater, the third MSG had an exposition hall in the basement, which enabled it to hold two events at the same time. And also, it was equipped with efficient lighting fixtures and a sound system to liven events up, which included 10 microphones, 10 public-address speakers, 29 spotlights, and 296 lights strung 79 feet above the arena.<sup>19</sup> A plaque imbedded in the new MSG’s wall on 50th street side showed for what the third MSG was used, which said, “Dedicated to Athletics, Amusements and



the Industrial Arts.”<sup>20</sup>

In advance of the official opening ceremony, one of the most popular athletic events among the New Yorkers, a six-day bike race was launched as a pre event on Nov. 25, 1925. It was James A. Farley who served as the starter of the race. A successful catholic politician, Farley was not only a powerhouse of the Democratic Party but also a State Boxing Commissioner, which indicated the tie between politics and entertainment industry grew more tightly than ever before. Rickard didn't have a specific political orientation to any political parties. Otherwise, what he just wanted was lifting the status of the Garden higher than ever and making MSG function more effectively to increase the revenue. To achieve the goal, he kept trying to bring the Republican National Convention in 1928 to MSG, following the Democratic Convention in 1924. Actually, as the opening of the third MSG was nearing, he often expressed his longing, as saying, “We wanted to get the next Republican convention here because there is no convention hall in the United States that will compare to our plant in magnitude when it is completed.”<sup>21</sup> Even though the dream of holding the Republican Convention at MSG had not come true until George W. Bush was nominated as a candidate in 2004, major figures of both Republicans and Democrats frequently used MSG for political campaigns to gain the support from voters by giving out policies.

One of the most typical cases was 1932 election. In the midst of political turmoil caused by the Great Depression, the mayoral, gubernatorial, presidential and general elections were supposed to be held in the same year, 1932, due to Mayor Jimmy Walker's sudden resignation. Regardless of political differences, many candidates chose MSG as the most suitable place for the climax of their campaigns. In the presidential election, the nominees of both parties showed up at MSG respectively. Following the Democrat City Convention held with 32,000 delegates on Oct. 7, Republicans appeared at the Garden. Reported they were put into the difficult races, they needed to

recover the backing from the public by any means. The First meeting was on Oct. 11. 18,000 Republicans welcomed an eminent Republican, ex-President Calvin Coolidge who came to give an address, which was his first political speech since he had left the White House.<sup>22</sup> Afterwards, the crowd of 22,000 put together there again on Oct. 31 to cheer up the incumbent president Herbert Hoover facing a formidable opponent, Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt.<sup>23</sup> In the wake of the Republican rallies, Roosevelt stood on the platform at MSG together with ex-Governor Al Smith, both of whom received enormous cheers from 22,000 supporters.<sup>24</sup>

Even though the presidential election typically shows how much MSG conveys the wide range of politics, not only the Republicans and the Democrats gathered at MSG. Rather, the extent MSG can bear political claims was more enormous and elastic. In reality, one of the main political organization that used MSG most frequently during 1930s and World War II was the Communist Party (hereafter, CP). Communists and their sympathizers often came to attend meetings held at MSG, as if it had been their home arena. Under the direct influence of Comintern, CP managed to appeal to the membership for understanding of the reasons why their policies were needed whenever orders from Comintern changed, which were sometime for supporting the Popular Front, the Lincoln Brigade, against Nazi, Fascist and even Trotskyists, sometime defending their stance on non-intervention, a sudden pact between the Soviet and Nazi, and also joining the Allies. Out of CP's many meetings at MSG, what is remarkable was that CP presented various entertainment programs during meetings at MSG as well as major parties in which it gave kinds of plays, music like dance numbers (supervised by Marc Blitzstein), chorus.

