

NJS Presents**NJ Studies Academic Alliance Graduate Student Awardees****In this Issue:*****This is Your Hometown:******Collective Memory, Industrial Flight, and the Fate of Freehold, New Jersey*¹****By Jonathan D. Cohen****Ph.D Candidate, University of Virginia****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v2i1.27>**

When the A. & M. Karagheusian Company began shutting down its rug mill in Freehold, New Jersey in the late 1950s, hundreds of workers joined the ranks of the city's unemployed, a cohort which already included a quiet, troubled man named Douglas Springsteen. Unlike the mill employees, Douglas was no stranger to joblessness. He had quit high school after one year to take a job at the rug mill, enlisted for World War II on his eighteenth birthday, and lived off of his veteran's benefits following his return from Europe. He met and married Adele Zerilli in 1947 but over the course of the next two decades proved unable to hold down consistent employment. He worked stints in a nearby plastics plant, as a taxi driver, and as a prison guard but spent a preponderant amount of time in local bars. A legal secretary, Adele provided the only stable income for their three children, only one of whom moved with the couple to California in 1969, just a few years after the doors closed at the mill for the final time.²

Bruce Springsteen did not want to grow up to become like his father. Spurning both

¹ Established in 2012, the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance (NJSAA) Graduate Student Award recognizes excellence in graduate writing about New Jersey history. It is presented for a paper written by a graduate student that best represents significant research and writing about any aspect of New Jersey history. The 2015 award went to Mr. Cohen.

² Peter Ames Carlin, *Bruce* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 3-5, 8-11, 14-16, 60; Craig Statham, *Springsteen: Saint in the City, 1949-1974* (London: Soundcheck Books, 2013), 4-5, 74.

education and blue-collar labor, Bruce worked at music instead, signing a contract with Columbia Records in 1972. After two slow-selling, critically acclaimed albums, he found commercial success with *Born to Run* (1975), *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (1978), and *The River* (1980), albums whose lyrics focused on the tribulations of working-class life and pursuit of the “runaway American Dream.” During his 1980-1981 tour Springsteen developed a more refined historical consciousness as he began to consider the effects of political, economic, and social forces on blue-collar Americans. “When I was a kid,” he told one audience in 1981, “all I remember was my father worked in a factory, [and] his father worked in a factory. And the main reason was because ... they didn’t know enough about themselves, and they didn’t know enough about the forces that controlled their lives.”³

As he sat down to write new material at the end of 1981, Springsteen did not shy away from singing about characters like his father, losers in the capitalist system in a world that confiscated every “Reason To Believe,” as one track title claimed. Among the songs he penned was “My Hometown,” a combined biography of Douglas, Bruce, and Freehold. In it, a son recalls being driven by his father through their hometown as well a 1965 race riot at his high school. The singer assesses the current state of his hometown, explaining that the stores on Main Street have closed and the local “textile mill” is shutting down: “Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain’t coming back to your hometown.” In the final verse, the protagonist, now with a wife and child of his own, considers moving his family to the South. Before doing so, he takes his son on a drive through town, thereby repeating the ritual he formed with *his* father and grounding the familial male lineage within the spatial confines of his hometown.

On November 21, 1985, “My Hometown” was released as a single, the sixth such issue

³ Dave Marsh, *Bruce Springsteen: Two Hearts: The Definitive Biography, 1972-2003* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 299.

from Springsteen's blockbuster 1984 album *Born in the U.S.A.* Of all of the album's singles, this one was undoubtedly the timeliest. Earlier that month, the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M) announced that it would be shutting down its audio-visual tape plant in Freehold and that it would be laying off almost all of the plant's 350 employees. As workers prepared to campaign to keep the plant open, a local union leader heard "My Hometown" and reached out to Springsteen, hopeful the rock star would empathize with blue-collar workers in Freehold. Springsteen agreed, lending his name and his wallet to the union campaign.

He also lent his voice. At a benefit concert that January for the 3M workers Springsteen took the stage at a bar in nearby Asbury Park and gave his thoughts on 3M's obligation to its employees and to Freehold:

I think that the marriage between a community and a company is a special thing, that it involves a special trust ... What do you do when, after 10 years or 20 years, you wake up in the morning and you see your livelihood sailing away from you[?] ... What happens when the jobs go away and the people remain? ... What goes unmeasured is the price that ... unemployment inflicts on people's families, on their marriages, on the single mothers out there trying to raise their kids on their own. Now, the 3M Company: it's their money and it's their plant but it's the 3M workers' jobs. And I'm here tonight to just say that I think that, after 25 years of service from a community ... there's a debt owed to the 3M workers and to my hometown.

To no one's surprise, a rousing rendition of "My Hometown" followed, a choice that indicated the enduring memory of the Karagheusian departure nearly 25 years after the textile plant had closed down.

This article takes up the case of Freehold, New Jersey to study the relationship between a

community and the companies that shape the economic well-being of its blue-collar citizens. Specifically, I examine the arrival and departure of two facilities that defined Freehold's experience with industrial capitalism in the twentieth century. Karagheusian opened its mill in Freehold in 1904 and served as the city's economic lifeblood before its departure for North Carolina between 1957 and 1961. The same year the mill ceased production in Freehold, 3M opened its second plant in the area. The 3M plant did not have the cultural or economic significance of the mill, but it offered hundreds of jobs at a time when the city was desperate for sources of employment. An examination of these plants provides a more complete industrial history of New Jersey. Most studies of manufacturing in the Garden State focus on its northern, western, and southern borders, ignoring the rise and fall of industrial capitalism in the state's interior.⁴

The reasons for Karagheusian and 3M's departures subvert common explanations of deindustrialization. Jefferson Cowie, Bruce Schulman, and Thomas Sugrue, among others, argue that capital flight occurred throughout the post-World War II period because companies sought to relocate their facilities away from the unionized northeast where workers had developed a sense of ownership over their jobs and, correspondingly, come to expect a high set of wages and benefits. While many of these authors acknowledge other factors that contributed to the decisions to decentralize production—such as racial tension in northern cities, the ease of interstate transport, and new federal tax policies—this narrative maintains that, above all, American corporations relocated from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt so that management could exert its control over labor

⁴ For examples of work focused on industrial capitalism and deindustrialization in New Jersey, see: David Halle, *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics Among Blue Collar Property Owners* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1987); Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); Bryant Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams: Atlantic City and the Fate of Urban America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Howard Gillette Jr., *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

costs and standards of production without the interference of labor organizations.⁵ This thesis remains very valuable. The desire for cheap labor provided an important impetus for Karagheusian's departure and both companies relocated from Freehold to areas where they could operate non-unionized plants.

