

## Welcome to the Nineteenth Century: Venezuelan Elections by Fernando Calzadilla

So that a person, is the same that an actor is,  
both on the stage and in common conversation;  
and to personate, is to act, or represent himself,  
or another, and he that acteth another,  
is said to bear his person, or act in his name;  
- Thomas Hobbes ([L](#))

On January 1, 1958 I saw warplanes dropping bombs over Caracas. Some fell in my neighborhood, not far from my own house. Luckily they didn't explode, and the damage they caused was limited to the impact of a heavy object dropped from high up. I didn't know that at the time. I was eight years old and didn't even know what bombs were. 23 days of street battles ensued, and I saw bleeding people running down the street, I dodged machine gun fire, and slept on the floor under the bed because the mattress was a good protection for stray bullets. On January 23 at 2 a.m. we heard an airplane, and minutes later cars started to beep and people rushed to the street to celebrate the dictator's departure with carnivalesque frenzy, including allusive floats. Marcos Perez Jimenez will be remembered as Venezuela's last dictator. A transitional civic-military junta in charge of government promised elections by the end of the year. From now on, we were to live in Democracy.

If we were to distill democracy's principle to its bare minimum we would be left with voting. Direct voting to decide a policy, to administer justice, or to reach a decision on common issues requires a sharing of space, that is, being there at the same time and place and having the authority to exercise the vote—authority being the right to do any action. Most historians agree that the Greek polis (a Western paradigm of democracy) functioned with five or six thousand voting members. This number permitted people to gather in one place and, most important, enabled them to recognize each other as members of the assembly. Anything beyond that number became an impractical way of doing politics. Participatory attendance had no representation; democracy then was a first instance of embodied practice.

The Greeks found their own solution to the problem of growing populations, which is not pertinent to the content and extent of this paper. What we do today to solve the impractical problem of deciding public matters by direct vote when populations range in the millions is representation, the most theatrical instance of politics. Acting in the name of another is the sustaining principle of representative democracy. Insofar as the sustaining principle is a theatrical device, it is no wonder that electing representatives constitutes such a theatrical event. From the impersonation of a character by the candidate to the act of voting, the entire process is theatrical. The theatricality might suggest direct engagement, as voting performs the action by which democracy is most directly exercised, yet it is also, paradoxically, the most alienating. The most democratic act consists of surrendering the right to authority, the right to do any action, by electing a representative who will act in our name.

But delegating authority onto an elected representative requires a mechanism of control and accountability. How is the elected person accountable and to whom? In 1844, Venezuelan political thinker Tomas Lander wrote “Los partidos políticos son indispensables en el sistema representativo” (political parties are essential to the representative system) (2). In November 1958, following Perez Jimenez's ousting, Venezuela established a representative democracy based on a cooperative agreement between the three major non-communist parties (3). Political parties should act as a buffer from democracy's paradox, which both demands and overrules embodied, participatory practice. However, as Venezuelan thinker and historian Jose Gil Fortoul wrote about political parties in 1890, “[no] se transforman las costumbres nacionales en solo unos meses de entusiasmo patriótico” (national customs don't change in just a few months of patriotic fervor) (4). Venezuelans believed in democracy, though, and through participation delegated authority. In December 1958, democratic elections were held with massive participation.

The theatricality of the electoral process extends to the practice of the democratically elected government or, one could argue, to all government. What makes the democracy especially interesting to analyze is the tension between what the constitution dictates (what people believe they are sustaining by voting), and what people practice (what I call the performance of social imaginaries). For example, in electing Hugo Chavez as President, people were sustaining democratic principles established in the 1961 constitution, but in reality, the practice indicates that the 19th-century caudillo social imaginary was at play. Chavez parading in military uniform, claiming inheritance to Ezequiel Zamora's legacy and, above all, Simon Bolivar's, reenacted the caudillo/savior scenario (5). Chavez has been a master at performing coup de théâtre. By breaking the protocol, he performs the space that exists between social actor and character. Social actor and character exist within particular scenarios that allow us to view them simultaneously. Characters are scripted but because they are embodied they are also open to change. The social actor's performance of a character carries with it the possibility for cultural agency, for potential outcomes. This potentiality is the space that exists between social actor and character. In the swearing-in ceremony on February 2, 1999, Chavez swore “over this moribund constitution,” thus separating the social actor (Chavez) from the elected president character—who was supposed to follow the protocol. In consequence, his action rendered the 1961 constitution ‘unlivable,’ in spite of being the discursive frame that gave legality to his presidency. What Chavez represents at both discursive and embodied level is a democratically elected 19th-century caudillo who knows well how the theatrical mechanism works and how to use the space between social actor and character to perform a particular social imaginary. In this way, he manages to embody both constitutional and de facto power mantled in an aura of constitutionality.

