

# Hugo Chavez, Humble Man Who Transformed the World

By [Rick Rozoff](#) and [John Robles](#)

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Hugo Chavez was a humble man from humble origins who did more than anyone else to lift up and unite the countries and the people of Latin America after being subjugated to decades of US imperialism. He was an inspiration and a beacon who will be sorely missed by many. Hours after the passing of the late President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez, Rick Rozoff spoke with John Robles about the legacy and the positive changes the late leader single-handedly brought to the world.

**Robles:** In our discussions of NATO expansion, US imperialistic movements all over the globe, many times we've talked about Hugo Chavez and his independence and the way he stood up to the US. Can you give us your opinions of the great achievements of Mr. Hugo Chavez?

**Rozoff:** The late and very much lamented, Hugo Chavez, was a remarkable man but in many ways remarkable despite the fact that he was not remarkable. That is, he was born in a very humble family, one that might even be described as impoverished. He was born in a village. He was part indigenous, that is of Native American Indian background, as well as reportedly of African background.

He was somebody who resembles people like you or me, our parents, our grandparents: people who have not gone to elite schools, people who have not been born in privilege and have been selected from birth, if you will, for positions of honor and power. A simple man who applied himself and developed his talents and his abilities, but most of all his dedication.

We have to remember that his election as president of Venezuela in 1999 set the stage for, heralded, a whole series of election victories and transformations throughout Latin America,

Central as well as South America, in countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Nicaragua, El Salvador, that he himself was the prime mover in setting up what is known by the acronym of ALBA (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) that he was a prime mover in setting up something by the acronym of CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), the Bank of the South, TeleSur (the television network for South America).

It was this one man instrumental in turning the tide of Latin America and in many ways of the southern hemisphere of the world that has been wracked by the neoliberalism of the 1990s.

And his actions have been described, I think very accurately, John, as having, on his initiative that we have seen the reversal of 200 years of the Monroe Doctrine.

A few years ago when Russian and Venezuelan vessels participated in a joint naval exercise in the Caribbean, it was exactly in that context it was remarked that this had basically reversed 200 years of the Monroe Doctrine, that is of Washington and the United States claiming exclusive sphere of influence throughout the entire Western Hemisphere.

And that this was the doing of Hugo Chavez, this humble former soldier, who became 14-year-president of Venezuela, one who read distributed the wealth from petroleum and other industries in the country to benefit the agrarian as well as the rural poor, or offered major economic assistance, including subsidized energy deals with countries throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, even parts of the United States, as a matter of fact, New York City.

He reconfigured the power relationships not only in the Western Hemisphere, but globally, in a way that could not have been foreseen. The head of state of a country that isn't a tremendously large one, isn't a tremendously powerful one, certainly not in military terms, but this is a man who made frequent visits to Russia, to the African continent, to the Middle East, to China, who cultivated relationships with the emerging multi-polar world, particularly those nations represented in BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. And he was arguably the most persuasive advocate for a newly emerging system of multi-polarity in the world of anyone I know.

**Robles:** Let me ask you about Nicolas Maduro the Vice President. Yesterday he said that Hugo Chavez's cancer was part of a conspiracy against him and basically he had been poisoned by enemies.

He also expelled two US military attachés from the country. Would you care to speculate on those accusations, that he made?

**Rozoff:** On the first accusation, you know that the suspicious incidence of cancer amongst independent Latin American heads of state - in Argentina, in Bolivia, earlier in Brazil, in Venezuela, even, one can argue, with Fidel Castro in Cuba - that there certainly is room for legitimate suspicion and investigation.

I might recommend a book that was published in the last couple of years with the intriguing title "Dr. Mary's Monkey", a book written about the late Mary Sherman and about CIA-linked operations in the early 1960s to actually develop types of cancer for use against political adversaries. So, it's not that far-fetched an accusation.

On the second score, the fact that two US embassy personnel have been declared persona non grata and expelled from or invited to leave Venezuela, I think what is of most concern to us right now is the fact that, should a new election be held because of the death of Hugo Chavez, that the United States would certainly kick into high gear the entire color revolution operation that has been employed in the past, in Yugoslavia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon and so forth. But we may see it done on a much more ambitious scale even than we saw in the countries that I've just mentioned. Just as Venezuela has been the bellwether, has been the prototype for the transformation that has occurred throughout Latin America in the last 14 years, so the US sees it, I suppose, as the transformation, the revolution, that needs to be reversed first.

**Robles:** Rick, if we could maybe about a minute more and I really appreciate you speaking with me at this late hour.

**Rozoff:** Thank you for the opportunity.

I think when talking about somebody like Chavez, who again was as humble and unpretentious a person as any of us could hope to be, that in speaking of him nevertheless, it is almost a paradox, I am reminded of the lines in the Bible, in the Gospel, that I don't feel worthy to lace his sandals.

I mean I can pay him a tribute, but it's a tribute of a very simple person who was immensely grateful and stands in eternal admiration of everything that he has done.

And all the people that he has made enthusiastic about the process that he in many ways initiated, and that his faith and the faith that he has instilled in them will continue. And I'm very much saddened with his demise. I'm very proud of his accomplishments. I'm very confident that Latin America and the world will continue towards a world that is really worthy of mankind.

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