



Anushavan Abrahamian: “Every Armenian needs to do his best in order to help the Homeland advance”



Hayern Aysor’s correspondent sat down for an interview with Armenian American benefactors, founders of the Ofik and Anushavan Abrahamian Educational Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Abrahamian, who were hosted at the RA Ministry of Diaspora.

Hayern Aysor: Mr. Abrahamian, why did you decide to establish this educational foundation?

Anushavan Abrahamian: It was a dream that I had in my prime. I had decided that one day, when I get married, have a successful business, become more successful than my father and be able to provide for my family, I will try to do my best to help Armenian children and youth receive a higher education, learn a professional or a craft in order to find jobs in the future. Our three daughters have received a higher vocational education. Two of them are nurses, and the other is a lawyer. So, we thought that our family had less worries, our children had already chosen their paths and were working, meaning the time had come for me to fulfill my longtime dream. We thought of implementing our idea by improving the conditions of buildings of over 160 intermediate vocational institutions dating back to the Soviet era. We would select the buildings of former schools and workshops, improve the conditions and make those schools active, as well as create workshops and intermediate vocational schools for the children and youth of socially disadvantaged families living in Armenia’s provinces. However, Mr. Yeritsyan, who was the Minister of Education and Science at the time, told us that there were only 20-26 institutions left and that the rest of the structures had been used for other purposes, that is, refugees had settled in those buildings. We decided to select a structure in every province that used to serve as a school or college, start renovating it, improve the living conditions and provide water and heating. In 2005, we started taking small steps, and in 2006, we officially registered our educational foundation and opened an office at 3 Baghramyan Street in Yerevan.

Hayern Aysor: Did you select the provinces?

A. A.: We set terms and conditions, and according to them, the Ministry of Education and Science gave us a general list, and we started touring the provinces to see the buildings and calculate the expenses that we had to make in order to make these buildings useful for providing the children and youth with an education. First, we started renovating broken and useless roofs, after which we began to fix the

restrooms. Later, we saw that there was no water, and we solved that issue as well. We provided the buildings with electricity and heating, and after all this, we installed workshops, provided facilities and tools for workshops, including a sewing machine (we placed 6 sewing machines), as well as tools for hairdressing, cosmetics, construction work, food service and carpentry... To this day, we have created 64 workshops for 6-7 crafts. During this visit to Armenia, we have held the opening ceremonies of workshops for the construction of robots and computer programming in the Tavush Province, in Vardenis, Hrazdan, Maralik, Yeghegnadzor, Vanadzor, Kapan and Ararat. In June, we came and created experimental workshops in two places. Today, we have established them. Our work will be ongoing.

Hayern Aysor: Mr. Abrahamian, you make so many investments and carry out so many charity acts by providing Armenian children, teens and youth with the opportunity to learn a craft for free. Do they know the benefactor?

A. A.: They know me very well. They know that we are doing this with our personal funds. We have created an independent committee at each school. Parents make up 50% of the members, while teachers and students make up 25% each. The president is a clergyman. Upon the proposal of the leader of the U.S. Diocese, His Holiness Hovnan, we met with the Catholicos of All Armenians several times. He gave us his blessing and blessed our work. We have met with the representatives of various Dioceses and have concluded memoranda of mutual understanding so that they always present us. The boys and girls attending our schools will also become parents someday, and they need to be close to the church. The principal and administration of the schools are members of the committee, but they have no vote because they are the beneficiaries. We have cooperation agreements with the schools stating their responsibilities in order to make sure the ends justify the means.

Hayern Aysor: Are you carrying out a similar program in Artsakh?

A. A.: Not now. We don't have enough ability or opportunities. We are currently adding to what we have started and improving.

Hayern Aysor: Mrs. Abrahamian is listening to us and giving a nod of approval, but she also plays a major role in these charity acts. Isn't that right, Mrs. Abrahamian?

Ofik Abrahamian: It is obvious that the Abrahamian family is overseeing the tasks. We do it with pleasure and with the hope that the young Armenians will go on to find good jobs and that they will have so much money that they too will carry out charity acts someday. I also learned how to sew and type texts. I want Armenian teens and youth to receive a good education and learn a craft. We have helped Armenian schools in not only Armenia, but also in the USA. Our daughters also help us a lot. I always participate in fundraisers and charity acts for education, while Anushavan takes part in the implementation of greater tasks. He is one of the founders of the Armenian American Chamber of Commerce, which he and five others established in 1998. He is also a member of the Homeland Union and supports the Knights of Vartan Organization, the Organization of Armenian American Engineers and Scholars and supports the implementation of very large tasks.

Hayern Aysor: Mr. Abrahamian, how did you settle in the United States? Was it due to your profession?

A. A.: In March 1963, I traveled to Germany. Fifteen years later, I got married to Ofik, who had come to Germany in late December 1977. We were both born in Iran. After getting married, we moved to Tehran. Twenty-six years ago, we decided to move to the United States of America because our three daughters, who were in Germany, were having trouble finding Armenian men to start families and there was no guarantee for the preservation of the Armenian identity. It is much easier to preserve the national identity in the USA because there are many Armenians there and the foundations of Armenian culture are strong.

I make automobiles by profession, but I didn't start working by my profession when I arrived in the USA. For the past 40 years, I have been fixing and selling trade centers. I am independent, meaning I didn't settle in the USA due to my profession.

Hayern Aysor: When did you establish friendly ties with the RA Ministry of Diaspora?

A. A.: We already had friendly ties in the second year of establishment of the Ministry of Diaspora. We were very pleased with the establishment of this Ministry and decided to meet with the Minister and collaborate. We have visited the Ministry several times, and this visit fell in line with the 25th anniversary of Armenia's Independence. We see positive changes in Yerevan, but democracy is still not at its peak. Nevertheless, we are optimistic and hope everything will be fine because there are many smart and patriotic Armenians. We love Armenia very much!

Hayern Aysor: Mrs. Abrahamian, what are your impressions of the events that were dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Independence?

O. A.: I am very impressed! I was very happy to witness the parade. I saw that people were proud of the Armenian army and our soldiers. I barely noticed joy in the eyes of people following the events that took place in April. There are so many good young people in Armenia! They are the future of the Homeland. Young Armenians deserve to receive the best education and participate in international contests and competitions. They need to have the opportunity to study foreign languages for free and receive their education in Armenia and at the world's top universities.

Hayern Aysor: Mr. Abrahamian, what does the Homeland mean to you?

A. A.: The Homeland is our hope and faith. Every Armenian needs to do his best in order to help the Homeland advance.

Interview by Karine Avagyan

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