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# SIGHTINGS:™ UFOs

BEYOND IMAGINATION LIES THE TRUTH  
Stories from the Amazingly Successful TV Series

**1994**

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## Visitation in Zimbabwe

### Why Would 62 Schoolchildren Lie?

It was upsetting. The lights were big and I thought the ship was going to land on the school and destroy it.

—Zimbabwean schoolgirl, age eleven

The Mutual UFO Network is the world's largest UFO research organization. MUFON has more than 5,000 members in over twenty countries, including a legion of field investigators and regional directors operating in all fifty of the United States. But on the entire continent of Africa, the grand total of MUFON coordinators is one; and Cynthia Hind of Harare, Zimbabwe, has got her hands full.

According to South African ufologist Dimitri Galanakis, sightings throughout Africa have risen dramatically in the past ten years. During an interview in 1994, Galanakis said, "The sightings in South Africa alone have increased tenfold in the last few years, especially in the last twelve months. On average we receive between 500 and 1,000 calls each month with regard to UFO sightings. I'd say at least half of the sightings are genuine, the balance being attributed to secret aircraft, meteorites, or other natural phenomena. But at least half of the sightings reports we get are

definitely worth investigating.” Investigating UFO sightings in Africa has proven to be a daunting task. Vast expanses of desert and bush, tribal superstitions, and language barriers have all conspired to keep nearly every authenticated African UFO event out of the mainstream media.

“When I have heard about UFO cases that seem genuine and are worthy of a good looking into, I have offered to pay for people to go into Kenya, to the coast, or to some outside town in Ghana,” Cynthia Hind explains. “I tell them, just give me an account of your expenses, and I will give you the money to go and investigate. But sadly, nobody has wanted to do it. These areas are generally very remote, and it’s scary. There are a lot of wars going on. And however dedicated I am about UFOs, I don’t want to die for them. I do have hope that now that things are opening up and people are becoming more educated, we will begin to show everyone that this area is important in the worldwide study of UFOs.”

Sightings in Africa are of particular interest to UFO researchers, because the eyewitnesses have not all been tainted by descriptions of extraterrestrial spacecraft and alien beings in the mass media. “Many people in Africa do not have television,” Hind says. “They might have radio, but I can tell you that the reporters here don’t have UFO stories on the air. So where would witnesses pick it up? I remember I once had a good case in a tribal village in Zimbabwe, where twenty-three people were involved in a UFO sighting. They didn’t use words like ‘saucer’ and ‘alien,’ because they don’t even know what those words mean. Instead, they described the beings as the ghosts of their ancestors. However, their descriptions of the tight-fitting suits and strange slanted eyes are the same as descriptions of aliens reported by people in the States or in Europe. Remember, in the tribal areas, the people are isolated. When I told them that men are going into outer space and that Americans have walked on the moon, they said, ‘That can’t be. Only God walks on the moon.’ In many remote places there is no conception of what’s going on in the rest of the world.”

Several years ago, Hind investigated a case in a remote desert outpost in central South Africa that illustrates the area’s lack of sophistication about UFOs and their place in popular culture. “In

rural areas, they don't actually know what UFOs are; nevertheless, things are happening. I interviewed one man who lives in the Great Karoo, an area that's almost completely unoccupied, just miles and miles of arid land with nothing on it. This chap woke up one morning and walked out to a wall that surrounds the village where he lives. He saw what he thought was a caravan, what you call a trailer in the States. As he walked closer he thought it was strange the caravan hadn't got any wheels, just tines sticking into the ground. When he got nearer still he saw four men standing in this trailer; one was at a console where a lot of lights were flashing, and the other three seemed to be examining meters. Something alerted them to the man's presence outside. They all looked up, and with that, the man heard a click, and a light flashed on him. 'I couldn't get my breath,' he told me. 'I felt as though I was drowning. I was trying to get out of this beam of light, but it was difficult.'

"His nose started to bleed. He began to vomit. As he tried to crawl out of the light, this craft lifted off the ground, the legs folded underneath, and it took off. He said it nearly knocked over his windmill. Well, the man died eighteen months later, because he was riddled with cancer. I'm only speculating because nobody knows, but I think he got too close to that craft, and he died from the effects of radium or some kind of radiation sickness. But no one would ever examine the case. The doctors all thought he was crazy and that I was crazy."

In a more recent case in Ruwa, Zimbabwe, Cynthia Hind did not have to contend with an easily ignored single eyewitness, as in the Great Karoo case. This time, on September 16, 1994, Hind found sixty-two irreproachable witnesses who had all seen the same brilliant UFO and claimed to have made contact with the alien beings who emerged from the craft. The witnesses were all schoolchildren ranging in age from eight to twelve years old. Their account of a saucer-shaped craft and its humanoid occupants has ignited the UFO community worldwide, attracting notable researchers to the site, among them Harvard professor of psychiatry John Mack. "The children of Arial School experienced a powerful encounter with strange beings, and we're left with the

rather disturbing fact that this seems to be what it is," Mack says. "And it seems to have no other psychiatric explanation."