However, based on the case study of Freehold, I add nuance to this narrative by illustrating that labor costs could play a relatively minor role in driving companies' decisions to relocate. Though workers had organized at both factories, unions in Freehold rarely challenged their company's production plans in the postwar period. Karagheusian workers had a brief period of spirited labor activism in the 1930s but by the early 1950s were far more accommodating to Karagheusian than other locals or their national union. 3M workers proved compliant employees too, making only one concerted, ultimately unsuccessful demand on the company in the plant's 25 years of operation. Freehold provides a qualitative example that bolsters previously ignored quantitative studies of plant closings that have found no conclusive correlation between active union presence and capital flight.⁶

The deindustrialization of Freehold was not the product of a changing dynamic of the labor-management accord. Rather, other micro- and macroeconomic factors also played vital roles in Karagheusian's and 3M's relocations and the consequent breakdown of what workers perceived

⁵ This thesis has had wide currency in studies of deindustrialization and the history of American capitalism; see, for example: Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 163-165; Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 127-133, 137-138; Cowie, *Capital Moves*, 1-11; Timothy J. Minchin, *Fighting Against the Odds: A History of Southern Labor Since World War II* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005), 70, 118; for an early articulation of this argument, see: Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 80, 165, 170.

⁶ For example: Marie Howland, *Plant Closings and Worker Displacement: The Regional Issues* (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1988); Richard B. Freeman and Morris M. Kleiner, "Do Unions Make Enterprises Insolvent?" *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 52, no. 4 (July 1, 1999): 510-527.

as the sacrosanct bond between capital and their community. Karagheusian began a period of intense bureaucratic reorganization in the early post-war period as an entire generation of executives died or retired. In their stead emerged a new group of executives willing to change the basis of relations with workers; the geographic scope of the company; and Karagheusian's status as an independent corporation. Meanwhile, Americans' changing taste in carpeting prompted the company to shift its production priorities away from those styles made in Freehold. While the presence of a union helped provoke the decision to build new facilities elsewhere, other factors led to the closure of the mill that had defined Freehold for over 50 years.⁷

Twenty five years after the Karagheusian closing a very different series of changes in the structures of corporate capitalism pushed 3M executives to shift production away from Freehold. Amidst a wave of mergers, buyouts, and hostile takeovers in the mid-1980s, American corporations—even those the size of 3M—adopted business philosophies geared towards short-term profit maximization. 3M proved unwilling to spend millions to upgrade a plant amidst an overall cost-cutting campaign, especially considering intense competition from Japanese producers. Unsurprisingly, neither Karagheusian nor 3M workers were aware of the effects systemic changes in corporate capitalism and market preferences would have on their plants. As they had fulfilled their side of the industrial bargain and complied with the desires of management, workers felt betrayed when the companies returned years of loyal employment with paltry severance packages.

I begin by examining the years Karagheusian spent in Freehold, the changes that prompted

⁷ I add the story of Karagheusian to the literature on America's postwar textile industry which has heretofore focused almost exclusively on the South; for example: Mimi Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise: A Portrait of Southern Textile Workers* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979); Clete Daniel, *Culture of Misfortune: An Interpretive History of Textile Unionism in the United States* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Randall L. Patton with David B. Parker, *Carpet Capital: The Rise of a New South Industry* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Timothy J. Minchin, "*Don't Sleep With Stevens!*": *The J.P. Stevens Campaign and the Struggle to Organize the South, 1963-1980* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

its departure, and the embittered reaction of longtime employees which formed the basis for Freehold's collective memory following the closing. After analyzing the causes of 3M's departure, the second section shifts from explaining reasons for deindustrialization to focusing on workers' responses to it in the form of a union-led public relations campaign against the 3M closure. In a fight against one of the world's largest corporations, local union president Stanley Fischer beseeched 3M to retain its plant in Freehold but also articulated a platform of progressive economics that sought to redefine the connection between a community and the industrial facilities in its midst. This campaign, which lasted from the end of 1985 through the spring of 1986, invoked the Karagheusian closing as a political strategy to draw attention to the workers' plight. I argue that Freehold's whole history with industrial capitalism—not merely the 3M departure—prompted this movement. Despite demographic changes in the years since the Karagheusian closing, the population of Freehold retained a historical memory of a previous generations' experience with capital flight. As manifest in "My Hometown," a song about the rug mill shutdown that served as the anthem of the 3M closing campaign, the lingering memory of the departure of Karagheusian informed 3M workers' ideas on the meaning of the loss of their jobs and the responsibility of corporations to prevent such shutdowns in hometowns across America. Through Springsteen's song and Fischer's campaign, Freehold became emblematic of working-class communities and the fate of blue-collar America in the age of industrial flight.

"They're Closing Down the Textile Mill Across the Railroad Tracks..."

Karagheusian built its rug mill in Freehold in 1905, and the factory quickly became the town's economic heart. By 1928, the employee tally reached almost 1,000 though Freehold Borough had a population of only 1,720. By 1950, with Freehold Township's population numbering 3,442, the mill employed around 1,500 people. A former resident recalls that "most

anybody in town either worked for the rug mill or knew somebody who did.”⁸ Accordingly, Freehold’s economy rose and fell with the success of the company, a fact which did not escape one local official who commented in 1937: “It might be going too far to say that the mill is Freehold, but I do not like to think what Freehold would be without it.”⁹

The mill also stood at the center of the town’s cultural life. Freehold fielded a team in the Jersey Shore Baseball League named the “Gulistans” after Karagheusian’s distinctive brand of carpet. The 1943 Memorial Day parade featured a marching unit of rug mill workers and news from the mill frequently graced the front page of the *Freehold Transcript*. A 1939 Works Progress Administration guide noted the blurred line between the town’s culture and the mill, writing of the “large rug factory that has blended with the community rather than altered it into a factory town.”¹⁰ Yet work life was not always placid. Workers organized an industrial union in the 1930s and partook in the labor fights over wages that riled the textile industry in the 1930s and in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

Overall, however, employees at the rug mill made few protests of the company, especially in the postwar period. Workers did not engage in an extended walkout nor did they demand radical changes in their annual contractual negotiations. The labor strife in the carpet industry in 1952 provides a telling example of their accord with management. After negotiations broke down

⁸ Dean Herrin, “The Makers of Gulistan: A. & M Karagheusian’s Rug Mill in Freehold, New Jersey 1904-1965” (September, 1987; n.p.; Found in records of the Monmouth County Historical Association (MCHA), Freehold, New Jersey), 16; U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population Vol. 1* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 717; U.S. Department of Commerce, *County and City Data Book, 1952* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1953), 52; Harry F. Hutchinson, Oral History Interview, August 18, 2009, by Shaun Illingworth, Rutgers Oral History Archives, 7; online via http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/images/PDFs/hutchinson_harry.pdf (accessed May 1, 2014).

⁹ Karen DeMasters, “A Factory that Wove Rugs and Bound a Town Together,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2000, NJ3; *Asbury Park Press*, “Freehold Mill Shutdown Raised Relief Bill \$4,947,” January 5, 1937; quoted in: Herrin, “The Makers of Gulistan,” 1.