As CP mobilized thousands of workers and exerted influence over popular political fronts by using MSG, other counter organizations such as The Socialist Party, labor unionists feeling threatened by CP's power, had to oust CP members and its sympathizers from their unions. To disperse CP's permeation

into major unions, they also frequently held counter rallies against CP at MSG, where they denounced CP's strategy thoroughly and put a lot of pressures on CP members mixing in their unions. Among them was the president of International Ladies Garment Workers Union (hereafter ILGWU), David Dubinsky. While appealing to the support for Roosevelt, he stood on the podium of MSG many times and gave warnings on communists' 'evil' infiltration into American Labor Party (hereafter ALP) established by New York City labor leaders including himself in 1936.<sup>25</sup>

ILGWU, which was the biggest union in the country at that time, also used MSG just like a home arena to create the alliance with different ethnic workers, especially Italians and Jews, who mainly composed the ILGWU membership. To put members with different background together, whenever ILGWU faced some crucial issues to argue or settle, Dubinsky called the membership to come to MSG and then ask them to fight against their 'common opponents,' communists. While forging an internal solidarity in the unions by doing so, Dubinsky also set MSG as a premier theater for political campaigns, especially in the 1937 mayoral race.

Before gaining its full backing from ILGWU, a Republican and fusion nominee Fiorello La Guardia had already beaten the incumbent John P. O'Brien and ex-acting Mayor John McKee in the election of 1933 (O'Brien's term was just one year because he took office to make up for the vacuum caused by the resignation of James Walker). La Guardia, the son of Italian father and Jewish-Italian mother, a Republican Episcopalian, nonetheless, had to struggle to build the cooperation of various political, ethnic, and religious groups since Tammany Hall still politically remained powerful and aimed at winning back the mayoral seat in the next election.

In the 1937 mayoral race, the coalition of ILGWU and La Guardia worked very effectively for La Guardia's re-election. Among other things, ALP played the most crucial role in securing votes for La Guardia. Originally, ALP was established in 1936 as an alternative organization

for liberals and unionists by New York City's notable labor leaders of both AFL and CIO such as Dubinsky of ILGWU and Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, Alex Rose of the United Hat and Millinery Workers Union. To make Tammany less powerful, they planned to utilize ALP for the re-election of labor friends, President Roosevelt and Governor Herbert Lehman in the 1936 presidential and gubernatorial election. In both races, it contributed to their victory by bringing crucial votes to them across the political line. Even though ALP was originally supposed to be just a temporal instrument for the 1936 election, it continued to function as a key political alliance and consistently helped the unstable La Guardia win.

With backing from ALP's support, La Guardia also set MSG as the climax of his political campaign. Traditionally, MSG had been a final site for Tammany's campaign. La Guardia, however, deliberately forestalled Tammany by holding a Republican-Fusion rally right before the voting day, which was the first failure for Tammany to have a gathering in final political stage.<sup>26</sup> In that rally, when speakers who had expressed a favor for Tammany's candidates stood on the podium or some speakers mentioned the names of Democratic nominees, all of them invariably got booed by audience of 14,000.<sup>27</sup> In concert with La Guardia, ALP had a big rally for him and his running mates at MSG by itself three days before a Republican-Fusion rally, in which La Guardia of course showed up there as a leading speaker.<sup>28</sup>

These consecutive political rallies at MSG in the 1930s visibly epitomized the transition of the political and ethnic power balance in New York City. While the influence of Tammany on New York City's politics was waning, Italians and Jews began to take the positions Tammany used to hold. MSG had been a stage to display a political shift and a wide range of politics in New York City.<sup>29</sup>

## Facing Nazism, Chanting Patriotism

The more the war in the European theater intensified, the more visibly differences on political views stood out through meetings at MSG. The expansion of invasion in Europe by Nazi Germany forced Americans to take a clear stand on the Third Reich as long as they were “true patriotic Americans.” In March 1937, an anti-Nazi big rally was held at MSG gathering 20,000 under the auspices of American Jewish Congress and Jewish Labor Committee. John L. Lewis, the president of the Congress of Industrial Workers, stood at the platform and addressed as a main speaker. After that the enthusiastic audience started to stamp and clamor, demanding Mayor La Guardia, sitting at the upstairs box, to come down to the platform to make a speech. Even though La Guardia was not scheduled to speak, he responded to cheers and came down to the stage to address them.<sup>30</sup>

Meetings replete with patriotic keynotes were brought to MSG from other sides. As public opinion that America should take part in the war to help Britain gain momentum, non-interventionists had meetings at MSG to counter the main current that demanded immediate intervention into the war. Believing that to keep the country away from the European war was the duty of patriots, a prominent aviator hero in the country, Charles A. Lindbergh was one of the most ardent non-interventionists at that time. He not only went to New York City but also traveled around the country to claim that America should not join the war in Europe, while reproaching ‘three most important groups which have been pressing this country toward war,’ the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt Administration.

