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# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## A Mediator's Letter to Santa Claus

Joel Lee (National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law) · Friday, December 14th, 2012

[Author's note: Christmas is just around the corner and as with last year, I thought I would indulge by writing something whimsical. For those readers who do not celebrate or like Christmas; or those who do not believe in Santa Claus; or those who generally don't like whimsy, please accept my apologies. I promise that my entry next month will return to the usual programming.]

Dear Santa,

It's been a long time since I have written a letter to you and am a bit rusty. I hope you will forgive that.

How are you? I hope you are in good health despite what people have been saying about your weight gain and lack of exercise. I also hope that Mrs. Claus, the reindeers and the elves are doing well. Please give my warmest wishes to all of them.

I am writing to tell you of my Christmas wishes. My friends laughed at me when I told them I was going to write to you. They said I, as an adult, was too old! They even said that because I am a lawyer, I am on your naughty list.

Well, I am an adult but adults have dreams and wishes too and I hope that I am not disqualified from writing to you simply because I am a child stuck in an adult's body.

As for being naughty, I must admit that I am a lawyer and that during this past year, I haven't been all nice. But I have been more nice than naughty and I teach and help people to resolve conflicts amicably so I hope that counts for something.

When I was 8, I used to write to you to ask for presents I wanted for myself. I guess this letter is no different. I am asking to write for presents but this time not for myself.

In working with people in conflict, I can't help but notice that there are a number of things that make conflict worse and make it harder for parties to resolve their problems and to move on.

The first thing I notice is that parties often have a "I am right" attitude. Of course this must mean that the other person is wrong. One of the things that I have to do is to get them to realise that there are many truths, and that their truth is not the only one and not necessarily the "real" or "correct" one. It would really help if you could give the world the gift of perspective and understanding. Then, they will be better able to put themselves in the other party's shoes and see it from their

point of view. And at least, even if they do not agree with the other party's point of view, they can understand and appreciate it.

The second thing I notice is that parties in conflict often feel isolated and separate from the other party. They only focus on the conflict and the bad feelings between them and the other party and cannot or will not see the commonalities that they share. I have to help them see that they are better off working with one another than to act separately. It would help if you could give them the gift of empathy and connection. Then they will be able to reconnect as human beings to solve their mutual problem.

The final thing I notice is that parties find it hard to accept solutions that are good for their future because they are constantly looking backwards. It is a bit like driving a car while only looking in the rearview mirror. I have to help them let go of the past so that they can move on with their lives. It would help if you could give them the gift of forgiveness and healing.

I know some of my friends will ask me why I don't just ask for world peace. I guess I could have, but I figure that if more people had the gifts above, we're one step closer to creating world peace for ourselves.

I know you have lots of letters to read and much work to do before Christmas so I'll end here.

Take care Santa and Merry Christmas!

Cheers

Joel

P.S. I'll be putting out some milk and cookies for you as usual. I bought some of those cookies you like so much.

P.P.S. Please give Rudolph a pat from me. He's my favourite!

P.P.P.S. I hope the elves aren't fighting. If you need a mediator, you know where to find me!

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