¹⁰ *The Karagheusian News*, “Memorial Day at Freehold,” Vol. 1, No. 2 (July, 1943), 2; Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of New Jersey, *New Jersey: A Guide to its Present and Past* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), 250.

between major rug companies and the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA), the union—part of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—called a strike of 18,000 employees at three different firms. Over 11,000 workers, including Karagheusian employees at a factory in Roselle Park, New Jersey heeded the union’s call. The 1,100 TWUA workers in Freehold, however, ignored the union’s “no contract—no work” vow and remained on the job.¹¹ Freehold workers indicated their displeasure with the TWUA and its inability to reach an agreement with the company by voting to disassociate from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and affiliate instead with the United Textile Workers (UTW), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The CIO represented a more radical and activist union conglomerate; in the strike wave of 1945-1946, for example, two thirds of all strikers were CIO union members.¹² While workers ultimately voted, in an election run by the National Labor Relations Board, to remain with the CIO, the threat of secession illustrated Freehold workers’ dissatisfaction with any uncompromising position by the union against the company.¹³

Despite workers’ commitment to keeping the factory operational, in the late 1950s Karagheusian began slowly shifting jobs away from Freehold into newly acquired southern facilities. In Freehold, as elsewhere, deindustrialization did not occur with one dramatic plant closing but rather through a long, drawn out process. In fact, waves of firing had already begun

¹¹ A.H. Raskin, “Inter-Union Rows Hit Carpet Mills,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1952, 29; Milton M. Levenson, “7,000 Fail to Quit in Carpet Strike,” *New York Times*, June 3, 1952, 24; *Freehold Transcript*, “Strike Is Called Off At Karagheusian, Inc.” June 5, 1952, 1.

¹² Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 213.

¹³ The election results (916 for the CIO, 576 for the AFL) do not provide conclusive evidence on the sentiments of Freehold workers. In the original election, of the 1,100 union members at the Freehold plant, 700 had voted in favor of switching affiliation to the AFL, 60 against. However, the NLRB forced Freehold and Roselle Park workers to vote as a single unit and Roselle Park workers were strongly in favor of the CIO. *Freehold Transcript*, “Rug Workers Switch From CIO To AFL,” May 22, 1952, 1; *Freehold Transcript*, “Representation Of Local 26 In Question; NLRB Called In,” May 29, 1952, 1; *Freehold Transcript*, “Freehold and Roselle to Vote as Unit On Representation Issue,” August 28, 1952, 1; *Freehold Transcript*, “CIO and AFL Both Say They Will Win In NLRB Election,” September 18, 1952, 1; *Freehold Transcript*, “Membership Meeting For Local 26 Called Friday By CIO Head,” September 25, 1952, 1.

over the course of the 1950s in accordance with the gradual introduction of mechanized loom operation. Then, in March 1957, Karagheusian bought a vacant factory in Aberdeen, North Carolina and began incrementally laying off more employees as various departments and facilities in Freehold relocated or shut down entirely. By early 1961, the company had relocated its velvet weaving and broadloom Wilton carpet divisions, bringing employment to about 500. That February, Karagheusian announced the cutting of 325 more jobs as the company ceased production of Axminster carpets, effectively ending all manufacturing operations in Freehold. These layoffs would leave only 75 employees at the plant which fifteen years earlier had employed over 1,500.¹⁴

Karagheusian explained the movement of its production to the South by claiming that its Freehold facilities were not well suited for expansion and that the company needed to economize in the face of imports. Yet, wage issues provided an important, unspoken impetus for the company's departure from Freehold. In a 1959 edition of Karagheusian's Freehold newsletter, the plant manager wrote that no carpet company held a distinct advantage in quality or style. Thus, cost remained consumers' primary concern, a responsibility he laid on workers: "Carpet can only be priced competitively if the costs resulting from the pay checks of our people are reasonable and realistic. Each of you by working *harder*, working more *efficiently*, and continually giving of your *best*, can help keep our costs in line."¹⁵ Though the most activist period of Freehold's unionists had come 25 years earlier, the presence of a union in Freehold kept wages above a certain minimum. As other rug makers opened factories in the South, Karagheusian felt compelled to follow suit in order to reduce production costs. George Oakes, who had worked at the mill since

¹⁴ *Freehold Transcript*, "Lay-Out, Machinery Changes Announced By Karagheusian Are Nearly Complete," February 19, 1959, 1; *Asbury Park Press*, "Firm Will End Manufacture of Axminsters," February 13, 1961, 1; *Wall Street Journal*, "Karagheusian to End Freehold, N.J. Carpet Operations, Idling 500" February 14, 1961, 4; *Freehold Transcript*, "Karagheusian Will Shut Down Most Production Facilities; To Discontinue Axminster Carpeting; 325 To Lose Jobs," February 16, 1961, 1; *Asbury Park Press*, "Closing of Karagheusian Ends an Era In Freehold," April 2, 1961, 3.

¹⁵ Emphasis in the original. Edwin B. Bachman, "Your Pay Check," *The Weaver*, Vol. 3 No. 9 (September, 1959), 2.

1916, presciently noted in 1960: “People in the [N]orth should wake up to the fact that the [S]outh is taking over today’s industries ... taking them away from us.”¹⁶

However, wage issues proved a relatively minor impetus for relocation as Karagheusian was not merely transferring its manufacturing southward but shifting its code of production entirely in response to Americans’ changing carpet choices. Axminster carpeting accounted for 93% of the Freehold rug mill’s production facilities, but its popularity was quickly fading: from 46% and 39.4% total of carpeting yardage purchased in the United States in 1950 and 1951, respectively, to just 10.2% in 1959 and 9% in 1960. In that time tufted carpeting, the product of new carpeting technology, had risen from 9.4% to 59.5% of the market.¹⁷ When faced with the need for technical upgrades, rather than pay to convert its facilities, Karagheusian elected to purchase a new plant in a union-free southern town.

Along with a new product, internal changes in the Karagheusian Company prove vital to understanding its departure from Freehold. In the 1940s and 1950s, the company entered an intense wave of corporate restructuring. Though the number of workers at the Freehold mill remained fairly constant in this period, the number of executives mushroomed.¹⁸ Karagheusian also saw dramatic changes within company leadership due to the death or retirement of a number of

¹⁶ *Freehold Transcript*, “150 To Lose Mill Jobs As Broadloom Operations Slated to Move South,” November 17, 1960, 1; *Freehold Transcript*, “Union Calls Mill Layoff ‘Virtual Double-Cross;’ Lauds ‘Loyal’ Workers,” December 1, 1960, 1.

¹⁷ *Wall Street Journal*, “Karagheusian to End Freehold, N.J., Carpet Operations, Idling 500,” February 14, 1961, 4. *Freehold Transcript*, “Karagheusian Will Shut Down Most Production Facilities; To Discontinue Axminster Carpeting; 325 To Lose Jobs,” February 16, 1961, 1.

