

Questioning the Author: Simon Bolivar

Directions: Below is an excerpt from Simon Bolivar's *Cartagena Manifesto* from *El Libertadore*. Read the excerpt and answer the following questions "questioning" Bolivar's intentions through this writing.

Cartagena of the Indies, 15 December 1812

My purpose in writing this memorial is to spare New Granada the fate of Venezuela and to redeem Venezuela from the affliction it now suffers. Please deign, fellow citizens, to accept it with indulgence out of respect for such admirable intentions. I am, Granadans, a son of unhappy Caracas who, miraculously escaped from amid her physical and political ruins and ever faithful to the just and liberal system proclaimed by my country, now follow the banners of independence fluttering so gloriously in these States. Allow me, inspired by a patriotic zeal that emboldens me to address you, to sketch for you the causes that led Venezuela to her destruction, and to flatter myself that the terrible and exemplary lessons proffered by that extinct Republic will persuade America to improve her own conduct, correcting the failures of unity, strength, and vigor manifest in her several governments.

The most grievous error committed by Venezuela as she entered the political arena was undoubtedly her fatal adoption of the governing ideal of tolerance, an ideal immediately rejected as weak and ineffective by everyone of good sense, yet tenaciously maintained right up to the end with unparalleled blindness. The first signs our government gave of its folly were manifested when it refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the subject city of Coro and declared it insurgent and treated it as a hostile power. Instead of subjugating that defenseless city, which was ready to surrender as soon as our maritime forces came into view, the Supreme Junta allowed it to build up its defenses and adopt an attitude of such defiance that it later managed to humble the entire federation, almost as easily as we might initially have humbled it. The operating principle of our Junta was apparently the mistaken notion of human nature that restrains any government from liberating by force any town too stupid to see the value of its rights.

Questions:

- I. What is Bolivar conveying in this excerpt?
- II. Why is Bolivar arguing these concepts of democracy in the excerpt?
- III. Is it stated clearly?
- IV. How might Bolivar have conveyed his argument had he had been clearer?
- V. What would you have stated instead?