

The Ethics Buzz

NEWSLETTER

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Business as a Force for Good: José Francisco Ávila and the Garifuna People



José Francisco Ávila, a Bentley University alumnus with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting, has transformed his journey from student to activist and entrepreneur—devoting much of his life and success to uplifting the Garifuna community, an Afro-Indigenous people of the Caribbean. Through his unwavering activism and strategic investments, Ávila has powerfully demonstrated great support in his activism and investments on their behalf proving that Business is a driving force for good.

The Garifuna Experience of NYC, founded by José Francisco Ávila, is a vibrant tourism destination brand dedicated to celebrating and promoting Garifuna arts and culture. With a bold vision to establish New York City as the epicenter of Garifuna heritage, the organization aims to weave this rich cultural identity into the fabric of the city, positioning it as a must-visit destination for travelers seeking authentic

and diverse experiences. Ávila's passionate advocacy for the Garifuna people has not only inspired communities across the nation but also earned recognition from institutions such as his alma mater, Bentley University, and the Hoffman Center for Business Ethics. His powerful journey continues to motivate aspiring leaders, entrepreneurs, and social changemakers alike.

When examining José Francisco Ávila's life and work through the lens of business ethics, two core principles stand out: transparency and ethical leadership. After migrating from Honduras to the Greater Boston area in 1969 with his family, Ávila faced a profound identity crisis. Though he knew he was Garifuna—an Afro-Indigenous people with a distinct language and spiritual traditions—he lacked a deeper understanding of his heritage, particularly how his ancestors came to settle in Honduras.

At age 15, living in Dorchester, Massachusetts—a predominantly Black neighborhood—Ávila found himself caught between cultures. White individuals labeled him “Black,” while Black individuals referred to him as a “foreigner.” In truth, he was neither and both, navigating a cultural limbo that led him to assimilate out of necessity and confusion. Through extensive personal research, Ávila uncovered the rich, complex history of his people. He came to embrace his identity as Black, Hispanic, and American—rooted in the proud, resilient Garifuna heritage. This journey of self-discovery ignited his life's mission: to advocate for and elevate the Garifuna community. His leadership, grounded in authenticity and ethical conviction, continues to inspire others seeking to reconnect with their roots and drive meaningful change.



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In his early years in Honduras, José Francisco Ávila grew up watching both of his parents serve as active and respected members of their community through their entrepreneurial efforts. It wasn't until his time at Bentley University that Ávila fully understood the significance of their work—not merely as informal trade, but as small, yet vital, businesses making a tangible impact in the real world. Bentley's education helped him reframe business not just as a series of models and results, but as a human-centered practice rooted in self-awareness and purpose. Ávila embraced this holistic view of business, using it as a foundation to build and amplify his experiences. With his education and insight, he turned his focus toward uplifting his own historically marginalized community. Over time, he has taken on many roles—educator, mentor, advisor, friend, and advocate—to guide fellow Garifuna individuals navigating the complexities of cultural identity and self-discovery. His work continues to empower others to reclaim their heritage and envision new possibilities for their futures.



In an effort to foster a sense of belonging and enhance the well-being of the Garifuna community in the United States—particularly in New York City—José Francisco Ávila and his twin brother founded the New Horizon Investment Club of New York.

This initiative was born from both José's education at Bentley University and a deep awareness of the economic struggles many Garifuna migrants faced. Although physically present in the U.S., many remained mentally and emotionally tied to Honduras, which often hindered financial progress and long-term planning.

The Investment Club aimed to break this cycle. By promoting financial literacy and encouraging a

forward-thinking mindset, the Ávila brothers helped shift the community's focus from short-term survival to long-term prosperity. Their efforts empowered members of the Garifuna diaspora to envision and pursue sustainable goals—financially, personally, and collectively—reclaiming agency over their futures and cultivating a renewed sense of purpose and community. As a result of sustained efforts toward empowerment and progress, José Francisco Ávila has proudly witnessed a remarkable rise in both homeownership and business ownership within the Garifuna community. As a first-generation college graduate, he also takes immense pride in seeing more Garifuna individuals pursue higher education—an achievement he sees as one of the most rewarding outcomes of the New Horizon Investment Club's impact. For Ávila, these milestones are powerful indicators of change, signaling a community that is not only surviving but thriving. While navigating the tension between ethics and profitability, Ávila remains steadfast in his belief that business is not solely about financial gain—it's about building trust and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships. He recognizes that cultural appropriation of the Garifuna people often stems from ignorance, but also believes that education is the antidote. His time at Bentley University and the courses he took there, he says, remain among his greatest assets—both in his personal journey and in the broader success of the Garifuna community. Ávila emphasizes the importance of social responsibility, mission, and purpose, all of which he came to fully understand through his education. Today, the future looks bright for the Garifuna people. Their cultural advocacy has not gone unnoticed—they were recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001, and recently, out of 1,100 cultural organizations in New York, they received a competitive grant to further their efforts. For Ávila and his community, this is only the beginning of a greater movement toward visibility, resilience, and pride thus proving that business is a driving force for good.