After officially becoming a member of American First Committee in April 1941, which was a national non-interventionists’ organization, he intensified his efforts. Representing the Committee as a spokesman, he came to MSG twice in May and October to promote the campaign not to move the country toward the war and denounce the ‘subterfuges’ such as the

Roosevelt Administration.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, an organization with different patriotic notes also came out at MSG, which was the German American Bund advocating Nazi's policy. Since founded in Buffalo, New York in 1936 by only German Americans, the Bund, whose headquarter was located in Manhattan, held pro-Nazi meetings and parades mainly in New York City. Not only to spread sympathy for Nazi Germany in the country but also to identify itself with patriots, it always used both American flags and Nazi symbols like Nazi party's emblem, the swastika, in the meetings. On Feb. 20, 1939, in the midst of surge of anti-Nazi sentiment, the Bund had a big meeting to defend Nazi's policy with 22,000 Nazi sympathizers.<sup>32</sup> In the event, the Bund used their emblems of the swastika over the words, "True Americanism and George Washington Birthday Exercise," to emphasize that it was not an extremist but a patriotic organization as well as the other ethnic ones were.<sup>33</sup> The slogan equating Nazi with Americanism caused a huge patriotic resentment and outrage from everywhere, as Clyde Miller, secretary of the Institute of Propaganda Analysis said, "Americanism actually means concrete manifestations of German fascism."<sup>34</sup>

The confused situation concerning Nazi Germany and the war in Europe got the sports event at MSG involved in it. At that time, a special plan of boxing title match the public had been longing for the realization was aroused. It was a heavyweight title match, 'Black Uhlan of the Rhine,' Max Schmeling from Germany as a contender vs. 'Pride of the Irish,' Jim Braddock born in Hell's Kitchen of Manhattan as a champion. Against media's speculations, Schmeling had beaten the 'Brown Bomber,' Joe Louis, who was an African American young boxer, at Yankee Stadium in 1936. Because a promising boxer, Louis had been invincible until he was defeated by Schmeling, the expectation that the next contender challenging against Braddock should be Schmeling beating Louis rose higher among the public. Media also depicted the expected title match as a substitute war between

'the most democratic country America' and 'the evil dictatorship Nazi Germany.' On Dec. 12, 1936, Braddock and Schmeling signed the contract to fight on June 3, 1937 at Madison Square Garden Bowl, which was an outdoor arena built in Long Island City, the borough of Queens, in 1932 with 72,000 seats by the Madison Square Garden Corporation.<sup>35</sup> The contract was signed under the auspice of both the Madison Square Garden Corporation and the Twentieth Century Sporting Club. Mike Jacobs, the president of the Club having a contract with Schmeling, had already got an exclusive contract with Louis in 1935. The Corporation and its foremost rival the Twentieth Club were exclusively to promote this limelight bout.

As soon as the contract had been signed between both camps, the campaign against the bout was launched by the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights, Inc. It claimed that if the proposed bout had been done, "Schmeling would take his share of money to Germany." It sent the letters to ask for the cancellation of the championship fight to many organizations in the whole country, including MSG Corporation and the New York State Athletic Commission, which had the jurisdiction over all boxing bouts in the State. Joe Gould, manager of Braddock immediately expressed his apprehension to the boycott campaign. Even though Jacobs shunned any comments on the matter, he could not hide his dismay at the state of confusion.