¹⁸ Between 1946 and 1953, Karagheusian created at least 11 new national-level executive positions, filling seven through external hires and four via internal promotion: *New York Times*, “Head Gulistan Promotion Ad Advertising,” April 25, 1946, 31; *New York Times*, “Business Notes,” July 8, 1946, 41; *New York Times*, “Advertising News and Notes: Name Purchasing Agent By A. M. Karagheusian,” February 13, 1947, 39; *New York Times*, “News and Notes in the Advertising Field,” September 10, 1947, 44; *New York Times*, “Business Notes,” September 19, 1952, 36; *New York Times*, “Karagheusian Manager for Sales Development,” June 6, 1953, 25; *New York Times*, “Named Vice President of A. & M. Karagheusian,” April 10, 1944, 29; *New York Times*, “Advanced to New Post By A. & M. Karagheusian,” July 6, 1951, 39; “Company Outlines New Training Plan,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1949, F6.

longstanding, high level executives, including a number of company directors.¹⁹ The most important personnel changes occurred among the company's top leaders. Miran Karagheusian, company president and co-founder who ran domestic manufacturing, died in 1948. Upon Miran's death his nephew Charles, a director and the company's treasurer, became Chairman of the Board.²⁰

The transition of leadership from Miran to Charles embodied the shift in business philosophy brought on by the company's new crop of executives. "Charles was cool and distant," Freehold historian Kevin Coyne writes, "clearly more at home with the Fifth Avenue end of the business."²¹ Miran, by contrast, had visited the mill weekly and was well known and highly regarded there for his lack of ostentation and the care he showed for workers. A eulogy in the company newsletter claimed that Miran had ensured that his employees had sufficient food and fuel during the Great Depression; one worker, Coyne reveals, "felt the loss [of Miran] personally, as if of his own relatives had died."²² Charles' rise represented a broader shift in labor-management relations. For example, in 1947, Robert Gaffney was appointed Karagheusian's first Industrial Relations Director. His arrival meant Karagheusian no longer relied solely on the company treasurer and secretary to bargain with the union, as it had in 1946. Gaffney's appointment signaled a new basis for the company's relationship with workers, outsourcing primary negotiation

¹⁹ Two company directors and the heads of two plants died or retired between 1944 and 1954. *New York Times*, "Fred L. Bronaugh, Rug Executive, 75" December 12, 1946, 29; *New York Times*, "James J. Brogan," June 7, 1950, 29; *New York Times*, "Carl Ehlermann, 66, Lawyer, Executive," October 18, 1950, 33; *Chicago Daily Herald*, "People and Events," November 16, 1952, A9; *New York Times*, "D.A. Diradourian, Rug Official, Dies," September 19, 1954, 89.

²⁰ *New York Times*, "Miran Karagheusian, A Rug Manufacturer," October 8, 1948, 26; *New York Times*, "Elected to Directorate of A. & M. Karagheusian," December 16, 1944, 23; *New York Times*, "Executive Elections," October 21, 1948, 46; *Red Bank Register* [Red Bank, New Jersey], "Rug Firm Names New Executives," November 4, 1948, 11.

²¹ Kevin Coyne, *Marching Home: To War and Back with the Men of One American Town* (New York: Viking, 2003), 224.

²² *The Karagheusian News*, "Miran Karagheusian Dead at 74," Vol. 6, No. 5 (November, 1948), 2; Coyne, *Marching Home*, 228; *New York Times*, "Miran Karagheusian, A Rug Manufacturer," October 8, 1948, 26.

responsibilities away from the highest echelon of Karagheusian executives.²³

Workers and union leaders proved extremely sensitive to these changes in company leadership. Events surrounding the plant closure, for example, illustrated to workers that the company had changed its managerial philosophy. Many workers assumed that the entire factory would close as early as 1957, though the company denied any such plans. Thus, with the 1960 and 1961 divisional closures, workers cited specific instances when company leadership had refuted allegations that other parts of the factory would soon close. To one worker, this deceit “[hurt] most,” ostensibly more than the actual closing.²⁴ Fights between the company and union leadership over severance and pension payments further confirmed to workers the end of the amicable relationship between the company and its blue-collar employees. Karagheusian’s “pose of concern for employees being stranded in Freehold,” one 1961 union press release claimed, “is a sham.”²⁵

Rather than focus on changing consumer patterns for carpeting, workers blamed the closure and breakdown of the familial worker-management accord that had existed at the plant on the new flock of company executives. TWUA carpet and rug director William DuChessi responded to a 1960 layoff by claiming that the Karagheusian family had at one point invested in its workers, “but the management today is interested in dollars, not human beings.”²⁶ “It was a first class operation when the brothers ran the plant,” a former union leader at the mill recalled in 1994, but Charles “cared nothing about the rug mill business [and when he] took over ... it was never the same

²³ *New York Times*, “Heads Industrial Relations For A. & M. Karagheusian,” February 3, 1947, 28; “Agreement Between A. & M. Karagheusian, Inc. and Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O.,” January 11, 1946 and “Agreement Between A. & M. Karagheusian, Inc. and Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O.,” June 20, 1947, found in Manuscript Collection #51: A. & M. Karagheusian Records, Box #1, MCHA.

²⁴ *Freehold Transcript*, “Union Calls Mill Layoff ‘Virtual Double-Cross;’” *Freehold Transcript*, “150 To Lose Mill Jobs.”

²⁵ *New York Times*, “3 Rug Mills Agree to \$100 Pensions,” March 19, 1950, 47; *Asbury Park Press*, “Closing of Karagheusian Ends an Era In Freehold,” April 2, 1961, 3; *Freehold Transcript*, “Unfair Labor Practice Charges Being Leveled Against Karagheusian,” March 2, 1961, 1.

²⁶ *Freehold Transcript*, “Union Calls Mill Layoff ‘Virtual Double-Cross.’”

again.”²⁷ Though it was certainly hyperbolic and overly nostalgic to imply that a benevolent Miran Karagheusian would have prevented the elimination of jobs at his beloved Freehold mill, the passage of the company into the hands of his nephew as well as an array of recently promoted and newly hired executives represented a new stage of business practice. The abandonment of Freehold was part of a broader retreat from the company’s roots as the lack of traditional leadership facilitated the methodical elimination of the oldest, most established sectors of the company, including the importation division in 1957. The effects of the executive turmoil were best exemplified in 1963 when Charles agreed to surrender Karagheusian’s corporate independence, approving a purchase of the family-owned business by J.P. Stevens, America’s largest textile producer, though by this point nearly all of Karagheusian’s production took place south of the Mason-Dixon Line.²⁸

“These jobs are going ... and they ain’t coming back...”

Even as workers and residents bemoaned the departure of Karagheusian, construction was nearing completion on a new factory just outside Freehold Borough. In early 1961, 3M began building its second plant in Freehold, a sign for municipal leaders that the future of their city was bright despite the impending mill closure.²⁹ The plant initially employed 200 workers, producing audio-visual tape for use in professional recording studios and film and television cameras.

3M’s time in Freehold passed with little incident. A few years after production began at the tape plant, workers joined the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW) union as Local 8-

²⁷ Dick Metzgar, “Rug Mill A Fabric of their Memories,” *News Transcript* (Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, NJ), May 4, 1994, 8.

²⁸ *Red Bank Register*, “Merger Won’t Affect Rug Firm Operations,” December 27, 1963, 11; *Wall Street Journal*, “Karagheusian Will Stop Importing Oriental Rugs,” September 16, 1957, 7; *Freehold Transcript*, “Rug Mill Custom-Tuft Division To Move South,” December 31, 1964.

²⁹ *New York Times*, “Plastics Plant to Be Built,” September 3, 1956, 23; *Freehold Transcript*, “Chamber Official Optimistic About Freehold’s Future Economic Outlook,” March 2, 1961, 2; *Asbury Park Press*, “Closing of Karagheusian Ends an Era In Freehold,” April 2, 1961, 3.

