

Christmas 2021

I was looking forward to Christmas this year. I thought that I would be able to go to the northern hemisphere's Santa's Village, aka Toyland, in Greenland as I have done for many years to help Santa track children. As you remember from my other Christmas writing that there is a team of us who make sure we locate children who move during the year, or who may be spending Christmas with a relative. Last year, because of the pandemic, all that work was done online, so we did not go to Toyland. I missed seeing everyone and spending quality time in conversation with Santa, Mrs. Claus, the other helpers who come from around the northern hemisphere, and the workers who live and work in the village all year.

I thought this year was going to be different. As I said last year, when the vaccines for covid-19 became available for people in my age group, I immediately started trying to get it. I got both shots in the Spring. Then, when government health officials suggested a third shot, I got mine. I got the third shot in early November because I planned to spend Thanksgiving in Maryland with my beloved friend and with my daughter. Our Thanksgiving plans went forward with no problem. We cooked and ate and watched movies and football games and Sumo wrestling together. I was expecting to come back home, pack a bag for Greenland, and be on my way a few days after returning from Maryland. It was not to be so.

I got the call from Santa December 1, the same day the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the case that will determine whether or not the Court will allow a law that violates Roe v. Wade to go into force. I have been fighting the abortion wars on the side of a pregnant person's right to choose whether or not they want to bring a pregnancy to term since September 1, when a Texas law (Texas S.B. 8) went into effect that bans abortions after detection of an electrical impulse in the embryo. I refuse to call this a heartbeat because at this point in gestation there is no heart to beat. Moreover, the law allows ordinary citizens who may have no connection to either the pregnant person or to the abortion provider to sue the abortion provider or anyone who helps the pregnant person

obtain an abortion after the about six-weeks. Thus, abortion providers in Texas have stopped providing abortion services after the detection of the impulse which means that the constitutional rights to an abortion before fetal viability are denied to pregnant people in Texas. The Supreme Court refused to stop this law from going into effect. They did however hear arguments about the law, then they heard the Mississippi case. As I write this, the Court has handed down no decision.

Santa called around 2 p.m. my time on December 1. He said that he was cancelling the in person gathering because of the Omicron variant. There had been a breakthrough case in the Village, and they were all in Isolation and testing regularly, trying to make sure that Santa was not infected by the time Christmas Eve night came. The other three Santas were also taking extra precautions. I was depressed for the rest of the day. The oral arguments at the Supreme Court had been a disappointment, and now, I would have to cancel my trip to Toyland.

Then Santa made a suggestion, as he often does, about what I could do instead of the child tracking work. "I want you to read the Arctic Report Card 2021 published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration." I was not certain that I heard Santa correctly. "Excuse me," I said.

Santa assured me that I had heard him correctly. Climate change has been a major concern of all four Santas for some time. Most people do not know that there are four Santas – the northern hemisphere Santa that we have known about for years, the southern hemisphere Santa based in the Seychelles, the eastern hemisphere Santa based in South Korea, and the western hemisphere Santa based in Costa Rica. They all see the effects of climate change on a daily basis and they see its effects on children. They see how conflict over scarce resources is made worse by climate change. They see families moving because of the effects of climate change on local economies. They see how beach erosion and natural disasters are made worse because of climate change. They work closely with groups who are working toward helping people to understand the concept of climate justice.

“You are good at explaining things to people,” Santa said. “Help people to understand the importance of climate change in their lives.”

Since I rarely say no to Santa, I told him I would give it a try. So, I have started to read the Arctic Report. I confess that there is much in it that I will have to learn more about before I am confident enough to try to explain it to other people. However, there are some things that I find alarming on my first reading of it. For example: because of melting ice, waters that were once not navigable are now open to ships. With shipping traffic comes human garbage that is now washing up on shores in the Arctic. Also, with more shipping comes noise that is disrupting the communications of sea creatures. The effects of covid and climate change are having an effect on the ability of Arctic peoples to hunt for food and use systems of cooperation to avoid food insecurity.

While reading the Arctic report, I remembered that world leaders and activists came together in Glasgow, Scotland this Fall to talk about a global response to climate change. Then I thought about the climate change provisions in President Biden’s Build Back Better legislative proposal. These provisions include: \$320 billion in tax incentives for people who produce and use wind, solar, and nuclear power; \$1 billion to build electric vehicle charging stations; \$2.9 billion to improve the electrical grid to accommodate wind and solar power; and \$55 billion to promote research and climate friendly farming and forestry. (See: [nytimes.com/article/build-back-better-explained.html](https://www.nytimes.com/article/build-back-better-explained.html))

I have argued for Build Back Better because of the child tax credit that has pulled children and their families out of poverty. The climate change provisions are just more reasons to support this legislation and to contact our congress-members to support it. It is a reason to support people running for office who will support it.

At first, when Santa asked me to shift focus from the abortion wars to climate change, I thought he was taking me away from the struggle for human rights. However, when I started reading the statement from the Conference of the Parties 26 (COP26) Glasgow Climate Pact, I understand the demand for the human rights of pregnant people, the demand for reproductive justice is not disconnected from climate justice. The Glasgow Pact says:

“Also acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”

(See: [washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2021/glasgow-climate-pact-annotated](https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2021/glasgow-climate-pact-annotated/))

In my Letter to the Supreme Court, I say that the State has an obligation to its people to secure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Human happiness is connected to the all of nature and creation. This means we all have an obligation to honor and to care for Mother Earth.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays Everybody. As Tiny Tim Said: “God bless us everyone.”