The constitution represents the discursive formation of a nation. That same day after swearing on the ‘moribund constitution,’ Chavez called an assembly to write a new constitution and re-found the Republic. The Supreme Court, through an unconstitutional act, declared the assembly the originary seat of power overruling all branches of government except for the presidency. On December 15, 1999, a new constitution was



Chavez holding the new Constitution.

voted, approved, and the Fifth Republic founded. The new constitution was printed as a little blue book that was distributed widely, becoming for the first time in history a manageable, popular, iconic representation. Everybody can hold it, carry it, and cite it. The street vendor stand [Fig 1] carries constitutions along with Harry Potter and other texts like denunciations of the CIA intervention or the *Putas de los Medios* (Media Whores) denouncing the role of the private media against Chavez.

Selected articles of the constitution are printed on milk packages sold in the famous Mercal popular markets the government supports (6). The image of Chavez holding the constitution, 'la bicha' as he calls it, has become the emblem of his supporters. [Fig 2]

They even paste his image on the little book. Thus he becomes the embodiment of the discursive and the imaginary: the constitutional caudillo. A character only possible through the theatricality intrinsic to the scenarios he reenacts, the independence hero who founded the nation and the democratic president. He is an expert communicator, a sort of preacher who can efficiently perform the space between social actor and character. He embodies the presidential character with a social imaginary of frankness and simplicity that is associated with people's common wisdom. His performance of power moves between solemn and simple, sometimes edging on vulgar with a touch of derision, reminiscent of the *gracioso* character in the Spanish Golden Age *comedias*. Most people in Venezuela, regardless of the acceptance or rejection they might have of the character, can certainly identify it. He performs Juan Bimba (7), the *pueblo* (meaning the nation but also the poor). I can also observe traces of Joselo Diaz, a popular TV comic, who, in spite of intellectuals' disdain for his performance, was one of the most influential characters in Venezuela's cultural landscape during the 1970s and 80s. He, too, represented a modern Juan Bimba,



The constitutional caudillo wearing the flag as a cape.

the humble *llanero* (person from the flatlands, stereotypical of the Venezuelan nationality) who rose to power through his wit. He besieged the media by constantly breaking the rules, walking off-camera, talking to the technicians, stepping out of 'character' to reveal the format—revealing the theatricality of the occasion. The majority of the population, which was increasingly becoming poor and urban, identified with the character because they saw in him a possibility for success. He is one of us and he succeeded; he can do whatever he wants.

Chavez, like Joselo, is fond of breaking the rules for the sake of raising a populist element within his constituency. "Con Chavez Manda el Pueblo," read big billboards across the nation. In the photograph [Fig. 3] we can see a reversal of the presidential character, an important one played in humble garb, Chavez playing a modern Juan Bimba. The *pueblo*, a reclaiming of the word he changes from meaning "poor" to meaning "sovereign," identify in him their aspirations. He is one of us, we can do it.

Chavez's embodiment produces what Pierre Bourdieu calls misrecognition, a paradoxical construal whereby power relations are perceived not for what they are and instead are rendered legitimate in the eyes of the beholder (8). Up to the December 1998 elections,

the discursive formations sustaining Venezuela—the constitution, the judiciary, and so on—claimed the country to be a representative democracy. Nonetheless, elected presidents, legislative authorities, and basic democratic processes—such as candidate lists—reflected not the interests of the “people” but the interests of the ruling elite. Yet the system was called democratic and ‘rendered legitimate.’ Since July 2000, after the so-called re-legitimizing elections, Venezuela has a federalist participatory democracy with legislative authorities elected through ‘open lists.’ Yet abstention on one side and Chavez’s handpicked candidates on the other leave little room for an accountable democracy. Nonetheless, social imaginaries reflect the workings of the entire population, not just the few in power. Social imaginaries make evident the contradictions and tensions that political pronouncements and promises attempt to hide. In Venezuela, the tensions are numerous—mostly perceived along class, gender, and racial differences. The performance of the popular social imaginary in electing president and representatives reenacts colonial monarchic values and 19th-century personalist politics (caudillism). That is why in Venezuela it is so difficult to trace ideological affiliations along party lines in the traditional spectrum of left and right, or for that matter between federalist and centralist forms of government. People tend to vote for the candidate that they perceive will protect their interests, whether there is any basis for this perception or not. Theatricality and style therefore become fundamental to the electoral process.