760. The union, which included 240 of the 400 workers at the two plants, only engaged in one major conflict with the company, an unsuccessful two month strike over wages and health benefits in 1976.³⁰ After a wave of hiring in the early 1980s, company spokespeople announced in November 1985 that the tape plant would close between March 1 and June 1, with production shifting to plants in Hutchinson, Minnesota and Wahpeton, North Dakota.

Based on the dominant historical narrative of deindustrialization, the lack of labor unions in the Minnesota and North Dakota plants should provide the primary impetus for the relocation of jobs from the unionized northeast. While one *New York Times* reporter attributed 3M's flight to a desire to retreat from the local union, a 3M representative unsurprisingly denied that this was factor in the closing decision. However, this claim was not merely a corporate, public relations ploy, as verified by both internal company documents and 8-760 president Stanley Fischer who maintained that "there's not a labor dispute here" as "3M is not seeking wage and work rule concessions."³¹ Not only was the local union not causing problems for the company in Freehold, but the move also did not represent a flight from high union wages. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press & Dispatch* reported that the midwestern plants boasted comparable wages to those of the Freehold facility, where workers received \$9 per hour, amounting to approximately \$19,000 per year, \$24,000 with overtime.³²

Though 3M had been one of America's 30 most profitable corporations since 1959, the

³⁰ Telephone Interview with Stanley Fischer, March 26, 2014, recording in possession of the author; *Red Bank Register*, "Court Sets Picketing Rules for Striking 3M Workers," March 4, 1976, 4.

³¹ William Serrin, "3M Workers Campaign to Keep Plant," *New York Times*, December 24, 1985, B2; John A. Harnes, "3M Workers Ask Entertainers' Aid" *Asbury Park Press*, November 14, 1985; "3M Internal Memorandum on Freehold, NJ Plant Closing," October 18, 1985. Provided to the author by Don Prial, former 3M Public Relations Representative.

³² Mike Langberg, "Plant Closing Turns into 'Family' Feud," *St. Paul Pioneer Press & Dispatch*, January 13, 1986. These sums have not been adjusted for inflation, they represent 1985 dollar values; information on wages in Freehold from: Jean Mickle and Jacqueline Sergeant, "3M Taught Workers a Lesson in Job Insecurity" *Asbury Park Press*, May 26, 1996; Randy Diamond, "Not Even the 'Boss' Can Save N.J. Jobs," *Daily News*, February 28, 1986.

state of corporate capitalism in the 1980s provided a crucial context for the company's decision to close its Freehold factory. In the postwar period, American business saw intense waves of corporate buyouts, takeovers, and amalgamations. Mergers reached an unprecedented scale in the mid-1980s, affecting even America's largest corporations. Of the companies on the Fortune 500 in 1980, one third had fallen off the list or had ceased to exist altogether by 1990 and, of those that remained, one third had staved off a hostile takeover attempt. Economist Marina Whitman notes the emergence in the 1980s of "a newly intensified focus on the bottom line, on efficiency, productivity, and cost cutting." In order to ensure their survival as independent entities, corporations enacted waves of "downsizing, restructuring, reengineering, and rightsizing—all terms that signify getting rid of people."³³

3M was not immune from these trends. In May 1986, with the final closing in Freehold looming, shareholders approved three anti-takeover measures strongly favored by the company executives.³⁴ Though the company chairman clarified that these were precautionary measures and that 3M was not facing any actual takeover threat, the move illustrated the contemporary siege-mentality in the boardrooms of even America's largest and most successful corporations.

Another means the company had of protecting itself was, as Whitman writes, maximizing profits even at the cost of reduced production, plant closure, and a smaller labor force. The 360 employees at the Freehold tape plant and 70 workers at the nearby electrical facility could be added to the growing list of those 3M had already laid off in the 1980s, including over 1,300 workers—

³³ Marina Whitman, *New World, New Rules: The Changing Role of the American Corporation* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 9; Bruce Nussbaum, "Deal Mania," *Business Week*, November 24, 1986, 74; Michael Useem, "Corporate Education and Training," in *The American Corporation Today* edited by Carl Kaysen (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 294-297; Marjorie Kelly, *The Divine Right of Capital: Dethroning the Corporate Aristocracy* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 54-55; Robert B. Reich, *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 50-52; Stanley Buder, *Capitalizing in Change: A Social History of American Business* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 357-363.

³⁴ Mike Langberg, "3M Adopts Takeover Barriers," *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, May 19, 1986.

with an additional 2,300 offers for early retirement—in 1982 alone.³⁵

In addition to these concerns, market conditions helped prompt 3M to move away from Freehold. The company held a 50% market share for professional audio-visual tape but faced strong competition and declining profits from home-use tapes. Accordingly, parts of 3M's main tape plant in Hutchison, Minnesota was underutilized, leading the company to relocate professional tape production from Freehold to its semi-vacant facility.³⁶ So too, the machinery in Freehold was in need of repairs. Since at least the early 1980s 3M operated an around-the-clock production schedule for six or seven days per week.³⁷ As a result the company addressed only small mechanical problems while ignoring major repairs instrumental to ensuring the longevity of its machinery. Rather than pay an estimated \$15-20 million for renovation at a time of short-term profit maximization, the company could instead make small-scale upgrades to the midwestern facilities and shift production there. "It's a question of manufacturing a large amount of tape at rock-bottom prices," said one spokesman; plant manager Ken Dishino agreed, stating that the Freehold plant was "not making typical 3M profits," a frightful concept for any corporation in this period.³⁸

As in the Karagheusian mill closing years before, workers felt betrayed by the impending shutdown, many of them likening it to losing their family, a second home, a friend, or even their wife. "So many times the company has said it is not 3M, we are 3M," a machine operator stated. "I agree with that. We are 3M. Those guys are abandoning their own company."³⁹ Fischer set out

³⁵ Thomas W. Lippman and Mark Potts, "Layoffs Found Across the Board," *Washington Post* July 4, 1982, A1.

³⁶ Robert Hordt, "Competition in Videotapes Hurts Sales," *Asbury Park Press*, November 3, 1985, D1; *New Tribune* (Woodbridge, N.J.), "Monmouth Officials Pitch in to Keep 3M in Freehold," November 11, 1985.

³⁷ Fischer Interview, January 31, 2014; *International Labour Reports*, "Stars Line Up Against Closure," No. 14 (March/April, 1986), 5.

³⁸ Lisa R. Kruse, "3M Plant Closing, Many Lose Jobs" *Red Bank Register* [Red Bank, New Jersey], November 13, 1985, 1A; Francis Pestana and John A. Harnes, "Springsteen's Aid No Help, 3M Says," *Asbury Park Press*, December 5, 1985.

³⁹ Serrin, "3M Workers Campaign to Keep Plant."

to convince the company to overturn a decision they publically deemed irreversible. Immediately following the closing announcement, Fischer vowed: “We’re not giving up. It’s going to be a long hard fight, but I feel confident that we’re going to [be] able to influence the company to remain.”⁴⁰ In early October, Fischer visited the Labor Institute, a think-tank in New York City, to plan 8-760’s campaign.