On January 31, 1937, however, an exit out of this serious situation suddenly was found. Gould announced that he had accepted an offer of \$500,000 from Sheldon Clark, head of the Sports Club of Illinois for a heavyweight title bout between Braddock and Louis in Chicago. Both fighters officially signed the contract to fight 15 rounds at Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox on the night of June 22. When asked if Gould would get into some legal trouble with MSG, he replied, "I think that public opinion is in Braddock's favor, and that's what will get the fight for us."<sup>36</sup> It was clear that rising anti-Nazi voices caused Gould to confidently

move to an alternative contract. Jacobs also showed his resolute position in the statement, in which he said “Nothing that was done in Chicago in any way impairs the Braddock-Schmeling contract, or my contracts with Madison Square Garden in connection with that bout...I could not in all fairness to Joe Louis prevent him from making the match with Braddock.” The statement continued, “The Braddock-Louis match will go through in Chicago as scheduled on June 22 and I am advised that nothing can lawfully stop this match.”<sup>37</sup> Embarrassed at the fast transaction between canny promoters, MSG launched counter actions by filing suits to enjoin Braddock from fighting against Louis. Any legal decisions, however, didn’t support MSG’s plea. The federal judge didn’t recognize the legal justification in MSG’s claim that Braddock should fulfill his duty to fight a title match for MSG before engaging in any other contests, because the claim was “an unreasonable restraint upon his liberty” and it could not bind Braddock as to the length of the existence.<sup>38</sup> The New York State Athletic Commission levied the fine of \$1,000 apiece on Braddock and Gould and suspended Braddock from fighting in the State or in any State affiliated with the New York Commission. On the other hand, Braddock could keep his title as before and Joe Triner, the chairman of the Illinois State Athletic Commission, announced the Illinois Commission “will not recognize the suspension of Champion Jim Braddock” and declared the decision by the New York Commission would not have any effect on the bout in Chicago.<sup>39</sup> In spite of the desperate situation, Schmeling with considerable distress kept on training for the bout against Braddock scheduled on June 3 at MSG Bowl. He showed up there on that day for the ‘phantom fight’ with perfect readiness. Braddock never came out.

## **From Bangladesh to New York: Internationalism or Patriotism**

The present Madison Square Garden was built after the demolition



of old Penn Station and it opened in February 1968. There have been many kinds of benefit concerts organized by notable musicians at MSG. Out of such concerts, not only many musical critics but also media and even UNICEF point out that the first benefit concert of its kind was the Concert for Bangladesh held at MSG on August 1, 1971.<sup>40</sup> The motive of George Harrison who organized the concert with his Bengali friend, Ravi Shankar was so simple. When a reporter asked him why he chose Bangladesh as the subject to help despite the fact that there were many other countries as well as Bangladesh at the press conference before the concert, he replied, "Because I was asked by my friend if I would help, that's all, you know."<sup>41</sup> Harrison directly put his honest feelings on the lyrics of the song, "Bangladesh."

The influence of the concert went beyond Harrison's will to raise a large amount of money by using his fame. How widely the influence spread out was deeply related to the situation surrounding America at that time. First of all, the reality that it was still fighting the Vietnam War inevitably turned young Americans' eyes to the Third World. As Shankar witnessed, many people, especially the younger generation who came to the concert, became aware of the situation of Bangladesh which was something of which very few of them had been conscious.<sup>42</sup> Some of them who had not known about Bangladesh at all were able to locate it on the map for the first time. The next is a kind of sense of despair prevalent among the young generation. As symbolizing the deaths of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin in 1970 (also Jim Morrison in July 1971) due to drug overdose, drug use had been rampant among the young in the country. The seriousness of the spread of this problem was evident enough for the Nixon Administration to have to tackle this headache. Even less one year before the concert, Vice President, Spiro Agnew was so infuriated that he rebuked "drug culture" in public, citing specific examples including the movie *Easy Rider* and lyrics of rock music like "A Little Help From My Friends." Nixon called 70 of the chief broadcasters from over the country into the White House, where he asked

them to search their own conscience and understand the radio influence on the youth, avoiding telling them to what to air.<sup>43</sup> Local governments also began to shore up regulations against drug use. In case of possession of marijuana (first offence), Alabama had the most severe penalty, 5-20 years in jail and fined up to \$20,000, Texas 2 years to life.<sup>44</sup> In the midst of spreading drug use, the concert organized by ex-Beatle Harrison could have been seen as a hope the young used to believe.

