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Doctor John Mack is a Pulitzer prize-winning Harvard professor and psychiatrist. He thought you might like to know, there very well may be **aliens** among us.

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Aliens Among Us



John E. Mack is a Doctor of Psychiatry and a professor at Harvard University. At 71 years old he might have retired by now, but he's a doer and always has been. After attending Harvard's Medical School he went on to found the **Psychiatric Department at Cambridge Hospital.** And somehow, while exemplifying himself in his chosen field of study, particularly within the realm of studying *repressed* and *screen* memories associated with family trauma, he found the time to win a **Pulitzer Prize** for a biography he penned on T.E. Lawrence. Yes, that would be Lawrence of Arabia. However, it would not be his Pulitzer Prize, or his founding of a respected psychiatric department, or his list of academic credentials with one of the most storied universities in the world, that would gain him his greatest degree of recognition. No, it would be something far more unexpected, strange, and what some might even consider bizarre.

by Joe Eich-Bonni

In 1994, Dr. Mack authored a book called *Abduction*, which chronicled the stories of dozens of people claiming to have been abducted by aliens. Released around the same time as the premiere of the X-Files, *Abduction* grabbed the attention of an American public, whose interest in all things alien was at an all-time high. But good timing wasn't the only reason *Abduction* made such an impact. Dr. Mack's pedigree lent credibility to the abduction phenomena. Dr. Mack looked at the abductees he worked with, not as suffering from some sort of hysteria, but as having gone through a transforming, if unexplainable event. In *Abduction*, Mack posited that the abductees hadn't imagined or fabricated the experiences they described; instead, the events they suffered were *real*, only we, the observers, needed to change, or more accurately expand, our definition of what is *real* in order to begin to understand them. Dr. John Mack, you see, thinks there may be aliens among us, and he thinks there very well may have always been.

In his new book, *Passport To The Cosmos: Human Transformation And Alien Encounters*, (Crown Publishing, 1999), Dr. Mack writes on his discoveries, both personal and scientific, after studying over

200 cases of 'anomalous experiences'. In *Passport...* the doctor widens the range of experiences he studied in *Abduction*, this time including not only those claiming to have been abducted by aliens but also other "daimonic realities" (unseen realities or forces that manifest in the physical world) including Shamanistic beliefs. In *Passport To The Cosmos*, Dr. Mack likens the abduction phenomena to what mystics and spiritualists from non-western traditions have described for untold centuries in stories of 'starpeople' or *makuras*, beings that, according to Brazilian Shamanistic tradition, "came from high up in the sky." Ultimately in *Passport...* Mack observes that in cultures that do not so sharply divide the realm of the spiritual and the realm of the scientific as westerners do, such anomalous experiences like abduction, out of body experiences and a variety of other states of alternative consciousness and states of being, are not dismissed or even looked at as aberrant. In *Passport*, Dr. Mack revisits the need for observers of this phenomena to change their ontology and develop new epistemologies, that is, change their definition of reality and devise new ways and systems of learning – ways of studying things – in order to simply understand the evidence presented, not necessarily prove or

disprove the events professed by witnesses. In a daring step, the good doctor, after interviewing hundreds of *experiencers*, as he prefers to call them, asks his readers and more importantly his peers in various scientific disciplines, to expand our worldview and accept concepts often left to shamans and quantum physicists, the dark witch doctors of the spiritual and scientific communities respectively, and accept not only concepts of multiple and parallel universes, but to accept that sometimes things happen, even if there is no evidence, as we have come to understand evidence, to support the events or results that lie before us.

In *Abduction*, Mack made note of his time examining family traumas and work he had done in the past involving *repressed* memories, events forgotten consciously for years but suddenly, unexpectedly, and sometimes to initial detriment, dredged up to the present, and *screen* memories, a fictional set of memories created to replace real events, often too painful to deal with consciously in one's day-in and day-out life. His work with patients suffering from these problems due to personal trauma and his knowledge and use of relaxation and meditative techniques to allow patients to achieve an altered state of consciousness, states often more receptive to discovering altered memories, made the doctor a perfect candidate to work with individuals claiming to have been abducted.

