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Hugo Chavez (28 July 1954 – 5 March 2013) was Venezuela's first multiracial president. He was the President of Venezuela from 1999 until his death in 2013. Chavez was the first Latin American president to proudly embrace indigenous and African ancestry; and under his 14-year leadership he initiated programmes and policies that challenged the historical legacy of racism and discrimination that plagued the country. He drastically reduced poverty and uplifted the Afro-Venezuelan communities through his radical socio-economic programs.

In 2005, Hugo Chávez led Venezuelan lawmakers to establish May as Afro-Descendent Month, and May 10 as Afro-Venezuelan Day (El Día de la AfroVenezolanidad). That day was chosen to honor Black revolutionary hero José Leonardo Chirino, who led an insurrection against Spanish colonists in 1795.

Furthering its commitment to ending racial disparities, the Chávez administration passed the Organic Law Against Racial Discrimination in 2011, which holds the power to establish “mechanisms to prevent, respond to, punish and eradicate racial discrimination by any person, group of persons, public authorities, and private institutions, and civil, economic, political, cultural, and social organizations.” And also in 2011, Venezuela changed its national census to allow its citizens to identify themselves as Black for the first time. Chávez died in Caracas on 5 March 2013 at the age of 58.

Here are ten quotes by Chavez:

1. “When we were children, we were told that we have a motherland, and that motherland was Spain. However, we have discovered later, in our lives, that as a matter of fact, we have several motherlands. And one of the greatest motherlands of all is no doubt, Africa. We love Africa. And every day we are much more aware of the roots we have in Africa.... Racism is very characteristic of imperialism. Racism is very characteristic of capitalism. Katrina is—indeed, has a lot to do with racism—no doubt about it. Hate against me has a lot to do with racism. Because of my big mouth, because of my curly hair. And I’m so proud to have this mouth and this hair, because it’s African.”
2. “Christopher Columbus was the spearhead of the biggest invasion and genocide ever seen in the history of humanity.”

3. "The eagle does not hunt the y."
4. "We must confront the privileged elite who have destroyed a large part of the world."
5. "Mutual respect! That's what it takes to be friends."
6. "I hereby accuse the North American empire of being the biggest menace to our planet."
7. "Yesterday the devil came here. Right here. And it smells of sulfur still today."  
(On George Bush, 2006)