Some commentators assert that few traces remain from the colonial period and 19th-century politics (see Kornblith, 1993:5-6). I disagree. I contend that while constitutions are decreed and approved, laws drawn, organizational principles designed, and agreements signed, embodied practices responding to well established social imaginaries are resilient. Personalist politics dominate democracy’s political landscape through the embodiment of verbal and non-verbal pacts and alliances. Social imaginaries are slow to change in spite of the apparent discursive formations’ rapid implementation. Neither one is stable and in their interaction they affect each other. However, performative formations based on the enactment of social imaginaries are seldom observed for what they are.

By observing embodied behavior concerning candidates’ performance, voter participation and abstention, and social imaginaries at play, I want to problematize the democratic system’s legitimacy, when 76 percent of the electoral active population decides not to vote (9). This observation will highlight pressing questions, such as: which are the social imaginaries at play in electing a candidate? What is at stake in an election? What is the meaning of abstention from voting? Does Venezuela suffer a crisis of representation? Do social imaginaries influence the outcome of an election?

Of course, there is no simple answer to any of these questions and they apply not only to Venezuela but also to democracy in general. By focusing on the Venezuelan case from a performance studies perspective, I hope we can learn something about how embodied behavior tells a different history than the one we find in discursive formations.

### **The Candidate/The Performance**

Venezuela’s electoral processes between 1958 and 1993 would seem to indicate a strong dominance of two political parties, AD and COPEI. Charisma and personalist politics



The costume has been popular since 1993

dominated. Carlos Andrés Pérez, the most paradigmatic candidate of the era, was the first to campaign in a sport jacket; he had his canine teeth filed down to make him more photogenic; he wore sideburns, longish hair, big plaid blazers, and campaigned on foot with a light gait, sometimes so fast that his entourage had trouble keeping up with him. The campaign centered on his charisma and his way of greeting the masses became his trademark (both arms extended up and moving sideways). Little jumping-jack dolls with his likeness hung everywhere. He combined old-style flesh-pressing in rural areas and barrios (urban shantytowns) with a high visibility media campaign under the direction of electoral campaign advisor Joseph Napolitan, who had worked on the J. F. Kennedy and L. B. Johnson campaigns. His performance was the enactment of an old social imaginary: *El estado soy yo, la democracia soy yo* (I am the state, I am the democracy) (10) through the promise of a founding act, “La Gran Venezuela.”

It’s hard to imagine Hugo Chávez without Pérez. Although bitter enemies, Chávez learned from Pérez how to become a charismatic leader and outdid the master. After Chávez’s 1992 coup against Pérez failed, he was given two minutes of TV airtime to call his companions to surrender. He said that he could not achieve his objective, *por ahora* (for now), and the phrase stuck in people’s mind like hope for change. When he decided to run for President for the 1998 elections, the ‘*por ahora*’ was his best political weapon. Chávez mined the national imaginary to resurrect himself as the personification of the foundational hero, Simon Bolívar. Chávez modeled his charismatic personality on the military giant, the man of action who could take care of any situation. His performance of power highlighted his role as a trained soldier, as a man who could come to the rescue and become a protector, like Bolívar, the father of the nation. Chavez embodied the gendered image of virility, fatherhood, violence, and popularity. In the reenacting of the independence and federalist scenario, he triggered a social imaginary that played well at a time when democratic parties had lost credibility, the economic system needed revamping, and poverty soared to unprecedented levels. He filled the need for an action figure who could change the system and put the nation as the first priority, the warrior/martyr who could perform a sacrifice for *la patria*. His was a populist performance cloaked in nationalist discourse and embodied with brazenness in the way he revered Bolívar while enacting the 1960s revolutionary hero imaginary. His use of the military red beret was his political symbol. His followers modeled themselves on him, much as he modeled himself on Bolívar. They wore versions of the camouflage uniform he wore during the coup attempt. During carnival season after 1992, the most popular costume for children was Chávez’s uniform.

