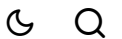




Electronic Voting Systems, Smartmatic, Jimmy Carter, and How an Election was Robbed



rights leader and persecuted politician on the truth behind the voting machines startup bought by Dominion



BY DEBBIE D'SOUZA · 11.23.20 · 14 MINUTE READ

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■ ~~highlighted that started the beginning of the end for Venezuela and I finally got the~~
 chance to do it. In light of the US election of 2020 and some of the voting machines that have come into question and their ties to the Venezuelan machines, this interview is perhaps more important than ever before. She was extremely brave to do this and I'm fully aware of the personal risk she is taking.

María Corina Machado was elected member of the National Assembly of Venezuela on September 2010, having obtained the highest number of votes of any candidate in the race. Machado ran as an independent presidential candidate during the opposition primaries held on February 2012, and is the head of Vente Venezuela, a political party founded in 2012.

Machado has been a firm and vocal critic of the regime in Venezuela. She is, without a doubt, one of the most important and recognized voices of the Venezuelan opposition.

What was your relation to the 2004 electoral process and the denunciation of fraud in Venezuela?

■ In 2002, five engineer friends who had never dreamed of becoming involved in politics decided to do something to reverse the profound damage Hugo Chavez was doing to our society. To that end, we created a citizens' organization: Súmate.

Chavez; militarist, coup leader and socialist, had come to power in Venezuela announcing that he was going to provoke the division and confrontation of the country, with an agenda where he would clearly go against democratic freedoms, as he did from day one. He attacked freedom of expression, private property, raided the courts and illegally modified our Constitution, to prolong his permanence and increase his power.

These social tensions began to generate reactions in many Venezuelans to defend our rights. At that time, we decided that it was necessary, as citizens, to organize and act in order to channel these social tensions peacefully, and we found in the Constitution the possibility of calling a referendum to recall the president —if signatures of 20 percent of Venezuelans registered in the electoral registry were obtained; this was equivalent to 2,400,000 signatures.

Everyone told us that we were crazy and had no political experience because we thought it

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exceeded all expectations and collected more than 9 million signatures. Immediately outraged, the regime annulled the whole process through a blatant disregard for the law. They illegally imposed all kinds of additional requirements that made it almost impossible to collect the signatures again, but we did it!

Chávez was forced to accept the call for the presidential recall referendum. But what Chávez would never allow was to lose that, or any other election. Therefore, at that very moment, a great operation began to prevent Venezuelan society, which was already mostly opposed to his mandate, from expressing itself freely. One of the first things the regime understood was that it had to completely control the electoral system, but never leave any traces of fraud.

To achieve this, they needed to change the existing electronic voting platform. The Venezuelan law required the acquisition of a new electoral technology to be through a bidding process but they found an excuse not to do so: the existence of a “new” technology that offered a “paper trail” (printed ballots of each electronic vote), which would allow the votes to be counted in physical form and supposedly prevent electronic fraud. **The newly created company, without any prior electoral experience, which was awarded the contract was Smartmatic.**

How do you describe the 2004 election in Venezuela? How was the vote counted? And when did you feel something was wrong?

No one can doubt that the 2004 recall referendum was a complete fraud, from start to finish. The regime invented “legal” devices to postpone what should have been an imminent referendum after delivering the required signatures. They needed time to execute many things, from intervening in the polls —which placed Chávez at a gigantic disadvantage-, to mounting an ostentatious propaganda campaign underpinned by mechanisms to distribute large sums of money through direct payments to the population and thus justify what would be the biggest fraud in our history.

But above all, they needed time so that a new electoral platform could be deployed and guarantee that Chávez’s regime would appear to be triumphant, without the slightest trace of the fraud committed.

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voting tables), arguing that, statistically, it was a more than sufficient sample.

On behalf of Súmate, I strongly opposed not counting all the ballots, but some representatives of the opposition parties themselves yielded to the proposal made by then chief of the National Electoral Council, Jorge Rodríguez (now sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury). The representatives alleged that if the ballots were counted and there was a discrepancy with the electronic votes, that would generate “problems at the tables.” This was an unheard argument by representatives of the opposition, but today it is explained by the fact that these people are shamelessly operating within and collaborating with the regime.

