



The Men behind the President's Birth Certificate

Descripción

An alleged birth certificate of Nicolas Maduro Moros—record 2823, page 435, stating that the current president of Venezuela was presented in that registry on November 27, 1964, i.e. two years and four days after his birth in the capital of Venezuela—is supposed to be in the civil registry of La Candelaria Parish in downtown Caracas. However, even if the existence of this document is verified, the true nationality of the President would remain a mystery.

Since he was forced with forceps as president of the Republic in January 2013, during the invisible agony of Commander Hugo Chavez in Cuba, and later on, after the death of the revolutionary leader at the Military Hospital of Caracas, when he won the presidency in April 2013 after a fierce election, the birthplace of Nicolas Maduro became more a State issue than a subject of public controversy. The current Constitution provides that the president must be Venezuelan by birth. If it were established that Maduro was born in another country and has another nationality, opposition factors estimate that even the obstacle of a Supreme Court firmly controlled by *chavismo* could be overcome to take an express path to remove president Maduro from office and call for new elections.

The estimate was not unfounded. There are plenty testimonies ensuring that the former foreign minister and current president had a close relationship with neighboring Colombia during his childhood and adolescence. An [article published in 2015 on this website reported on a family home in Cucuta](#), a city in Norte de Santander Department, where the mother of the president, Teresa de Jesus Moros, was born. Documents published by various media show that the father, Nicolas Maduro Garcia, with ancestors in the former Netherlands Antilles, studied in the town of Ocaña, in the same Colombian province. The *chavismo* hierarchs barely contributed to solve the genealogical puzzle of Maduro, since by trying to give convincing explanations about the president's place of birth and his identity, they boosted the discussion with frequently contradictory versions. For example, in 2013, the governor of the State of Tachira Jose Vielma Mora said that Maduro was born in El Palotal area of the town of San Antonio del Tachira, bordering Colombia. Hermann Escarra, the favorite jurist of *chavismo*, has referred to the president on several occasions, including in some sessions of the current Constituent Assembly, as "Nicolas Alejandro Maduro Moros," including a middle name that is not associated to the president not even in the papers kept in the Supreme Court, nor in his file of the National Electoral Council.

In the midst of all these events, Maduro's birth certificate became a key piece to decipher the enigma. After a year and a half of intensively checking the civil registries of Libertador Municipality in the west central area of the Venezuelan capital, the team of **Armando.info** was on the trail of the document.

Subject to the Kakfian caprice of those responsible, the intentional disorder of completing personal proceedings in Venezuela, and various statements from spokesmen of the *Chavista* regime -like Vielma Mora, who in 2013 referred to three different parishes as the place of birth of the Venezuelan ruler in separate interviews, the team members began to take turns and search in all the registries of Caracas until mid October 2016. Then a decision of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice revealed that the president was registered in La Candelaria.

Hence, a case that is perhaps unusual arose — a president whose place of birth was declared by decree. But the decision made it possible to focus the tracking efforts on that registry, located on Avenida Universidad of the Venezuelan capital city.



Every other Friday, as established by the arbitrary consultation rules of the registry, a member of this team checked the volumes where the presentations of newborns are recorded. It was decided to review the books from 1962 to 1967, under the premise that in order to begin his first studies, Maduro should have been enrolled in preschool education with an official document sometime during his first

five years of life. There was no need to go that far. A volume of late 1964 containing scanned records only held the birth certificate of the president of Venezuela.

To request this document at the registry of La Candelaria, the interested parties must be there from Monday to Thursday before 7:00 AM to get one of the numbers distributed to make a request. Only 80 numbers are distributed and some people arrive at 4:00 AM to make sure that they can complete the proceeding in one day. At the peak of the protests against the regime, from April to August 2017, some people even spent the night to be among the first. The increase in requests for birth certificates corresponded to the exodus of the Venezuelan people during recent months.

Many indexes of the books checked by the **Armando.info** team were torn out. When, as a test, the team requested the registry one of the certificates previous to that of Nicolas Maduro, corresponding to Jose Eliseo Arias and recorded in the same book, it turned out that the original volume was not available for consultation by the public, though you could photocopy the scanned document. This procedure confirms the secretiveness and mystery around the volume containing the birth record of the president of Venezuela.

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A Matter of State

The registrar of La Candelaria Parish, Camilo Angel, does not specify where Maduro's birth certificate is. He says: "It is protected, but I do not know where it is. Sebin (*Editor's Note: acronym for the Bolivarian Intelligence Service*), as a political police, assumed the protection of this information. But I do not know if Sebin, the Presidency of the Republic, the Mayor's Office of Libertador, or the National Electoral Council has it."

Maduro's certificate is in one of the few scanned books of 1964.

