

Christmas 2025

January 20, 2026

Christmas Day 2025. Trump bombs Nigeria saying he wants to protect Christians. Putin still bombs civilians and infrastructure in Ukraine, attempting to make life, so cold, so dark, so terrifying that the Ukrainians will want the misery to stop, even if this means giving up significant parts of their country. Palestinians in Gaza live under rags, tents incapable of providing shelter from wind and rain and cold. When the rains come, the ground in the tents becomes mud. Everything is wet, women and children bail water out of the tents. Survivors dig through rubble looking for loved ones killed from Israeli bombs. Let us be clear. Israel is perpetrating a genocide in Gaza, and the United States is complicit because the American tax payers send billions of dollars to Israel annually. There is also a genocide in Sudan.

As the African-American spiritual says: "there is trouble all over this world." Still Christmas is a time of the hope of peace on Earth and goodwill toward women and men.

Every Christmas, I am in touch with Santa Claus, the Santa of the northern hemisphere who lives in Greenland. There is a Santa for all four hemispheres – north, south, east and west. However, that is a discussion for another day. For years, I have visited Santa before Christmas, working on locating children so Santa will know where to deliver the right presents to the right addresses. The work is coordinating with Santa's helpers. I have not visited Santa since the Gaza war started in 2023. I have been reading the various human rights reports that describe Israel as an apartheid regime – Amnesty International, B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and a report published by the United Nations. I have read the UN report on genocide in this Gaza war. This past year, I worked on the history of Chicago and of immigration. If we forget the past, we will have no chance of correcting the mistakes of the past. We have no hope of crafting the moral evolution of humankind.

For the first time, this year I visited Santa's place after Christmas, during Kwanzaa Week. The principles of Kwanzaa are good for all of humanity to remember – unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Santa and I have been thinking about various philosophical and spiritual systems to build a value system to stand against the greed and deceptions and violence that is the source of all the trouble in the world. This work is especially crucial as Donald Trump has said that he wants to take Greenland either through a sale or through military conquest. Greenland is part of Denmark. The Greenlanders want independence some time in the future, but for now. They do not want to sever the relationship with Denmark, nor do they want to be American.

If one wonders how Santa ended up in Greenland, it goes back to the fusion of the Christian St. Nick with the Norse God Odin whose mythology tells the story of an all-knowing God who rides through the air and who cares about children. When the Christian feast day for Christ also became a celebration of winter, and when some northern European aspects of winter celebrations became part of Christmas, Christmas mythology located Santa's home at the North Pole, a place of imagination, of myth and magic and wonder; a place of elves and toys and reindeer. Santa's mythical home needed to be located in a place so far away, so physically inaccessible that it could realistically only exist in the stories that we tell. We can only visit there or live there in the winter wilderness of our minds.

However, Greenland is very real. It only has around 57,000 people, most of whom live in one of the communities near the coast. Its history is one where people from North America found their way to the largest island on the globe, formed communities and died out. People from northern Europe established communities that also lasted a little while and disappeared. Today, most of the people are Inuit; less than 10% are Danish; less than 3% are of Nordic or of other descent. There are stories of explorers who wanted to cross the island country, who died trying, there are some who lived to tell the tale of their adventures. Matthew Henson was a Black man who explored Greenland along with Robert Perry. They and other explorers brought back knowledge of a natural world that did not and that still does not welcome humanity.

Now, because of climate change, despite its still inhospitable environment, it is a place human beings think they need. Warmer winters are making the Arctic waters around Greenland navigable. There are natural resources and minerals that will be important in the future that may now be more accessible if the ice that now covers the earth under which they lie melts.

Enter Donald Trump who wants to make Greenland a part of the United States. Greenlanders do not want to be American. In a recent interview, Tillie Martinussen of the Cooperation Party in Greenland, gives many reasons why. Aside from the Greenlandic value that says no one individual can own the land, they do not understand what the United States would be buying. If the people had to choose between the United States and Denmark they would choose Denmark because they have free healthcare and education. The government gives people money to go to school rather than students being saddled with student debt as Americans are. She knows the history of indigenous people in the United States and the racism against people of color. The Inuits are people of color who do not think they would be treated any better than the Brown and Black people that ICE is going after in American cities for harassment, detention, and deportation. Greenlanders see We the People of the United States as greedy Americans.

She is correct. Our history is not a history of welcome to strangers. It is a history of greed and exploitation, of racism and violence. Now, our president is willing to break international treaties with the United Nations and with NATO for an acquisition that most of the American people do not want. Further, let us be clear: when a treaty is ratified by the United States Senate, it has the force of American law.

Yesterday was Martin Luther King Day. It is the day we remember King and the struggle to make the United States a more perfect union by providing equal opportunity to people of all backgrounds both here in the United States and around the world. King's moral imagination led him to think about the whole world as a house in which we all live. It is our moral responsibility to care for each other and for the house itself so that we can live lives of sustenance and joy. At the end of his essay, "The World House", King writes:

"Our hope for creative living in this world house that we have inherited lies in our ability to reestablish the moral ends of our lives in personal character and social justice. Without this spiritual and moral reawakening we shall destroy ourselves in this misuse of our own instruments."

We have a choice, and because we are human, we have the capacity to choose. Please.