The Arial School is located in Ruwa, Zimbabwe, about twelve miles outside the capital city of Harare. "It's a primary school for young children, quite isolated in the country, but it's a good school," Cynthia Hind explains. "It's open to all races, and there are about 250 children at the school." At approximately 10:30 in the morning on October 16, 1994, most of the Arial School children were playing outside during morning recess. All of the teachers were inside attending their monthly staff meeting. The only adult supervising outside was a woman operating the snack bar.

One of the older children (*Sightings* has chosen not to disclose the names of the Arial School children) remembers seeing some of the fourth-graders straying into the bush, outside the school's playground boundaries. As a student prefect, responsible for enforcing school rules, the older boy went to tell the younger children to come out of the dense undergrowth and return to the safety of the playground. "This thing, an object, landed with three or four things beside it," the boy recalls. "We saw this man in the musasa trees, and he looked like he was dressed in a really shiny diving suit. His eyes were down around his cheeks and he was looking really, really funny." One of the younger girls remembers, "He was definitely not a human. I don't know what he was really, but he had a big head and big black eyes, and he was dressed in a black body suit."

After the initial sighting, more children began to gather at the bottom of the playground. "I saw a few things in space," a fifth-grade girl explains. "I saw the bigger ship and then like four or five smaller ones crowding around it." An older girl corroborates her sighting. "I saw one big one and quite a few little ones scattered all around. They were very still, just hovering, and then I saw them also disappear. They went about a meter off the ground, and then they just vanished." In all, sixty-two children claimed that they had seen the UFOs and two alien creatures. No adults were present. According to Cynthia Hind, "The only adult there was the woman who ran the tuck shop [snack bar] where the children buy sweets and drinks. One little boy did run up to

her and said, 'Come quickly, come quickly, there are little men in the playground.' And she said, 'Pull the other leg. You're not going to get me out of the tuck shop so you can pinch sweets.'" Another boy explains, "We went to the teachers, and we went into the office, and we started telling the teachers, and then they said maybe there's nothing. We felt very sad, because we did see something."

Colin Mackie is the headmaster of Arial School. He remembers being skeptical about the children's story. "We were all in the middle of a staff meeting. None of the staff actually saw anything. Some of the children indicated to certain members of staff that they were seeing something very strange. Unfortunately, we just fogged it off, to put it bluntly, until after the meeting. But I began to take the situation more seriously when the parents began arriving after school and the children started to take their parents to the place where they said they saw the UFO." One mother, a native Zimbabwean, says, "I believe the children, because normally children don't lie about things like that. I believe that what they saw is maybe from the spirit world, not from our world." Another mother, a recent emigré from France, said, "At first I thought it was a meteorite display, but then when my son went into a description, I thought that it must be something more. Children don't lie unless there's an adult involved encouraging them in a certain direction. In fact, I was quite upset he didn't phone me so I could run down with the camera." As to her interpretation of the sighting, the mother adds, "I don't exclude the possibility of life on other planets, but I can't say I believe until I actually see one."

When Cynthia Hind was first brought in to investigate the children's seemingly outlandish claims, she asked the students to draw pictures of what they had seen. The children created a disturbing portrait of extraterrestrial contact in pencil and crayon. (See Photos 27-29.) "I believe they saw what they say they saw," Hind asserts. "They put into their drawings many things that I don't think they could have known about. For instance, UFOs are inclined to follow electricity lines, and one little boy drew a picture with the UFO coming in along the electricity lines. There

were several small details like that in the drawings, which I found to be incredible. I was amazed at the common features that occurred among quite a diverse group of children.”

The drawings were extremely convincing to Hind, and her belief in the children only increased when she interviewed each child individually about the encounters. “The children strike me as being particularly intelligent,” Hind says. “I interviewed them in the presence of Colin Mackie, and I can tell you that the children wouldn’t lie to their headmaster. He’s quite a disciplinarian, and the children respect him and are a little scared of him. He said to me, ‘I don’t believe in UFOs, but these children wouldn’t lie because they’re afraid of me.’ And I agreed. Whenever I would ask a question, they would look at Mr. Mackie while they were answering. These children were not lying.”

Not everyone who has since studied the Ruwa sighting agrees with Hind. “It’s not a question of whether they’re lying or not. It’s a question of their distinction between reality and not reality being not as sharp as that of an older kid or an adult,” says John Saliba, a professor of comparative religion at the University of Detroit. Saliba has researched many claims of extraterrestrial contact, discounting them all. “I think the kids knew about flying saucers. The way they drew the flying saucer and the so-called people who came out of it, now those are pictures you’d find in TV programs and movies.” Hind counters: “Most of these children don’t have a television. They don’t go to the movies. They live in the country where their parents are farmers.”