Through researchers like UFOlogist Bud Hopkins, Dr. Mack was introduced to many abductees, and over the last decade or so he has come to discover a number of patterns in the experiences of these people. Issues of veracity, corroboration and deception on the part of those he studies have been some of the criticisms levied against the doctor by critics, but over time Dr. Mack has quelled most of his critics through methodical study and documentation of his work. Even his cronies at Harvard have been mostly quieted. The patterns or common elements he has discovered can be broken into four parts: medical and surgical elements of the abduction, including an introduction of the abductee to alien/human hybrid projects; an ecological aspect of the visitation, including aliens imparting information important about the survival of the planet and the human species; a transformative, 'consciousness expanding' phenomenon of abductees; and finally the development, over time, of relationships with these beings by the abductees rather than the perpetuation of the abductee's belief that they are just victims. Almost as important as the development of consis-

tent patterns among those he has studied was Mack's ability to parallel these elements to the mystic traditions of tribal and native cultures throughout the world. Essentially, what Dr. Mack has been discovering may have been poo-pooed by modern western science, but it isn't anything new to history or dozens of other cultures older than our own.

In *Passport To The Cosmos*, Dr. Mack explains his own transformation by explaining he "was faced with the choice of either trying to fit these individuals' reports in a framework that fit my worldview – they were having fantasies, strange dreams, delusions or some other distortion of reality – or of modifying my worldview to include the possibility that entities, beings, energies – something – could be reaching my clients from another realm. The first choice was compatible with my worldview, but it did not fit the clinical data. The second was inconsistent with my philosophical grounding, and with conventional assumptions about reality, but appeared to fit better what I was finding. It seemed to be more logical, and intellectually more honest to modify my cosmology than to continue trying to force my clients into molds that did not suit them."

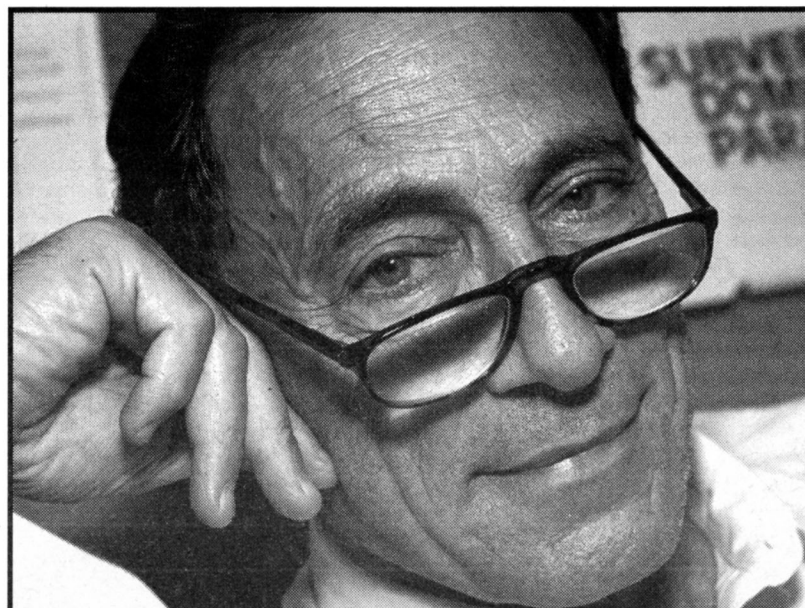
It's statements like this that would get Dr. Mack some unexpected, and not necessarily appreciated, attention from his peers at Harvard. In his new book he even jokes about some of the concerns his peers had about his new found foray into, and his convictions regarding, the paranormal after the release of *Abduction*. "One of the deans at the Harvard Medical School handed me a letter that called for the establishment of a small committee to investigate my work. After explaining vaguely that 'concerns' had been expressed to the university about what I was doing, (although he told of no specific complaint, nor was any offered in the letter), he added pleasantly – for he had been a friend and colleague – that I would not have gotten into trouble if I had not suggested in the book that my findings might require a change in our view of reality rather than saying that I had found a new psychiatric syndrome whose cause had not yet been established."

Dr. Mack relays this story to me again a few days ago. I was lucky enough to get a few minutes of the good doctor's time to talk to him about the decade he has spent studying the abduction phenomena and how it has affected him both professionally and personally, and ultimately, to find out what all this means to him, someone whose credentials are enviable to say the least, and who answered such criticisms by colleagues by ultimately founding a multidisciplinary study group of the phenomena in 1999 - with the assistance of

the very same university that had just five years earlier called his work into question. "I've been connected with Harvard since I was a medical student – and I've been a faculty member for many years. I had, by and large, nothing but support from Harvard until 1994. I guess I had quite a high profile in the media. Someone objected, I don't really know who or what happened but someone asked why was this professor going around saying that little green men were taking our children into spaceships. So there was damage control – a committee appointed to investigate my work – after 15 months there was a more or less amicable agreement – they didn't find anything wrong with my work but they didn't like my findings. We simply agreed that I would continue to follow the standards of the Harvard Medical School, which had never been all that clear in the first place, but since then I have continued to do my work without any problems.

