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Raven said, "Love thy neighbor."

Owl asked, "Can a Christian be a Buddhist?"



Raven said, "There are lots of them."

*Robert Aitken, Roshi (1917-2010)*

## RAVENS AND RACISTS

Let us back up a few days to the beginning of 2018. Is there any connection between ravens and racists? I doubt it. It is simply that they came into my view at the same time in the new year.

First to the ravens. My young friends tell me that the Raven is a "keeper of secrets." Well, it certainly seemed like something mysterious was going on. We've always had a few ravens. They like to

nest high in the firs and redwoods that surround us here at Starcross. But we had never seen the numbers that came in recently. On more than one occasion, we estimated that they were flying in by the hundreds! I saw them walking between the rows of olives one day.



They were parading in a very orderly fashion and I counted over 50 before they took off.

Things became a little less mysterious after some friends, who have a special interest in birds, reminded us of the massive devastation of the forests just over the hills from us in the October wildfires. The ravens were most likely looking for a new place to live, and for quite a few of them, that was Starcross.

I've always thought of ravens as pretty solitary birds. I am told they mate for life. But it seemed to me that when faced with a catastrophic problem they had no trouble working together to find a new home. On the other hand, we humans seem to be finding more and more ways of destroying our environment and less competence in teamwork. That thought troubles me.



The resurgence of white supremacists, racists, also troubles me. I suppose the “good old boys” — “crackers” as we used to call them —

will always be with us. But we read about young men, some still adolescents, wrapping themselves in Confederate battle flags and shooting up public places or driving into innocent crowds. I find this very disheartening. Problems of alt-right youth are certainly not uniquely American. Jihadist's recruitment propaganda is aimed primarily at young people.

Monday we celebrate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968.) Back in those days many young people went into the South and contributed to the fight for civil rights. Often they endangered their own lives in the process. That commitment is still present in our youth.



Can we generalize about all young people, sometimes known as “millennials”? A recent book describes them as, *“tolerant, confident, open-minded, and ambitious, but also disengaged, narcissistic, distrustful, and anxious.”*

Well, a lot of young people pass through our place, and that description doesn't fit them at all. They are very strong in their attitude toward equality in everything; race, gender, cultural heritage, distribution of wealth, etc. They are people who combine a sense, indeed a longing, for spiritual growth with the responsibility for ecology — a deep ecology. Yes they may be anxious for having inherited a world that very few are comfortable with. Unlike our Raven visitors displaced by natural disaster, the young people who come here are not sure how to find a home with a group of people that is safe and nourishing, a place where people value taking care of each

other. Nor surprisingly they are cautious about what steps to take.



Malcolm Harris is a 28-year-old millennial, who has written a book called *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials*. Speaking for people his age he writes,

*Either we continue the trends we've been given and enact the bad future, or we refuse it and cut the knot of trend lines that defines our collectivity. We become fascist or revolutionaries, one or the other.*

I put the last sentence in bold, and I had to ask a young friend to help me understand the rest of that quote. But I think I have it. We're

feeling the early shakes of the youthquake. On the one hand we see some young people trying to make sense of life through hatred and the alt-right. But most are latent revolutionaries who are just beginning to come out of their cocoon. It has been our privilege here to have quite a few of them as friends and helpers.



I don't know what the future is going to bring. It may take a long time in coming. But I have the feeling if there were ever a sports team in some distant future connected with Starcross it would be called “The Ravens.”

What can I say? —*“Let’s Go Ravens!”*”



# Brother Toby

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*The quote at the top is from Robert Aitken's delightful little book "ZEN MASTER RAVEN: THE TEACHINGS OF A WISE OLD BIRD."*

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