

## A disguised assassination in long-suffering Guatemala

By Karen Fischer

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Your name is Hugo Arce. Your body turned up on January 23, 2008, lifeless. A journalist, a poet, a writer – a controversial man – polemic, dreamer, sentimental yet with great love for your fertile and long-suffering Guatemala. Two years have passed now marking the anniversary of your not physically being here, but your ideas remain, they were captured handwritten on a piece of paper, in your struggles, and in your thoughts.

Loved and hated. You had three daughters that turned out with a valor worthy of their parents' genes. They have not wavered; much like you, they continue fighting. The CICIG (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala) has taken your case.

Hugo, did you really orchestrate your own assassination? Did you hire a hit man to drop you off at a hotel in the capitol – room 815? Blood type O positive appeared in that room and the DNA test says that it wasn't yours; that it was someone else's according to the results that came from forensic examination in Spain. Did you arrange that someone else's blood be placed in your room? There were none of your fingerprints on the .38 caliber weapon which they found on the bed, nor were fingerprints found anywhere else in that room, save on a coffee-cup. Could it also be that you ordered the hired assassins to clean up the fingerprints?

The hotel elevators were out of order and the surveillance videos were edited. Did you also tell the hit men to disable the elevators and edit the videos? Your body was dragged, from the bathroom door to the bed. Did you also order the hit men to drag your body? They are so intelligent that they failed to realize that with Luminol even having cleaned the blood, it will still show up. The infamous prosecutor Alvaro Matús, is now accused not only by us, but also for manipulation of the crime scene in the murder of Victor Rivera – he hadn't even requested the most basic tests for the enquiry.

Can you explain to me how they managed to remove the barium and antimony from your hands, which had a lower rate than for someone who has fired a weapon?

Those of us that knew you and were your friends know that you didn't type on a computer but rather on a typewriter, that you didn't send emails, or text messages. But they handed over the backup of your computer with the chronogram of your death, it said: "6:30 am. If you don't answer me, email the article 'Why I took my life' to Cisco. Give three copies to the media. 7:30 am. Show up at the hotel and state that you are dead. 9:00 am. Go to Diario La Hora to place a paid announcement in the newspaper. Go to Prensa Libre to take care of your obituary."

These were the instructions left to Haydee Evangelina Reyes Lopez, the former executive secretary to President Alvaro Colom. Haydee who took you to the hotel, who apparently had already sold your house, and no one knows where she is.

Nietzsche said it so well, my friend Hugo: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." Yet isn't that just what occurs in the magical realism of Guatemala?

Karen Fischer represents the family before the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala in the case of Hugo Arce. This article was originally published on January 28 in El Periodico as "Y ¿tu también te mandaste a matar?" It was translated for The Daily Star by Gabriela Arce and Robert Powel.