In Venezuela’s social imaginary, dictators stand for repression but also for peace and order (11). Juan Vicente Gomez and Marcos Perez Jimenez loomed close to Chavez’s promise for order, a new republic where the people had the first priority. Days before the re-legitimizing elections of July 2000, Chavez celebrated Independence Day (July 5) parading in a military uniform that brought memories of the Perez/Jimenez dictatorship. The reading that a theatre audience makes of a costume when watching a play is similar to the reading people made of this performance. It informed us about meanings that escape the narrative, meanings that are embodied rather than textual. In one performance, in a coup de théâtre, Chavez assumed control of the country’s civil and military authority

at a moment when his constitutionality was contested because he was not yet the president of the new fifth republic, nor was he the president of the already dismissed fourth republic. A few days later, he performed another mythic figure from the broader Latin American imaginary, the 1960s revolutionary. To close his electoral campaign he chose July 26, Cuba's national day in memoriam of *Asalto al Cuartel Moncada*, Fidel Castro's first action against the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. He wore fatigues and red beret like the ones in this 2004 picture.

The elections of 1998 made history for several reasons, but most important, of course, for the change of direction that signified the triumph of Hugo Chavez. On paper, Venezuela moved from representation to participation, but in reality the performance of the Chavez administration is presidentialist, personalist, centralist, and overall the enactment of the 19th-century caudillo social imaginary based on his incarnation of Bolívar's ideals, which is why he was elected.

### **The Act of Voting**

From 1958 through 1989, Venezuelan elections had basic principles: universal suffrage (all adults over 18 years old), secrecy of the ballot, and obligatory character. Parties identified themselves by color so those illiterate members of the population had little trouble identifying their preference. It was required that unused cards also be deposited in a sealed ballot box to ensure secrecy, but I remember having many to play with after election day. As a further precaution to guarantee the fairness of the process, each voter had the little finger of the right hand dipped in indelible ink so she or he couldn't vote again. Recipes to remove the ink varied from simple salt and lime to soap and soda to ammonia. Failure to cast a vote was penalized by suspending the citizen's rights to file any official paperwork, including getting a passport, for a period of time, but these measures were rarely enforced. Abstention was low for almost thirty years after 1958, but broken promises and declining living conditions eroded people's willingness to participate. Traditionally it was the lower classes and the *campesinos* who voted massively. They were also the first to abstain from voting. Sociological readings often attribute the act to apathy, ignorance, or just that daily survival prevails over voting.

But for me, those are condescending readings that take for granted certain political and social attitudes. Abstention from voting can also be observed as a form of protest that renders the system illegitimate. I am not proposing that this reading could be made across the board to other countries. I am talking specifically about Venezuela, where the endorsement of any candidate legitimizes a situation in which we find ourselves unrepresented in a *cul de sac* because the democratic mechanism is undermined by the social imaginaries at play and by the pacts established by those holding political and economic power, such as business associations and the armed forces. But democracy's rule is the vote of the majority, and that's the discursive formation we abide by in constitutional form. Democracy's rule also creates a space for those non-democratic mechanisms of control to operate under an aura of legality. Then, non-participation becomes a form of protest but also a double-edged knife. Since Chavez, the abstentionist trend has reversed. Chavez has consistently gathered the same number of votes in five elections and referendums between 1998 and 2000. Those votes have given him a slim

majority compared to the abstention rate. In the 1998 elections, a large portion of the professional middle class voted for Chavez. As the 'revolutionary process' took hold and new alliances changed, leaving out traditional actors from the political and economic elite, the lower classes started to vote again and the middle class started to abstain. Marches and protests against Chavez gathered millions of people in the streets. It could be safely affirmed that 4.7 million signatures were collected to call a referendum in December 2003. But, faced with the act of voting on August 15, 2004, the opposition's biggest fear is abstention. Why? Because the opposition does not have a counter-Chavez figure to offer. Because the social imaginary at play is the savior/caudillo, the action figure who can unite a large enough group of people to oust Chavez. Deep inside, perhaps, a large sector of Venezuelans are still disappointed with the democratic experiment. After all, only 46 years have been "democratic" of the 183 years since the declaration of independence. Because the figure of the caudillo is strong in the social imaginary, it outweighs the appeal for a democracy. *Ninis'* (undecided) main question is 'After Chavez, what?' (12) We Venezuelans have not figured out yet how the person we elect to act in our name is accountable for her/his actions. We know how to change the cast, how to put a new set of social actors onstage and then hope that the new players will be able to transform the spectacle for the benefit of the nation. But that would involve changing both the discursive and the performative character of the nation. Our constitutional claims would have to be in sync with the fantasies that voters enact through the electoral process. Disappointed with the change, we absent ourselves or change the players again by any means, including violence. If this is not the case, 'democracy's rule' prevails. Chavez supporters will vote and win the referendum with a slim minority in relation to the active population who could vote. They will impose both their social imaginary and discursive formation on the whole nation.