Another element that we denounced from the beginning was the fact that the voting machines printed out the results after an Internet connection was established, which Smartmatic assured was one-way—that is, it only transmitted information from the voting machine to the computer center. Subsequently, the transmission logs of the telecommunications company CANTV were accessed, and it was found that there was bidirectional information transmission before the results were printed.

For the recall referendum, more than 180,000 witnesses and volunteers were deployed in all voting centers. Additionally, Súmate hired the prestigious American firm Penn, Schoen & Berland, which validated an independent exit poll that was added to two other exit polls carried out by Venezuelan political parties. **Our analysis was clear: the higher the participation, the more convincing the victory for the opposition.**

August 15, 2004 arrived and with the passing of the hours we saw how in all of Venezuela people went out en masse to vote. The results of the three independent exit polls were very similar and ratified what we expected: 56-58% of votes for our YES option, and a little more than 40% for Hugo Chávez’s NO.

However, when the results began to be broadcast that night, the situation was very different. Surprisingly, the numbers changed to exactly the opposite: Chavez had an advantage of more than 15 points, contradicting all the exit polls that had been made during the day.

voting boxes that made up the statistical sample of 196 boxes that should have been opened to contrast with the result of each Smartmatic machine. **In most of the voting centers corresponding to those tables, at the time of the count, there were events of intimidation or violence, and, due to the instructions of the regime, the physical count of the ballots was not carried out.** In other words, there would be no way to demonstrate that the votes deposited coincided with the data from the Smartmatic machines unless the ballots were opened and counted in all the boxes, which were under the control of the National Electoral Council.

The regime reacted aggressively, putting hard pressure on all international actors, especially external observers, threatening a scenario of conflict and violence. The pressure that was unleashed against us at Súmate was brutal, both by the regime, as well as by opposition political actors who wanted to recognize the fraudulent results, and by some members of international electoral observation organizations who were willing to validate the results. **They found our position “uncomfortable”; it had to be silenced and if that was not possible, disqualified completely.**

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El Globo

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Caracas, viernes 11 de junio de 2004 Año 14 Número 4.717

Bs 500 en todo el país de lunes a sábado

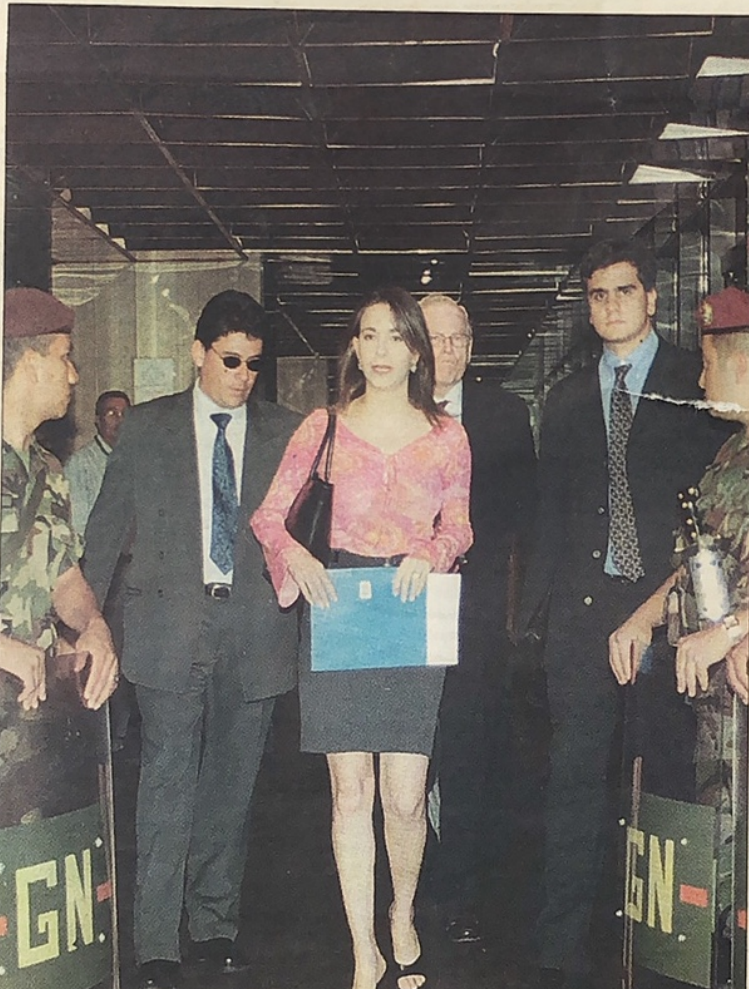
Ezequiel Zamora lanza alerta de fraude en el CNE