As compared with the Concert for Bangladesh, obviously, the Concert for New York City was replete with patriotic and vengeful voices from the beginning to the end of the show. The seats were occupied by invited officers of NYPD, firefighters of FDNY, emergency workers, and the victims of families of 9/11. Every time before the musician appeared on the stage, guest speakers stood there and made a speech, which were tribute to the heroes including audience, praise for New York City as the greatest city in the world, while making fun of and provoking Osama Bin Laden (an officer yelled on the stage, "In the spirit of the Irish people, Osama Bin Laden, you can kiss my royal, Irish ass!").<sup>45</sup> Whether New Yorker or not, every speaker identified themselves as New Yorker to unite together. Short films showed during the intervals of performances also extolled diversity and ethnic culture that had been raised in this city. Only one exception was when actor Richard Gere began to speak. He appealed to the audience demanding not violence and vengeance but compassion. Gere got vehemently booed by the audience.

Different from the Concert for Bangladesh, the cast appeared on the stage were not only musicians but also notable politicians like Mayor Giuliani, Governor Pataki, Former President Bill Clinton and Senator Hillary. In addition to them, sports stars belonging to four major sports teams baseball, ice hockey, basketball, football, based in New York City and New Jersey (New Jersey Nets now moved to Brooklyn) also climbed up on the stage. Many musical performers were mostly from US or UK and Union

Jack and Stars and Stripes were projected in front of the audience, sometime by turns, sometime side by side, which brought a reminder of US-UK Alliance to the audience's eyes. Thirty years after the eyes of Americans had turned to the humanitarian situation of Bangladesh, they turned back to patriotism resembling the tone at the eve of entering World War II.

## **Conclusion**

Looking back on the history of events held at MSG, it becomes clear that MSG has shown the fragility and volatility of New York City's political culture. As the central arena of entertainment, MSG has attracted excellent performers as well as audience from all over the world. These entertainment events have carried the state of political conflicts as its agency. The case in which Max Schmeling was left out of the bout definitely was tightly bound to anti-Nazi sentiment based on patriotism. The Concert for New York City was imbued with patriotism solidified by huge praise for the authenticity of New York City's special status which no other city has had, which, consequently, forced whoever you are to adjust to the bona fide logic, while relentlessly excluding any different viewpoints from the arena. Both cases at MSG indicate that New York City's political culture reflecting on entertainment events is forced to fit the tone of patriotism at the impending crisis. In the culmination of hostility, whether it turns to ethnic, racial or sexual subjects, the diversity that has been raised in New York City is abruptly overshadowed by a torrent of belligerent voices. While recognizing the diversity as New York City's political culture goes to compassion or solidarity with people from different shores, paying attention to the fragility and volatility of it gives wide and critical viewpoints to special status of New York City as self-evidence that has been undoubtedly praised for long time.

At the time of 1971 when the Concert for Bangladesh was held at

MSG, internationalism was more dominated than narrow patriotism in New York City's political culture. Taking another case in March of 1971, "The Fight for Century." It is a boxing title match, "The Greatest," Muhammad Ali fought against the incumbent heavyweight champion, "Smokin' Joe," Joe Frazier. This well-known bout also may show a character in common with the Concert for Bangladesh. Ali had had his boxing license suspended and been prohibited to fight in any States since March 1967 because of his refusal to the draft grounded on anti-Vietnam War. As anti-Vietnam War movement spread over the country, however, the public opinion to Ali's position changed. Consequently, he could return to the ring in October 1970 and show up at MSG in March 1971 to take back the champion belt he had previously worn from Frazier. In contrast to Schmeling's case, it means that the dominance of anti-war sentiment tinged with internationalism allowed Ali to come back to the bout. In that sense, New York City's political culture sometimes (not always) could be turned to tolerance.