Is participation the answer? I don't know. If we expand the scope beyond Venezuela we recall that participation was not the decisive factor for those Floridians who voted in the United States 2000 presidential elections. Like many around the world, I protested the invasion of Iraq hoping that my body would count and it didn't. Too much is at stake at the ballot not to vote. Too much is at stake when in spite of voting, democracy fails. The political choices are fewer as globalization advances and former communist and socialist countries embrace democracy. Is Singapore's style of democracy the answer? Have we reached the political zenith with democracy and cannot envision another system of government? What would be the effect of (ac)counting for those who decide not to vote? If there is nothing better than democracy, it's not the best either. More than a crisis of representation, we suffer a crisis of accountability.

### **Social Imaginaries at play**

I said that for the August 15, 2004 referendum, Chavez opponents' biggest fear is abstention, because the opposition does not have a counter-figure to oppose him. They have no 19th-century caudillo figure, and people have no confidence in the institutions (political parties, civil associations). On the other side, Chavez has based his referendum electoral campaign on "Florentino y El Diablo," a poem set to music depicting a Manichaeic fight between the forces of good and evil (a familiar theme, we recall, promoted by President George W. Bush, who spoke of the "axis of evil" and the U.S. and

its “allies” as the forces of good). Composed by Alberto Arvelo Torrealba, the popular *llanero* musical form is identified by most as *the* Venezuelan emblematic music. The popular hero Florentino defeats Satan in a singing duel by the sheer force of his poetry and wit. The devil challenges him to no other place than Santa Ines, the place where federalist Ezequiel Zamora won a battle against centralist forces. But the imaginaries keep adding up. In the last verse, Florentino invokes the virgin for his protection:

“Sácame de aquí con Dios  
 Virgen de la Soledá,  
 Virgen del Carmen bendita,  
 sagrada Virgen del Real,  
 tierna Virgen del Socorro,  
 dulce Virgen de la Paz,  
 Virgen de la Coromoto,  
 Virgen de Chiquinquirá,  
 piadosa Virgen del Valle,  
 santa Virgen del Pilar,  
 Fiel Madre de los Dolores  
 dame el fulgor que tú das,  
 ¡San Miguel! dame tu escudo,  
 tu rejón y tu puñal,  
 Niño de Atocha bendito,  
 Santísima Trinidad.



Fig. 8. Acceptance speech, Miraflores



Fig. 9. The legend at the bottom reads: “Yo no soy un Libertador. Los Libertadores no existen. Son los pueblos quienes se liberan a si mismos” by Che Guevara.

Chavez opponents have used the virgin as a counter-icon to his association with Jesus. The virgin and the nation have had an enduring metonymy through the nation’s representation in a female body and through Venezuela’s patroness, *la Virgen de Coromoto*. Florentino’s invocation dismantles the use of the virgin as an oppositional figure. The holy trinity (“*Santísima Trinidad*”) is also an association Chavez supporters have made using Jesus, Chavez, and Bolivar. During his acceptance speech for the referendum in front of the presidential palace (Miraflores), the backdrop framing Chavez's discourse was the close-up of a hand holding the constitution and a crucifix. He wore a black suit, white shirt without a tie, an obvious resemblance to a pastor’s costume. His performance was emotional, contrived, solemn. He rose to the occasion and played to his supporters an act of faith. God is on my side.