Freehold would not be the first site of worker resistance to deindustrialization, as workers and community members had tried in recent years to fight shutdowns in Youngstown, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. Yet, given the failure of worker resistance to these and other closures around the country, Fischer and the Institute cohort opted for an original tactic in hopes to achieving a different result. Rather than purchase the decaying plant—as workers had attempted to do in Youngstown—or organize a boycott of the company—as threatened by General Motors workers in Los Angeles in 1983—8-760 would wage its campaign in the media. Though 3M, like many corporations, invested heavily in the maintenance of its public image, the media offered a space for workers to make their voice heard; as one Institute official told the *New York Times*, “workers have no economic power. They have only public-relations power.”⁴¹ The press provided consistent coverage to deindustrialization in this period, much to the vexation of perennial positivist President Ronald Reagan, who complained in 1982 of the ubiquity of these reports, “Is it news that some fellow out in South Succotash someplace has just been laid off, that he should be interviewed nationwide?”⁴² The stories of factory closures and layoffs allowed blue-collar Americans to expose the existence of losers in the ascendant Reaganomic system. Though Reagan’s 1984 re-

⁴⁰ Kruse, “3M Plant Closing”

⁴¹ Henry Weinstein, “Boycott by UAW of GM Threatened,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1983, C1; Serrin, “3M Workers Campaign to Keep Plant.”

⁴² United Press International, “Reagan Raps TV Reporting: South Succotash Not News?” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1982, B2.

election campaign centered on the return of “Morning in America” and its implied national prosperity, the media at times provided a counter-narrative, illustrating that, for working-class Americans in the industrial sector, the 1980s were gilded, not golden.

Thus, noting that 3M was “very image conscious,” Fischer opted to attract sympathy and media attention by rallying support from public figures to entreat the company to reconsider rather than organize a slander campaign or boycott.⁴³ After hearing the reference to the Karagheusian closing in “My Hometown,” Fischer and Institute staff reached out to Springsteen to see if America’s most popular singer would be willing to help workers in Freehold. Fischer wrote to Springsteen: “You wrote a song about your hometown and about a factory that was shut down and what it meant to the town. When we hear that song, it strikes a very painful chord ... because it’s happening all over again.”⁴⁴ Beyond Springsteen’s widespread charitable contributions to hungry Americans on his 1984-1985 tour and his personal connection to Freehold, the trend of celebrity social activism gave Fischer heart that entertainers would join 8-760’s campaign. Most prominently, Springsteen and others released “We Are the World,” a star-studded benefit-single for Ethiopian famine relief recorded on audio tape manufactured in 3M’s Freehold plant. On December 1, Springsteen had dinner with Fischer’s family and agreed to lend his name to 8-760’s public relations campaign. He also made an unsolicited \$20,000 donation to help pay the union’s advertising costs.⁴⁵

The funds went to use immediately. The workers’ campaign began on December 4 with an advertisement in four newspapers. Under the headline “3M: Don’t Abandon Our Hometown!” the

⁴³ Armando Machado, “3M Workers Will Try to Save Freehold Plant from Closing,” *Red Bank Register*, November 14, 1985, 1A; Armando Machado, “Boss, Willie Sign on For 3M Workers,” *Red Bank Register*, December 5, 1985, 1A.

⁴⁴ Marsh, *Two Hearts*, 463.

⁴⁵ *New York Daily News*, “‘Boss Dinner’ With Labor Leader in Freehold,” December 8, 1985; Steven Dougherty, “Chatter,” *People*, February 10, 1986.

ad, credited to OCAW Local 8-760, featured the verse on the rug mill closing from “My Hometown” and an appeal to 3M’s moral and economic sensibility to keep the plant open: “We are not asking for charity. All we want is the chance to work.” An additional plea, signed by Springsteen and Willie Nelson, who had also agreed to join the campaign, further urged the company to reconsider. “We know that these decisions are always difficult to make,” their letter read, in part, “but we believe that people of goodwill should be able to ... come up with a humane program that will keep those jobs and those workers in Freehold.”⁴⁶ Though hardly a radical call for working-class empowerment, newspapers all over the country reported on the content of the advertisement as well as Springsteen’s involvement in the campaign. Other entertainers answered Fischer and Springsteen’s calls for additional support, as 12 cast members of *Hill Street Blues* produced a newspaper advertisement of their own, appealing for “social justice” for Local 8-760 through the preservation of their jobs.⁴⁷ The following month, local artists played a 12 hour benefit concert on behalf of 8-760 where, as mentioned above, Springsteen made a surprise appearance. Fischer planned another concert for the spring, but local officials denied the union’s permit, fearful that huge crowds would arrive if Springsteen agreed to perform. Despite this outpouring of support and media attention, however, the factory did shut down, as planned, with the first set of layoffs beginning on February 27 and the firing of the final 81 workers on May 29, 1986.

As the workers’ crusade progressed and prospects of keeping the plant open dimmed, Fischer changed the message of his campaign. Tony Mazzocchi, a former OCAW official who advised the Labor Institute, remained certain that any attempt to keep the factory open was

⁴⁶ Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, “3M: Don’t Abandon Our Hometown!” *New York Times*, December 4, 1985.

⁴⁷ Taurean Blacque, Dennis Franz, Charles Haid, Veronica Hamel, Ed Marinaro, Kiel Martin, Robert Prosky, James Sikking, Joe Spano, Daniel J. Travanti, Michael Warren, and Bruce Weitz, “A Roll Call for Social Justice from Some of Hollywood’s ‘Finest’” *Variety*, December 11, 1985, 80.

doomed. Given the lack of success of similar campaigns, he did not want 3M in Freehold to serve as merely another failed plant closing fight. Rather, with Fischer's permission, Mazzocchi used the publicity surrounding Springsteen's involvement to turn the 3M closing into a catalyst to draw attention to the need to reexamine and to regulate companies' responsibilities towards their workers in the event of a shutdown.⁴⁸ The changes in 8-760's advertisement campaign provide a telling example. Whereas the December 4th ad had entreated 3M to stay in Freehold, an ad in the *Asbury Park Press* in January articulated far more radical ideas about companies' responsibilities to their workers. Under the banner "3M: Violating the Human Rights of Our Hometown," the ad condemned 3M as well as other corporations for violating workers' rights to provide for their families by abandoning hometowns all across America. The ad called for a "Bill of Rights for Plant Closings," claiming that companies like 3M should be responsible for workers' higher education tuition as well as medical insurance, income, and child care until a new job could be found following a plant closure.⁴⁹

As the campaign shifted away from the specific project to save the plant, it also moved away from Freehold, both rhetorically and physically. Fischer took up the "hometown" idea in order to turn the 3M plant into a national symbol, using the closing in Freehold as a synecdoche for the imbalance of power between capital and communities and the fate of those left behind by factory closures. As he brought the crusade for a plant closing bill of rights around the country in a speaking tour at record stores and to union groups in early 1986, Fischer did not only talk about New Jersey: "What we're starting here does not just stop here in Freehold," he told ABC's *20/20*.

⁴⁸ Les Leopold, *The Man Who Hated Work and Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2007), 418-422; Telephone Interview with Les Leopold, February 2, 2014, recording in possession of the author.