What is important here is to understand that the popular belief that New York City has undoubtedly had a special status due to its ethnic diversity and political and religious tolerance hides the fact that, historically, New York City has not always demonstrated that. The political culture and climate of New York City has clearly been fragile and volatile as this article describes. All roads don't lead to New York City. On the contrary, roads radiate from the city, which enable it to connect wherever they may lead. Roads don't run only one way but always back and forth. It applies to the way of thinking of the political culture of the City. By understanding this, it will reveal other aspects, which could let one or another of the characteristics of the diversity New York City has rise to the surface.

## Notes

1. The Concert for Bangladesh [1971: 3]
2. Harrison [2011: 286]
3. Decurtis [2001]
4. Bob Geldof who organized Live Aid comments on Harrison's influence on him. *The Concert for Bangladesh Revisited with George Harrison and Friends* [2005] .
5. Hollander [1973: 2]
6. Hamill [2004: 15] ; Hollander [1973: 2-4]
7. Seifried and Wilde [2014: 457]
8. *New York Times* (hereafter NYT) [June 17, 1890]
9. Hamill [2004: 18-19] ; Durso [1979: 104-105]
10. Hamill [2004: 19] ; Durso [1979: 108]
11. Seifried and Wilde [2014: 458] ; NYT [June 19, 1921]
12. NYT [July 13, 1920]
13. NYT [May 17, 1924]
14. Hollander [1973: 13]
15. Durso [1979: 137]
16. NYT [July 14, 1920]
17. NYT [Aug. 5, 1920]
18. Ibid.
19. NYT [Nov. 22, 1925] ; Durso [1979: 137]
20. Durso [1979: 138]
21. NYT [June 18, 1924] ; NYT [Jan. 10, 1925]
22. NYT [Oct. 12, 1932]
23. NYT [Nov. 1, 1932]

24. *NYT* [Nov. 6, 1932]
25. For Dubinsky, see, Parmet [2005]; For ALP, see, Fraser [1993]
26. *NYT* [Oct. 26, 1937]
27. *NYT* [Oct. 31, 1937]
28. *NYT* [Oct. 28, 1937]
29. For La Guardia and ethnic politics in New York City, see, McNickle [1993]; Williams [2013]
30. *NYT* [Mar. 16, 1937]
31. *NYT* [Mar. 24, 1941]; *NYT* [Oct. 31, 1941]
32. "22,000 Nazis Hold Rally in Garden: Police Check Foes." *NYT* [Feb. 21, 1939]
33. *NYT* [Feb. 19, 1939]
34. "Miller Assails on 'Americanism' " *NYT* [Feb. 21, 1939]
35. *NYT* [Dec. 13, 1936]
36. *NYT* [Feb. 20, 1937]. Needless to say, Gould's decision to turn to Chicago included his astute calculation which contract would be brought more lucrative profits to him. An outspoken promoter, Gould said directly, "What will draw with Schmeling? Nothing! Fighting Louis, we ought to draw over a million dollars, and I'd be a pretty poor manager, if neglected to get a shot of that size for Jimmy." *Ibid.*
37. *NYT* [Feb. 23, 1937]
38. *NYT* [May 15, 1937]
39. *NYT* [June 4, 1937]
40. The George Harrison Fund for UNICEF [2016]; See also, Chevigny [2006]; In the documentary film, *The Concert for Bangladesh Revisited*, UNICEF official, reporter of the Rolling Stone, and 7th Secretary-General of United Nations, Kofi Annan affirm the significance of the concert.
41. *The Concert for Bangladesh Revisited with George Harrison and Friends* [2005]
42. *The Concert for Bangladesh* [1971: 3]
43. *Rolling Stone* [Oct. 29, 1970: 24]; *Rolling Stone* [Nov. 26, 1970: 1]
44. *Rolling Stone* [Apr. 1, 1971: 26] (this article cited *Playboy*).
45. *Concert for New York City* [2002]

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- . “22,000 Cheer in Garden.” Nov. 6, 1932.
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