Suenan las alarmas

Consejo Nacional Electoral fue ayer el epítome de una alarma de fraude, cuando el vicepresidente Ezequiel Zamora denunció la existencia de planes para despedir a 117 empleados de áreas claves y sustituirlos por simpatizantes del oficialismo. El listado incluiría direc-

tores de líneas, informática y otras jefaturas determinantes para el proceso de referendo revocatorio. La denuncia de Zamora recibió la respuesta del presidente del CNE, Francisco Carrasquero y del rector Jorge Rodríguez, quienes negaron tal posibilidad, calificando el su-

puesto listado de falso y prefabricado. Una hora antes de su denuncia, Zamora había asomado —a título personal— la factibilidad de una elección presidencial entre el 12 y el 19 de septiembre, negando la posibilidad de una “megaelección” para diciembre /3



Imputada por conspiración

María Corina Machado, representante de Súmate, fue imputada por la fiscal sexta nacional Luisa Ortega. “Mi deseo es facilitar la investigación. Uno de los delitos que se me atribuye es el de conspiración, contemplado en el artículo 132 del Código Procesal Penal, el cual establece una pena de 8 a 16 años de prisión”. La eficiente representante de Súmate calificó el hecho de absurdo, ya que la organización lo que pretende es la reafirmación de la democracia, a través de la libre expresión de los ciudadanos. La fotografía es de Leonardo Noguera /5

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What did Jimmy Carter and The Carter Center see in Venezuela that made them believe the votes were legitimate?

I cannot completely answer this question. I don't know what information President Jimmy Carter received, or what instances he had access to. **I can say that the Carter Center, during the process of validating the signatures to call the recall referendum, was absolutely permissive with a Chavez-controlled National Electoral Council.** This body arbitrarily added more and more requirements for the validation of the signatures, which had already been collected, in a desperate attempt to annul such a large number of them so that the goal was not met.

To our profound disappointment, The Carter Center published a report on the signature collection process and the validity of the signatures, which had very serious statistical shortcomings. In response to our strong demand and announcement that we would publicly denounce it, they proceeded to correct it.

Later, hours after the referendum, on August 16 or 17, 2004, **in a private meeting in my office, the electoral manager for Venezuela at The Carter Center, acknowledged to me, with witnesses present, that indeed, the opening of the 1% of the boxes to validate the ballots with the electronic vote had not taken place.** He also told us that he was forbidden to talk about that issue with us.

Carter Center observers had real-time access to the physical audit at only 6 polling places around the country, only in 1 of the ballots were counted. In short, the National Electoral Council provided The Carter Center with copies of the audit reports from only 25 of the 4,766 automated polling places —and in most of this small group, the ballots had not been counted during the audit.

In the end, I believe that one element that influenced The Carter Center's decision to ignore all the evidence of the regime's abuses in the electoral process and the evidence of fraud was **that they considered that for the sake of "governance of the country" and to seek "social peace", it was admissible to sacrifice justice and truth.**

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alone or was there international support?

To have been able to call the 2004 referendum was a civic feat, a demonstration of citizen strength committed to the democracy of our country. I was convinced that we could win it, because of the magnitude of the enthusiasm that was generated and the organization achieved, and also because of the strength and the courage of the Venezuelan citizens.

But yes, we must recognize that we all underestimated, not only the capacity for fraud that Chávez had but also the support of a great operation that included, of course, international actors.

The 2004 recall referendum was a sophisticated fraud. They carried out diverse practices that altered the results, and when added, layer upon layer, they configured a gigantic fraud. **This included the bulging of the electoral register by 21%, incorporating people who were dead and foreigners who did not qualify to vote.** Another practice was instilling fear in the population, both through the public campaign and in the presence of regime agents in the voting centers, many of whom were installed next to the Smartmatic machine, eliminating the secrecy of the vote. **But unquestionably, the biggest fraud was an electronic platform that generated an electronic fraud, which was conceived to leave no trace; and when a trace existed—that is, the paper ballot—they made sure that it was not audited before destroying it.**

In the weeks following the recall referendum, many technicians and statisticians began an in-depth analysis of the election results. The results are overwhelming: **statistically, those numbers are impossible to explain.** Among the various studies, there is one carried out by Professors Luis Pericchi and David Torres where they apply the Newcomb-Benford Law, a statistical distribution that is used to verify the veracity of electoral results. Their finding was shocking:

“The conclusions are quite clear: The NO votes (in favor of Chávez) in

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hypothesis, that is, the hypothesis that it complies with the Law is 1.34×10^{-36} , virtually 0).” In other words, there were a huge number of votes added to the NO option; that’s why they could not allow the ballots to be counted.