By invoking Florentino, Chavez is bringing all these imaginaries into play and more. The “Battle of Santa Ines” is the name given by the *chavismo* to the August 15 referendum. Florentino represents the good singer, the poet, and the *llanero* who defeats the devil using his wit, not force. The virgin is on Florentino’s side. But in addition to that, as the campaign poster illustrates, the revolutionary Che is transformed into a Jesus-like figure while Chavez in fatigues and red beret holds a sword, the symbol of Bolivar and Zamora’s fight. Thus, Chavez is the embodiment of the holy trinity representing the revolutionary/Jesus, the independence hero, and Florentino. The main devil opposing

good Chavez is a mixture of Hitler and Bush (David and Goliath scenario at play) while the devil's acolytes in flames represent Venezuela's private media owners, business associations and traditional political party leaders. Even at the strictly rhetorical level, Chavez campaign uses an action verb in the slogan "*No Volverán*" while the opposition uses the abstract "*Si Por Venezuela.*" Religious, cultural, and military social imaginaries are triggered by Chavez's electoral campaign while his opponents are left with a Chavez-ousting unique motive that has no scenario at play other than changing cast without a promise.

### **Conclusion**

Democracy's paradox, which demands and overrules embodied, participatory practice, also creates a space for non-democratic means of control, the space that exists between social actor and character. Characters are accountable to the discursive formation that creates them and legitimizes their power. That is political accountability. The social actor's performance falls through the cracks of political accountability into moral responsibility. This is a slippery terrain where the welfare of the *res publica* (the public thing) and that of the individual might conflict, especially within an economic system that praises the individual over the collective. How is an elected official held accountable for her/his actions? Democracy has not resolved this flaw. But accountability is only second to electibility. The candidate's performance and her/his ability to trigger the resonant social imaginary at a particular moment are not guarantees that the person will be a just ruler. What we have to judge from a candidate is whether s/he has the ability to communicate and to act convincingly. As we are all influenced one way or another by performances that tap deeply into the social imaginaries and make claims backed by our legitimate discursive formations, the act of voting becomes a fragile moment, susceptible to costly errors—much more when the guarantor of the process's fairness can be manipulated by social actors out of character.

The terminology used to describe the process (actors, characters, social imaginaries, space, performance) points toward the theatricality that supports our political system. I don't think that theatricality is a hindrance to it. I don't think that we have a crisis of representation. Maybe we should understand better the theatrical space between actor and character, so we can understand better how political performance and embodied practices affect our lives, not just at the discursive level, but at the most personal one. Whether we can influence democracy's accountability is debatable, be it through direct participation in the act of voting or by absenting from it. What we need to make sure is that we are (ac)counted through our actions and that those actions are observed and understood as having meaning. Voting is about counting. We need to make sure that we all count.

### **Notes**

1. Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, Chapter 16, N° 4, p. 107, Oxford University Press, 1998
2. Tomas Lander, "Notas o Apuntamientos. Partidos," 1844, cited in Rey, Juan Carlos, "Esplendores y miserias de los partidos políticos en la historia del

- pensamiento venezolano.” Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia N° 343, 2003. Also available at <http://www.fpolar.org.ve/jcr/jcr1.html>
3. The agreement, known as *Pacto de Punto Fijo*, excluded the left to reassure Perez Jimenez's main economic and political partner, The United States.
  4. Jose Gil Fortoul, "El Hombre y la Historia," 1890, in Rey, op. cit.
  5. Zamora was a 19th-century caudillo who rose in arms to defend Federalism in the name of the poor and disfranchised. He was killed in battle and became an icon of the warrior/martyr paradigm.
  6. One package I saw had article 80 on it. It concerns the rights of old people to pensions, retirement, dignity, and autonomy.
  7. Traditionally attributed to a Cumanes madman around 1853. Juan Vicente Gonzalez uses Juan Bimba as fool. Since the early 1900s , the name is applied to typify the humble man from the lower class. In that sense was fixed and popularized by Andres Eloy Blanco in several compositions and in humorous form in the magazine *Fantoches* during the 1930s. *Accion Democrática*, “*el partido del pueblo*,” used it as its symbol during the 1963 electoral campaign.
  8. Pierre Bourdieu, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977).
  9. Municipal Elections December 2000, <http://www.cne.gov.ve/estadisticas/e001.pdf>
  10. The phrase goes back to Louis XIV king of France (*l'état c'est moi*), but also Jose Antonio Paez used a variant upon knowing of Bolivar's death: “*Ahora Venezuela soy yo.*”
  11. I have heard many Chavez opponents wish for a Pinochet who could bring order and prosperity to the nation, forgetting the thousands who died in the process.
  12. 'Ninis' are those undecideds who neither support Chavez nor endorse the *Coordinadora Democrática*, the self-appointed body representing the opposition. Ninis are estimated in 40 percent of the voting population.
  13. "I am not a Liberator. There are no Liberators. People liberate themselves."

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