Business Ethics: Featured News



How to approach Business Ethics as Global Consensus Breaks Down

Harvard Business Review | MARCH 20, 2025

Global consensus is breaking down on ethical issues such as anti-bribery enforcement and corporate responsibility. This moment is a call for leaders to face these challenging realities or risk potential financial and reputational damage to their businesses. There are three strategies leaders can use to navigate these ethical challenges—before it's too late for their organizations: 1) Know your true values and pressure-test them; 2) embrace friction; and 3) “health check” expectations to drive ethical outcomes. By following these strategies, leaders can create constructive and healthy work environments that support ethical decision-making, even amid geopolitical risk and market volatility. [Read more »](#)



Empowering AI Development with Neurodivergent Perspectives for Ethical Innovation

AI Business | MARCH 31, 2025

Incorporating neurodivergent individuals into AI development enhances ethical innovation by leveraging their unique cognitive strengths, such as exceptional pattern recognition, attention to detail, and creative problem-solving. These qualities not only contribute to more accurate and inclusive AI systems but also introduce diverse perspectives that challenge conventional approaches. Despite their immense potential, employment rates among neurodivergent individuals remain disproportionately low, underscoring the urgent need for more inclusive hiring practices, supportive work environments, and broader recognition of their value within the tech industry. [Read more »](#)



Why CEOs Should Think Twice Before Using AI to Write Messages

Harvard Business Review | MAY–JUNE, 2025

What if CEOs started using generative AI to write employee messages? A recent study suggests most employees wouldn't even notice. But just because they can doesn't mean they always should. Relying too heavily on AI raises ethical questions around transparency, authenticity, and trust. Employees deserve to know when messages come from a real person—especially in moments that call for empathy or leadership. CEOs can still use AI to help with structure, tone, and clarity, but they should do so responsibly. Clear communication is important, but so is being honest about how it's created. [Read more »](#)

Farewell: Graduating Scholars



What you will miss most about Bentley?

Definitely the people here. I have met so many incredible individuals over the past four years, and it has been an amazing journey.

What are your future plans?

After graduation, I will be joining Rothschild & Co as an Investment Banking Analyst in New York City.

A Statement of Gratitude towards HCBE

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to be a part of HCBE. The experience has been invaluable, and I deeply appreciate the supportive and collaborative environment fostered here. I am especially thankful to Gail and Jeff for their guidance and leadership. Their support has had a lasting impact on both my professional and personal growth. The strong sense of community at HCBE has truly enriched my time at Bentley, and I am incredibly grateful for the connections and experiences that have shaped my journey.



What you will miss most about Bentley?

I think I will miss the routine and the amazing friendship/connections and memories I've made here; however, I'm a firm believer in not living in the past, so I believe even greater is ahead of me!

What are your future plans?

I am actively searching for future opportunities.

A Statement of Gratitude towards HCBE

I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Jeff and Gail for the incredible four years we've shared. Their dedication and effort in making the HCBE group feel like a true family have meant so much, and I deeply appreciate everything they've done to create such a warm and welcoming environment. Thank you, Jeff and Gail, for all the kindness, leadership, and dedication you've shown. You've made an unforgettable impact!

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Visit us!

HCBE has an extensive business ethics library, and all students, staff, faculty, and the general public are welcome to visit and make use of our resources as well as those on our website. [Read more »](#)



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About The W. Michael Hoffman Center for Business Ethics

Established in 1976 at Bentley University, the W. Michael Hoffman Center for Business Ethics (HCBE) is among the world's oldest and most highly-respected business ethics research and educational institutes.

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