Angel assures that he has seen it, because he has signed copies thereof many times when Maduro was a representative of the Assembly—he would become the president of the National Assembly a little more than a year after, from January 2005 to August 2006. But now, he says: "It is confidential information," as it is "a matter of State. He is the president of the Republic", he affirmed.

"It was the same with Rafael Caldera, Jaime Lusinchi, and others. It is confidential information and that has happened with all the presidents of the Republic, not only with Nicolas."

Manuel Gil, head of the Directorate of Civil Registries of Libertador Municipality, did not give news about the birth certificate either. He said that it is beyond his powers. But minutes later he called the registrar of La Candelaria to warn him about this search precisely when a member of the **Armando.info** team asked his subordinate why do they only show a scanned copy.

Unlike others, Maduro's certificate is in one of the few scanned books of 1964. It is, according to the registrar, a pilot digitization plan that has included—by chance—the volume containing the information on the birth of the head of state. "Since we are in a transition there is no order. Everything has been digitized in Antimano and El Valle, but we do not handle that specific information," he affirmed.

Armando.info has not been able to verify the authenticity of the document through a technical expert's test. However, we established that the original book is outside the registry building in La Candelaria, kept inside a safe, under the responsibility of Irving Gonzalez, director of the National Registry Office. This office is attached to the National Electoral Council (CNE) and operates on the second floor of the headquarters that the voting agency has in the old Caracas Teleport building in Plaza Venezuela, Libertador Municipality. Gonzalez, a CNE employee since December 2014, was temporarily appointed director on May 10, 2017.

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Apart from Camilo Angel, Manuel Gil and Irving Gonzalez, only a few from the National Registry Office know why there is only a scanned image of the President's birth certificate available for consultation. This team could not solve the mystery. But to get to the office of any of them, you have to go first through Gutierrez's filter, the figure who acts as a guide through bureaucracy in every Venezuelan public office.

To be precise, Gutierrez is much more than a guide. The neighbors of the alley that adjoins the back of the registry building, where there is a secret entrance, affirm that he is the guardian of the place. The taxi drivers who make their living in the alley call him when they see suspicious persons hanging around the area to find out if he knows them. On several occasions Gutierrez has run out thieves who steal spare parts or force the entrances of the adjoining businesses. He has done it at night and with punches, so they say, and he also warns the workers of the neighboring premises when he has seen a break-in attempt when awakened by the noises.

Some say that he used to be a policeman. Others avoid explaining why he lives in the registry office of La Candelaria. However, he once said that he was there taking care of Maduro's birth certificate. That night—according to the witnesses who told this history on the condition that their identity was protected—he had drunk too much.

During the day, Gutierrez—a thin, dark-skinned man with imposing tone of voice—opens the registry office, organizes queues, hands out copies of requested birth certificates, and even parks Camilo Angel's car. He is his right-hand man. They both get in and out the register from the back door. Gutierrez did not accept to be interviewed and delegated the authorization to Angel.

From afar

That birth certificate has only been seen from afar when the president of the Electoral Power, Tibisay Lucena, showed it during an interview with journalist Vladimir Villegas from Globovision, on October 10, 2013. Lucena wanted to settle the strong controversy that arose about the nationality of Maduro, who had been invested as head of state six months earlier, after winning the elections called to elect the successor of the late President Hugo Chavez by a close margin.

Others assumed that he had, at least, double nationality, because his mother, Teresa, was born in that city bordering with Venezuela

His detractors and a good part of the opposition press maintained then that he was Colombian. The former representative of Panama to the OAS, Guillermo Cochez, even showed an alleged document that claimed that the president was born in Cucuta exactly one year before the date of birth recorded in Venezuelan documents. Others assumed that he had, at least, double nationality, because his mother, Teresa, was born in that city bordering with Venezuela. All the suspicions seemed to be true because in addition to the foregoing, Nicolas Maduro and his older sisters, Maria Adelaida and Josefina, has consecutive identity card numbers. And they are registered to vote in San Pedro Parish, a lower middle-class area in southwest Caracas, where the ruler lived part of his childhood.

Lucena, a trusted figure of Chavismo in the electoral body, did not offer much information about the

alleged official document. She only said that Nicolas Maduro was born in a polyclinic in Caracas and was registered in La Candelaria Parish. The official confirmation of the location of his alleged certificate was issued in October 2016, when the Constitutional Court, in response to a request for "unnamed action for constitutionality control" filed by Maduro's legal adviser at that time, Elvis Amoroso, confirmed that Maduro is a Venezuelan citizen by birth, was presented at La Candelaria Parish, has no other nationality, and "has fulfilled and meets the requirements provided for in articles 41 and 227 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to exercise the position of Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela."

However, a thick veil still hides the document from researchers and onlookers. The birth certificate has turned into one of the most protected secrets of the Caribbean, and is treated with the disguise of the great mysteries treasured by the Vatican in its archives. The zeal has contributed to boost suspicions.

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