Saliba remains skeptical. “I have to admit that you have all these stories of flying saucers for the last forty years and I can’t understand their goals. Why are they here? I don’t know what they’re doing, why they’re wasting their time going around in circles talking to a few people who are insignificant.” One of the young fifth-graders sums up the feelings of the children when she says, “He can believe that, but it’s not going to change my idea of what I’ve seen or what I know.”

In 1995, world-renowned alien-abduction expert John Mack became interested in the Arial School children and journeyed to Zimbabwe to interview the students, teachers, and parents. Dr.

Mack, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard's Cambridge Hospital, is also the director of PEER, the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research. PEER is currently producing an in-depth documentary on the Ruwa sightings. Dr. Mack first interviewed the children alone for later comparison. The following are three excerpts from his interviews:

## I

BOY: The ship was silver, and the ring around it was red.

DR. MACK: Was red. Did light come from the whole thing or . . . ?

BOY: There were lights just above the ring on the dome.

DR. MACK: What was it doing?

BOY: It was hovering above the trees. That's when I saw the little men, and then I just couldn't see the object or the men anymore. I don't see how anything from this world could fly away so fast.

DR. MACK: What did the men you saw look like?

BOY: The hair was a bit like Michael Jackson, and they had on a black suit. They had short legs and quite long tops. Their heads were big, and their eyes were four or five times bigger than ours but they were about my height.

DR. MACK: What would you say to the idea that this was an experimental craft that landed where it shouldn't have, and these men were in spacesuits and helmets?

BOY: Well, unless kids my age got dressed up in diving suits and built a spacecraft . . . these men were my size.

## II

DR. MACK: How many of the strange beings did you see?

GIRL: I saw one below the craft and another one running around, but bouncy-like. They had a longish

face, and they had eyes like rugby balls. I didn't see any mouth.

DR. MACK: Was there any communication between you?

GIRL: They were kind of just like looking at us. They were like kind of astonished at what we were.

DR. MACK: How did you feel?

GIRL: I felt scared.

DR. MACK: You felt scared. What was scary about it?

GIRL: I felt scared, because I've never seen such a person like that before.

DR. MACK: How do you feel now?

GIRL: I feel now that it was valuable for me to see, because aliens are something hardly anybody gets to see. And just to see something really strange and new makes me feel good.

Not all of the children came away from their sighting with a positive feeling. Many of the children told Dr. Mack about telepathic communication that they believed they had received from the extraterrestrial visitors. It was a disturbing message that Dr. Mack had heard from hundreds of abductees in the United States, half a world away. "In the abduction process," Dr. Mack explains, "one of the most powerful elements is presentation of information about the fate of the earth and the ecological catastrophes that are brewing and accelerating. They are shown images of pollution, deforestation, Earth as a vast desert; apocalyptic scenes that have an extraordinary impact." Their doomsday scenario is being repeated to the last detail by the children of Ruwa.

### III

DR. MACK: What do you imagine is his reason for visiting Earth?

GIRL: I think it's about something that's going to happen.

DR. MACK: Something that's going to happen?

GIRL: What I thought was maybe the world's going to end. They were telling us the world's gonna end.

- DR. MACK: Are we supposed to do something about that?
- GIRL: I think they want people to know that we're actually making harm on this world, and we mustn't get too technologized. They don't think we look after the planet properly.
- DR. MACK: How did that get communicated to you?
- GIRL: I don't even know. It just popped up in my head. He never said anything. He talked just with his eyes. It was just the face and the eyes. They looked horrible.
- DR. MACK: And the eyes, the horrible look had that information that you just told me?
- GIRL: Yes. I just felt all horrible inside. I felt all the trees in the world will just go down, and there will be no air and people will be dying. It was upsetting. The lights were big, and I thought the ship was going to land on the school and destroy it.
- DR. MACK: Are you still worried?
- GIRL: I worry that the man is still looking at me and may kill me.
- DR. MACK: You're really upset about this.
- GIRL: Yes.
- DR. MACK: I'm sure no harm will come to you. Do you believe me?
- GIRL: I don't know.

Dr. Mack and PEER are continuing to work with the children and their families to help alleviate the fear and anxiety that has come in the wake of the 1994 sightings. Both Dr. Mack and Cynthia Hind believe that the most important thing right now is for the parents and teachers in Ruwa to continue to support their children and to believe in the truthfulness of their extraordinary experiences. "Instead of looking at the mystery, we accuse the tellers of false memories. This is not the right approach," Dr. Mack says. Hind echoes his clinical judgment in her passionate question, "Why would sixty-two children lie?"

