

Forty years ago, thousands of miles away from our hometowns, the two of us first met at an annual American Chemical Society conference in California. We had each been drawn to the emerging field of Biotechnology and the impact it could have on human health and sustainability. Despite our dissimilar backgrounds, we shared future outlooks filled with imagined possibilities and common values rooted in education, family, community and generosity. We settled as immigrants in the US, the perennial land of opportunity, and embraced innovation and entrepreneurship as we endeavored to build a life together.

We were—and are—hardly alone. Millions of people around the world are yearning for a chance to do what we have had the good fortune to do—to learn, to thrive, and to build. That is why, in addition to our professions and our family, we have always put philanthropy at the center of our lives. With our giving, we look to reinforce what we view as “immigrant mindsets:” tenacity, resilience, creativity, optimism, hard work, agility. These values reflect our family’s Armenian and Swedish heritage, and guide our efforts to expand the boundaries of what’s possible, build a more just society, and turn gratitude into action.

For the past quarter century, since starting the Afeyan Foundation, we’ve dedicated ourselves to designing, building, and supporting some of the world’s most innovative organizations and initiatives focused on education, science and technology, health, and humanitarian action. Through this work, we have sought to better both our spiritual home by investing in Armenia’s future, and our literal home by helping prepare underserved students in Boston for success in high school, college, and beyond. We’ve also worked farther afield, funding humanitarians around the world who are risking their lives everyday to help those in the greatest need.

Committing to the Giving Pledge is a natural extension of our lifelong work, which is far from over. We know there are still countless people improvising, imagining, and hustling their way toward survival. It is our aim to help them reach higher and achieve even more, to not just survive, but thrive.

All of us who have been fortunate in our lives, who truly have all we need, can play an even greater role—in partnership with local advocates, governments, and businesses—to ensure that opportunities are more widely accessed and the rewards of progress are broadly shared. We are honored to join a community that shares our eagerness to pay it forward. Together, we can boldly imagine a better future—and help bring it into being. This is our pledge.

Noubar Afeyan and Anna Afeyan Gunnarson