

1stGenYale: Looking Back to Move Forward

By Lise Chapman '81 MBA, Barb Protacio '81, and Michael Watson '81 | Posted May 03, 2023



Words truly cannot capture all the love and support shared by 150 first-gen alumni from '56 -'22 classes and all Yale schools at the recent 1stGenYale alumni conference, Being the First, But Not the Last, held on Saturday, April 29, 2023, at the Yale School of Management's Edward P. Evans Hall. **[Note: A video documentary of the event from Hugo Perez '93 is [available here.](#)**

President Peter Salovey kicked the program off by sharing his family's stories and initiatives to support first-gen low-income students. Next, Indra Nooyi '80 MPPM (former chairman and CEO, PepsiCo) and Gina Boswell '89 MBA (CEO, Bath & Body Works) explored their career paths as first- and second-gen immigrants, respectively, and the challenges they overcame to reach CEO, the highest level of global corporate leadership.

The dinner keynote, Gilbert A. Garcia '85, CFA (Managing Partner, Garcia Hamilton & Associates), said how in spite of discrimination as a first-gen Mexican American, he worked hard to succeed in the financial world. While they never forget their past, all our trailblazing keynotes shared that they continue to work toward making life better for the common good in our communities.

Throughout the day, over 65 alumni shared their challenges and opportunities in 16 diverse career panels, including specific industries, navigating your career, and developing life skills balance. Our joint student and alumni program highlighted the power of networking, meeting our 1stGenYale Summer Bulldogs (interns, sponsors, and volunteers), and panel discussions.

Closing the day, Lise shared, "Working on this big idea since Labor Day, we did not know if it would work, but with a dream, we strived ahead. Michael, Barb, and I are thrilled that first-gen alumni made this conference happen by buying a ticket or making a donation. I am blessed to be part of this movement, but now, we want to hear from each one of you. *What can you do for this community at Yale?* With Yale, the YAA, and you behind us, we can make this happen. With a shared commitment to social justice, we can have a positive impact at Yale and the larger communities where we live and work."

Shantel Moses '97 comment was said by many, "This was my first 1stGenYale event, but it certainly will not be my last."

For more information on 1stGenYale, please [email](#) or visit their [website](#).

From the attendees:

“I am truly humbled to have been a part of such a dynamic event filled with passionate and curious individuals. The energy and enthusiasm truly have inspired me to continue to push the boundaries of what’s possible.” -- Abhishek Agarwal ’21 MBA

“Attending the conference gave me a new perspective of the challenges and opportunities the 1st gen/low-income students face. I am really impressed with the programming and impact the grassroots group has made.” -- Mary Cusick ’81

“What an incredible accomplishment in bringing together this diverse organization with a unified commitment to social justice. The call for the commitment of everyone was loud and clear.” -- Marv Berenblum ’56

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