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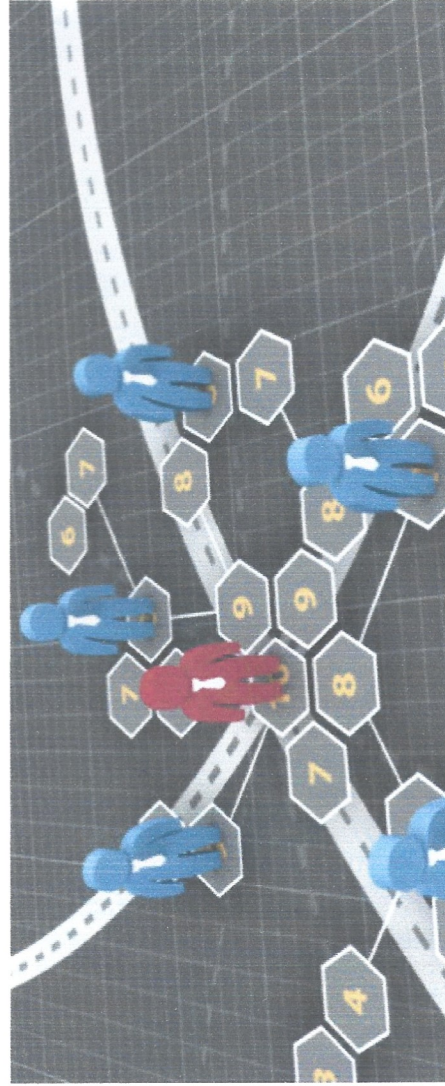
Chicago Lawyer Uses Business Degree To Fight For Social Justice

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One of the many ways business management professionals have found themselves to be a better candidate for senior management and CEO level work is by getting a J.D., according to US News Forty-six of the Fortune 500 CEOs hold law degrees



(Photo Courtesy of Juan Carlos Linares)

But that's not the reason Juan Carlos Linares earned a J.D. from DePaul University an LL.M (Master of Laws) in International Law from John Marshall Law School and an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

"I went to college for reasons of social justice," said Linares, who also earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Spanish from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "I grew up in a family of immigrants. My father's from Guatemala. My mother's from Peru. Having seen the poverty in their countries and the social injustices here in this country on the basis of race and income inequality, I went to college to have a career to remedy that."

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Linares chose a business degree as a "challenge to himself" after a 10-year career as a tax attorney for Deloitte LLP and working for Arthur Andersen LLP. His business degree helped him transition to his current job as the executive director of Latin United Community Housing Association (LUCHA), which builds affordable housing and counsels homeowners and buyers.

"My heart was in human rights but in Chicago there's not really a big platform for that. My career took a gratuitous detour into international nonprofit work."

That detour also led him to become a part-time teacher who works on the board of Legal Prep Charter Academies.

"When you receive a degree, it shows a commitment to excel at something. As an employer, I prefer people with degrees because it shows commitment, exchanging skills with others, being able to exchange ideas with others and that you have followed through."

Leadership courses, often labeled "soft skills," are underrated in his opinion.

"If you want social justice, let's say through a nonprofit organization, you have to be able to know how to run that nonprofit."

"Three required courses for an M.B.A. are accounting, microeconomics and statistics. It's important to know numbers, how to do a double-entry ledger and all those accounting skills to put together a business plan. But you've got to have both the business plan and be able to convince someone that you are the right person to implement that business plan. That's when leadership skills come into play."

Shamontel L. Vaughn is a professional journalist who has work featured in AXS, Yahoo!, Chicago Defender and Chicago Tribune. She's been an Examiner since 2009 and currently writes about 10 categories on Examiner.com.