⁴⁹ Leopold interview, February 2, 2014; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, "3M: Violating the Human Rights of Our Hometown," *Asbury Park Press*, January 20, 1986.

Addressing striking Hormel workers in Austin, Minnesota, Fischer noted that “our campaign in New Jersey is really about all our hometowns;” Springsteen had attended 8-760’s benefit concert where he “sang song after song about the problems we all face ... But it isn’t just our hometown he is singing about. He is singing about your hometown ... He is singing about working people everywhere.”⁵⁰ Under the organizational title “Hometowns Against Shutdowns,” Fischer, even after the 3M closing, worked to provide transition assistance for laid off workers in New Jersey and advocated for companies to financially support their workforces following a shutdown. By 1988, Hometowns had joined a coalition of 20 similar organizations committed to reducing companies’ unilateral power regarding the fate of their factories.⁵¹

Fischer employed the “hometown” image of Freehold as a means to popularize 8-760’s campaign, making it applicable to all American workers while simultaneously providing a not-so-subtle reminder of Springsteen’s solidarity with the 3M workers’ plight. Yet, Fischer also invoked Karagheusian to draw local support in Freehold, tapping into the town’s memory of its experience with industrial capitalism to highlight the injustice and seeming arbitrariness of the latest plant closing. The former Karagheusian employees garnered a special mention in the December 4th advertisement which, after referencing “My Hometown,” drew explicit connection between the two closings, claiming: “We can’t just let this happen again and again.” The near ubiquity of “My Hometown” during the campaign testifies to Fischer’s attempt to attract national attention, galvanize the local populace, as well as invoke memories of the Karagheusian closing to stimulate his Hometowns political project. 3M’s chief spokesman, for example, remembers that in Freehold the union was “playing ‘My Hometown’ everywhere.”⁵² Dozens of articles, advertisements, and

⁵⁰ “Statement by Stan Fischer,” *The Unionist* (Austin, Minnesota), Vol. 51, No. 10, January 31, 1986.

⁵¹ ABC News, *20/20*, February 27, 1986; Erik Gunn, “Group Fights Plant Closings,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 12, 1988, 5C; Marian Courtney, “Counseling for Displaced Workers,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1987, NJ6.

⁵² Telephone Interview with Don Prial, February 10, 2014, recording in possession of the author.

news features covering the closing quoted the song's lyrics or referenced it, and Fischer played the song at his initial press conference where he announced that Springsteen would be joining the campaign. The song also served as a campaign tactic: Fischer used the word "hometown" a dozen times in his speech in Austin and 8-760 leadership called for residents of St. Paul, Minnesota—the site of 3M's headquarters—to inundate local radio stations with requests for "My Hometown" to indicate their support for the Freehold campaign. The track provided a forecast for Freehold's fate should 3M continue with its planned shutdown. "Our community needs these jobs," Fischer stated. "We are fighting to prevent the kind of social and economic destruction that brother Springsteen sings about so well in 'My Hometown.'"⁵³

Yet, talk of Freehold within a "hometown" framework was largely disingenuous, and the implication that Freehold's Main Street still bore the "whitewashed windows and vacant stores" mentioned in "My Hometown" presented an anachronistic view of a city that had undergone intense changes since the Karagheusian closing. Few 3M workers called Freehold their hometown, as between 45 and 50% of 3M workers hailed from neighboring Ocean County, including Fischer himself who hosted Springsteen at his home in Brick Township.⁵⁴ Based on available data on 46 different 3M plant employees, only four lived in Freehold. Though some working-class residents remained in Freehold, the city's demographics had shifted away from the blue-collar suburbs of Springsteen's childhood. Freehold sat as the seat of Monmouth County whose average per-capita income exceeded average county per-capita income nationwide by 12% in 1959, 17% in 1979, and 42% in 1989.⁵⁵ Property values in Freehold increased tremendously in the 1980s, with a wave of

⁵³ Francis Pestana and John A. Harnes, "Springsteen's Aid No Help;" Fischer Interview, March 26, 2014; Armando Machado, "3M Workers Carry Battle to Minnesota," *Red Bank Register*, December 28, 1985, 3A.

⁵⁴ Alvin Decker, "Letter," *Ocean County Observer*, January, 1986; Tim Faherty, "Laid Off in the U.S.A." *Atlantic City Press*, June 1, 1986, A1.

⁵⁵ United States Census Bureau, "Per Capita Income by County: 1959, 1969, 1979, and 1989," accessed July, 2014 via: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/county/county3.html>.

residential construction that saw some homes more than double in value between 1982 and 1985 alone. Freehold's business sector, too, was growing rapidly, with a million square feet of commercial space built between 1985 and 1988.⁵⁶

Despite these changes, the 3M closing reopened wounds of the Karagheusian closing, prompting longtime residents to connect the two incidents. Local newspapers referenced the lyrics of "My Hometown" in October, 1985, two weeks before Fischer announced that Springsteen would be joining 8-760's campaign.⁵⁷ Dorothy Burdge, a packer at the 3M plant stated: "When they shut the rug mill down, my father told me then: 'you're nothing but a number and this can happen to you someday.' And I never believed it. But now here we are, and I'm going down the drain with the rest of 'em."⁵⁸ Ten workers slated for layoff from 3M had been laid off from Karagheusian, a fact which drew considerable media attention. Local columnists drew further connection between the closings, one writer commenting: "I felt a sense of déjà vu talking with 3M workers. It was as though I was thrown back to 1961 when Karagheusian's announcement left ... [workers] expressing similar feelings of betrayal."⁵⁹

The 3M closing ignited a final wave of consideration of the consequences and causes of Karagheusian closing in Freehold, a discussion manifest in an intense wave of negotiation over the future of the rug mill and, by extension, the place of Karagheusian in Freehold's past. Though filled with light industry through 1980, by 1983 the former mill stood vacant, its boarded-up

⁵⁶ Edward L. Walsh, "Freehold Planning Has Paid," *Asbury Park Press*, February 2, 1986, H1; Philip S. Gutis, "A Project in Jersey Evokes Colonial Era," *New York Times*, August 15, 1986, B6; Shawn G. Kennedy, "Office Complexes Displace Jersey Barns," *New York Times*, February 10, 1988, B10; Jerry Cheslow, "If You're Thinking of Living in: Freehold Borough," *New York Times*, January 26, 1992, R7.

⁵⁷ Frank Pestana, "Workers Fear Long-Time Jobs Will Be Lost," *Asbury Park Press*, November 3, 1985, D1.

⁵⁸ ABC News, *20/20*, February 27, 1986; Saunders interview with Joan Greenbaum, December 24th, 1985.