I have no doubt that this operation by the Chavez regime was advised and accompanied by the Cuban regime, both in the design and deployment of propaganda, as in the mechanisms of terror and social control.

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Comprará el CNE

12 mil máquinas "cazahuellas"

LOS EQUIPOS CAPTADORES serán instalados en los centros de votación para evitar el voto doble en todo el país. Definitivamente, no permitirán la llamada "auditoría en caliente", pero los actores pueden exigir revisiones previas de las máquinas, auditar después del proceso e impugnar si no le cuadraran las cifras. Los venezolanos en el exterior pueden votar siempre que estén inscritos en el REP aquí y allá. En la pregunta a responder el SÍ será para la oposición y el NO para el Gobierno. Se confirmó la noticia publicada por Quinto Día, hace tres semanas, sobre la ponencia que permite a Chávez la reelección inmediata si perdiera el referendo. p22

Secretos de una reunión en Miraflores

Súmate, el gran enemigo



EN EL SALÓN AYACUCHO. Chávez convocó el jueves, día de las cifras, a dirigentes del MVR, Comando Ayacucho

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What happened to you, personally, for denouncing the fraud in Venezuela?

I had no political experience whatsoever, let alone public exposure, when we created Súmate. In a matter of days, we organized tens of thousands of volunteers across the country and launched a huge public awareness and mobilization campaign. That immediately put me in the spotlight, and someone had to face the media. I remember the day that the date for the nationwide collection of signatures was agreed upon; the press conference was called and more than 100 journalists were waiting for a statement. I had to take a deep breath and go out into the arena, even though I had never given an interview before in my life.

That made the regime take all its anger out on me. Soon after, at a press conference by Jorge Rodríguez, chief of the National Electoral Council, furious at the evidence and the denunciations that we were making, he pointed to the camera with one finger and said: “You, Maria Corina Machado, will end up understanding what is going to be imposed here and what will happen here.” That is to say, they personified me as the enemy to be defeated.

Over the years I have understood why, if I was not a political opponent, the attack was so fierce. The reason is that **we, at Súmate, questioned the basis of the legitimacy of the Chavez regime’s supposed majority in popular support, and on which they justified so many atrocities and crimes against its citizens. We not only questioned that reality, but we proved it to be false.**

They began a brutal campaign, against me, against my family, against Súmate, using all the means of the State to disqualify us, above all morally. Finally, they initiated a legal process, accusing us of treason and conspiracy.

A few days after the recall referendum, I traveled to the United States to a *Miami Herald* conference, to speak on a panel with Jennifer McCoy of the Carter Center. Minutes before my conference began, I received information from my lawyer that there was a warrant for my arrest. I had hundreds of people in front of me waiting. I turned off my phone and told the truth.

That night my mother called asking me not to return to Caracas; it was difficult for her to understand that if I did not do so immediately I would not be able to return later. I changed

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From 2004 to 2017, Smartmatic held 14 elections in Venezuela. Did they maintain the same system and procedures as in 2004, or did they become more sophisticated?

Indeed, if these criminal systems learn anything, it is not to make the same mistake twice. With each process, they become more sophisticated and more difficult to detect. Soon after, we realized that there was no single reason that explained all the fraud, but that it was a sum of events and mechanisms. Each one brings a component of the fraud, and together, the result is devastating.

For 2005, a parliamentary election was due and conscious that popular repudiation against Chávez continued to grow, the regime decided to incorporate an even more perverse mechanism to the system, which consisted in connecting the fingerprinting machines —a device that verified the identity of the voter and registered their fingerprint— with the Smartmatic voting machine. The supposed purpose of this was to prevent a person from voting more than once, but in practice it had another: to end voter secrecy.

