

## Primary Source: *The Jamaica Letter* by Simon Bolivar, 1815

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1. What is Bolivar's purpose in writing this letter?
  2. What is Bolivar's vision for South America?
  3. Who is likely meant to read this document? What clues lead you to believe this?
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"Success will crown our efforts because the destiny of Latin America is irrevocably fixed; the tie that bound her to Spain is severed.... The hatred we feel for the Peninsula [*the Iberian Peninsula*] is greater than the sea separating us from it; it would be easier to bring the two continents together than to reconcile the spirits and the minds of the two countries. The habit of obedience, a commerce of shared interests, knowledge, and religion; mutual goodwill; a tender concern for the birthland and glory of our ancestors; in brief everything that constituted our hopes came to us from Spain.... Today the opposite is true: death, dishonor, everything harmful threatens us and makes us fearful. That wicked stepmother is the source of all our sufferings..... The chains have been broken, we've been liberated, and now our enemies want to make us slaves. That is why America fights with such defiance, and it would be rare should such desperate intensity not bring victory in its wake....

We are moreover neither Indians nor Europeans, but a race halfway between the legitimate owners of the land and Spanish usurpers – in short, being Americans by birth and endowed with rights from Europe – find ourselves forced to defend these rights against the natives while maintaining our position in the land against the intrusion of the invaders. Thus we find ourselves in the most extraordinary and complicated situation...."

The posture of those who dwell in the American hemisphere has been over the centuries purely passive. We are at a level even lower than servitude, and by that very reason hindered from elevating ourselves to the enjoyment of freedom....

The Americans occupy no other place in society than that of servants suited for work or, at best, that of simple consumers, and even this is limited by appalling restrictions: for instance the prohibition against the cultivation of European crops or the sale of products monopolized by the king, the restriction against the construction of factories that don't even exist on the peninsula, exclusive privileges for engaging in commerce even of items that are basic necessities, the barrier between American provinces, preventing them from establishing contact, or communicating, or doing business with one another. In short, would you like to know the extent of our destiny? Fields for the cultivation of indigo, grain, coffee, sugar cane, cacao, and cotton, empty prairies for raising cattle, wilderness for hunting ferocious beasts, the bowels of the earth for excavating gold that will never satisfy the lusts of that greedy nation.... Is this not an outrage and a violation of the rights of humanity?

We were absent from the universe in all things relative to the science of government and the administration of the state. We were never viceroys, never governors, except in extraordinary circumstances; hardly ever bishops or archbishops; never diplomats; soldiers only in lower ranks; nobles, but without royal privileges. In short, we were never leaders, never financiers, hardly ever merchants....

From the foregoing, we can deduce certain consequences: The American provinces are involved in a struggle for emancipation, which will eventually succeed....

When we are at last strong, under the auspices of a liberal nation that lends us its protection, then we will cultivate in harmony the virtues and talents that lead to glory; then we will follow the majestic path toward abundant prosperity marked out by destiny for South America....