⁵⁹ Frank Pestana, "3M May Shut its Two Facilities in Area," *Asbury Park Press*, October 29, 1985; Jennifer King, "Shutdown shuts out 430," unknown publisher, most likely the *News Transcript* n.d. approximately November-December, 1985; found in Manuscript Collection #51: A. & M. Karagheusian Records, Box #4, MCHA, Freehold, New Jersey.

windows providing a clear sign of its physical deterioration. Before the 3M closing, rather than collectively consider the economic forces that had led to its demise or its significance to Freehold's history, sporadic discussion about the mill among residents and local politicians focused on the future of the mill's physical structure. The hulking mass on Jackson Street, two large smokestacks punctuating the city's skyline and proudly bearing the Karagheusian name, provided a constant reminder of the town's industrial past, representing, as one local 1983 headline claimed, a "symbol of [a] bygone era."⁶⁰

With the 3M closing, Freehold, for the first time, began to seriously address its industrial history and began an intense wave of cementing Karagheusian's place in Freehold's collective memory through memorialization. Unlike other industrial sites—most prominently Youngstown—Freehold had not undertaken a memorialization process following its seminal moment of deindustrialization. This changed after the 3M closing catalyzed memories of Karagheusian's flight southward. After debates over the fate of the mill were stymied by fires in 1990 and 1998, the facility reopened in 2001 filled primarily with residential apartments, renamed Rug Mill Towers. Memories of the facility's former function lingered on: "There are a lot of ghosts in this building," a city official commented in 2000.⁶¹ Additionally, around this time, Freehold residents exhibited an intense desire to memorialize their town and, in particular, the place of the mill in their city's history. Local historians published narratives of Freehold's past beginning in mid-1990s, focusing both on Freehold's historic role in the American Revolution as well as the industrial production of the mill in the twentieth century. In 2000 the Monmouth County Historical

⁶⁰ Ira Breskin, "Former Karagheusian Rug Mill Still Alive with Activity," *Asbury Park Press*, March 23, 1980, B4; Robert Wright, "Freehold Revitalization Pushed," *Red Bank Register*, March 30, 1982, A1; Terry Moore, "Old Rug Mill Symbol of Bygone Era," *Red Bank Register*, August 14, 1983, A1; *Asbury Park Press*, "Freehold Planning Has Paid," February 2, 1986, H1.

⁶¹ Dick Metzgar, "Rug Mill Celebrates Past, Looks Forward to Future," *News Transcript*, September 20, 2000, 1.

Association featured a special exhibit on Karagheusian and its place in Freehold's past.⁶²

The case of Freehold prompts a reexamination of the reasons for deindustrialization. While labor considerations proved important to Karagheusian's closing decision, Freehold workers did not, for the most part, adversely affect the 'business climate' in Freehold in the postwar period. Rather, broader market forces and well as internal company changes combined to prompt the decline of Freehold's industrial base. Though Freehold proved to be one of the few places in the northeast successfully able to reindustrialize, a very different set of changes led to the same result in 1986, with the closure of the local 3M plant. Once again, a largely compliant labor force was left with a sense of anger, betrayal, and powerlessness as their jobs moved away.

Freehold's history allows a unique look into the process of deindustrialization, the way workers and community members affected by closing conceived of instances of economic turmoil. The centrality of Karagheusian to 8-760's campaign illustrates that the relationship between a company and a community can endure even after the two no longer occupy the same physical spaces. Deindustrialization does not take place in a vacuum but in a place with a past and, more importantly, a memory of that past. Due to Freehold's experience with Karagheusian, it could not erase the lingering, multigenerational anger and betrayal over the flight of the rug mill. Though they took place 25 years apart, local memory conflated the two closings to serve as evidence of the lack of corporate responsibility towards communities. Accordingly, while 8-760's campaign began as a simple plea for jobs, it gradually morphed into expressions of the need to regulate the relationships between companies and their communities. When that campaign failed to preserve jobs in Freehold, and with demographic changes threatening to erase the remnants of Freehold

⁶² Herrin, "The Makers of Gulistan" (1987); Lee Ellen Griffith, *Images of America: Freehold* (Dover, NH: Arcadia, 1996); Angela N. Higgins, *A History of St. Rose of Lima Cemetery (1857-1951)*, (n.p., 1998), found in the records of MCHA; Lee Ellen Griffith, *Images of America: Freehold, Volume II* (Dover, NH: Arcadia, 1999); Barbara Pepe, *Freehold: A Hometown History* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003); Coyne, *Marching Home*.

from the time of Karagheusian, residents began to memorialize their town's industrial past, one that had begun in 1904.

Fischer was able to tap into the collective memory of Karagheusian not only because the mill had been central to Freehold's identity, but because the political questions raised by the closing lingered into the 1980s. In late 1960, William M. Duchessi, carpet and rug director for the TWUA, predicted the need for legislation to prevent future closings such as that of the Karagheusian mill in Freehold: "Sooner or later, actions of this sort will come under the scrutiny of the Federal [sic] government and eventually some government action will be necessary to prevent the destruction of a community and the handling of its people as if they were used machinery to be tossed on the scrap pile."⁶³ 25 years later, on November 21, 1985—the same day "My Hometown" was released as a single—the House of Representatives voted on the legislation DuChessi had called for, a bill to regulate plant closings. This was not, however, the empowered legislation DuChessi had anticipated. By vote of 208 to 203, the House defeated a bill that would have required companies to provide at least 90 days' notice to workers before a mass layoff. The bill was rejected even though it had already been gutted of its most significant clause, one which would have required companies who planned to shut down a plant to consult with labor unions to discuss potential alternatives to closures.⁶⁴

The failure of this legislation highlights what DuChessi understood just 15 years after the end of World War II: the vulnerability of American workers and their hometowns given companies' ability to relocate their facilities with impunity, regardless of the conditions they left in their wake. A quarter of a decade later, the 3M closing taught Stanley Fischer a similar lesson

⁶³ *Freehold Transcript*, "Union Calls Mill Layoff 'Virtual Double-Cross.'"

⁶⁴ Peter Perl, "House Rejects Plant-Closings Legislation," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1985, A51; Leonard M. Apar, "House Defeats Bill Requiring Notice Of Plant Closings," *Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 1985, 6.

and he relied on a similar metaphor to DuChessi's to describe what factory closings revealed about companies' relationships with their spaces of production: "I liken it to strip mining. [Businesses] come in, they strip workers, plants, communities, strip it bare. And there's no effort on the company's part to restore that."⁶⁵

In his campaign, Fischer had tried to tap into rhetoric concerning the plight of America's hometowns to resist the harshly economic corporate decision-making process. He condemned the power imbalance of the community-company relationship and the corresponding mercy at which communities sat in the face of capital flight. Yet, while the lessons of Karagheusian remained central to 8-760's campaign, the failure of the campaign despite the intense public relations outburst illustrates the lack of power of collective memory in influencing politics. "My Hometown" could draw from the memory of Freehold's industrial era and help spark a long overdue process of memorialization. So too, thanks to Springsteen's popularity, it allowed the Freehold campaign to transcend a single plant, and broadcast a message relevant to all working class communities. However, the failure of the campaign illustrates the weakness of popular culture—even as a manifestation of collective memory—as a political tool in the face of an ascending logic of market efficiency. Though it originally served as a defiant call against 3M's closing plans, "My Hometown" ultimately served as a painful confirmation of the fate of the Freehold facility as neither Fischer's campaign nor Springsteen's music could prevent the industrial decline discussed in the song from happening again.

⁶⁵ ABC News, *20/20*, February 27, 1986.