Jorge Rodriguez and Smartmatic’s managers stated that this was not possible, because Smartmatic’s machines had an internal procedure that altered the sequence in which votes were cast, and therefore, even if the fingerprint machine did keep order, it was impossible to know how each person had voted.

On November 23, 2005, ten days before the election, in a National Electoral Council facility in Caracas, the regime authorities surprisingly agreed to conduct an audit on a Smartmatic voting machine, with the presence of observers from the European Union and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Technical expert Leopoldo González was registered by an opposition party to participate in this audit and carried out a voting simulation with those who were present. Then, Gonzalez took the Smartmatic machine, manipulated it for a few minutes, and addressing those present he said: “You voted A, you voted B, you voted C”. It was as if lightning had struck the place. The National Electoral Council representative stopped the audit and tried to prevent a record of the events that had occurred being taken—which showed, in real-time, and in front of witnesses, that the Smartmatic machine did keep the sequence of the vote and therefore, its

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This also demonstrated that Smartmatic’s directors had lied to the country. To our surprise, several opposition parties wanted to prevent this information from being made

public, because they had decided to participate in that election no matter what. However, the information became known and generated such national repudiation that the parties finally decided not to participate in an election where the vote was not secret. Hours before the election, Jorge Rodríguez proposed to eliminate the fingerprint capture machines, but the collective indignation was already so great, that the country repudiated the process.

Obviously, the OAS report on this 2005 election was devastating. Faced with this, a couple of very high-level leaders of an opposition party took it upon themselves to ask and get the OAS to eliminate a good part of the report, with the argument that Venezuelans would not want to vote in the 2006 presidential election if that information, which was true, was made public. **And so, once again, another part of Hugo Chávez’s and Smartmatic’s fraud in Venezuela was buried from public view.**



What can you tell me about the founders of Smartmatic Antonio Mujica

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I cannot say anything about the political or ideological preferences of these people, but what is clear is that they are part of the system that has been configured around the regime. These criminal systems end up co-opting people with very different ideas, even breaking people who at the time were honest, using perverse methods such as threats, blackmail, extortion and corruption. **But if there is one thing we must bear in mind, it is that whoever receives a penny from the mafia system automatically becomes its hostage; forever.**

What recommendation do you have for Donald Trump and his lawyers?

My recommendation is for the citizens of the United States, who are part of a society that has been an example in the rigorous application of justice, for the strength and independence of its institutions, and in the defense of Freedom.

More than 20 years ago, we Venezuelans said: “Venezuela is not like Cuba, it will never be like Cuba”, today we see that Venezuela is worse off than Cuba. Venezuela is an occupied nation, a country with a failed and outlawed regime that has surrendered our territory to organized crime and global terrorism, which serves as a hub for criminal operations that spread to the rest of the region to destabilize democratic governments.

Today we see with enormous concern how many Argentines say “Argentina is not Venezuela”, or Spaniards who say “Spain is not Venezuela”, and **the reality is that none of the Western democracies are safe from a continental operation of this magnitude, in which there are so many interests that seek to undermine the very basis of a society, which is trust in its institutions.**

Therefore, as a Venezuelan, if there is one lesson I can pass on to every American, **is that the defense of truth and the predominance of justice cannot be terminated, or dismissed, by excuses or arguments of any kind.** When a society carries out an electoral process, it requires knowing the truth in order to have confidence in the results, so that the election has legitimacy and to preserve democratic coexistence.

If justice is denied in the name of “peace”, that society will inevitably

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For centuries, the people of the United States have managed to settle their differences and set an example for the rest of the western world through the rule of law, their attachment to justice, and the strength of their democratic institutions. As always, they will prevail again.

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Author

Debbie D'Souza

Debbie, Venezuelan, is a writer, singer, director, executive producer, and an advocate for freedom. She writes a weekly op-ed for El American. During the Obama years, Debbie was active in her community and served as president of a local TFRW Club // Debbie, venezolana, es escritora, cantante, directora, productora ejecutiva y defensora de la libertad. Escribe un artículo de opinión semanal para El American. Durante los años de Obama, Debbie estuvo activa en su comunidad y se desempeñó como presidenta del Club TFRW

8 comments



Brian Davies says:
11.23.20 at 11:07 pm

Absolutely amazing and scary investigative piece of journalism. I will share this far and wide. Please keep up your

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