"One of the recommendations [of the committee] was that I should involve more colleagues, that I should create a multidisciplinary study group to look at the phenomena from many points of view. A historian at Harvard struggled with the phenomena and called it a 'wily reality' – she couldn't put this phenomena into any category. It couldn't be reduced to something else – the phenomena held up and the meeting brought dignity to the field. Theologians, philosophers, historians, all got together, all looking at this from different points of view and asking how we could wrap our minds around this thing which so radically veers from our reality. That meeting helped to push the whole respectability of these types of anomalies forward."

Previous to the study group held in '99, Dr. Mack had years earlier, in 1993, founded the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER). PEER is a unique organization combining research and education.



Originally funded by Laurence Rockefeller and having roots in the Center for Psychology and Social Change, which was originally and for many years an affiliate of the Harvard Medical School, PEER, a non-profit organization, takes on the scientific, yet inescapably social, challenge surrounding the study of reports of extraordinary experiences. PEER has been contacted by over 10,000 persons interested in learning more about anomalous experiences and themselves.

The establishment of PEER, along with the multidisciplinary Study Group held in '99, the release of two books by a respected Harvard Psychiatrist, and the increasing awareness of and compassion for abductees by medical professionals, has meant increased respect for experiencers. Mack tells me, "In the critical, scientific world I think that slowly there are clinicians coming to see these people – and there are many types of anomalous experiences – near death, telekinesis, hauntings; a whole realm of spooky paranormal and supernatural events that are increasingly being seen as part of the natural world – as part of our basic reality. By avoiding [studying these anomalous events] we do endless harm to our planet. In a sense we have rid the planet of the entire spirit world and thereby have turned the whole earth into a marketplace of resources to be commandeered by the more aggressive among us."

Mack explains that all along, one of his biggest challenges has been convincing peers to move away from the concept of proving or disproving whether these events have occurred, and instead, just studying the anecdotal evidence the experiencers provide. To that end, *Passport...* reads a little more like a Parapsychology 101 textbook than a history of abductee stories. The good doctor lays out very succinctly the challenges facing professionals attempting to study issues that science has traditionally

ignored. Over the last ten years, Dr. Mack has been building a framework of sorts for clinicians to study the paranormal. When I ask him if he perhaps pioneered the concept that issues of spirituality and 'super-science' (as opposed to science fiction – in other words, scientific ideas or concepts that have not or even can not be proven by science's current understanding of the universe, but nevertheless exist insofar as some can anecdotally describe the events) can be documented and analyzed in a scientific manner, his reply is amusing and humble. "I don't know what I've done because it is hard to separate what you do yourself within a whole shift in the field of consciousness – what I can say is that there is increasing recognition. We have been operating from a limited epistemology. The scientific method, which is very effective in learning about the material world, falls short when it comes to studying things 'beyond the veil' – the trans-personal realm, spirit world, holotropic world, morphogenic field – all deeper realities that are not immediately apparent to the senses but can be reached through non-ordinary states of consciousness. The scientific method provides an opportunity for experimentation and replication and control but this new epistemology (of consciousness or holistic knowing) is the one that is suitable for studying these unseen realms. The experiences themselves are the primary incidences and they can only be known mind to mind. What I may have had some effect on is increasing the respect of this way of knowing – that these unseen realms are best observed through direct knowing, not by traditional scientific methods of experimentation replication and measurement by instruments. Until recently, that could which not be known by these methods was simply dismissed as not worth studying so I hope that what I have done, along with others studying near death experiences, past lives, out of body experiences – all of which reveal these deeper realities beyond then immediately apparent - is to make these domains respectable ideas of scientific study and exploration."

And finally, I ask the good doctor, are the abductions real in his opinion? "If by *real* you mean 'in the physical world entirely,' I would not say that about these experiences. There are physical elements to them – marks on bodies, UFOs and lights seen by several witnesses, even those observed to be missing by others – but rarely – but the experience as a whole cannot be said to be in this material world. But if *real* means something that is powerfully significant whether or not it is material or existing in another dimension of reality – if we open reality to all sorts of realms beyond three dimensions, some of which are only accessible to non-traditional states of consciousness – if we mean by *real* that we live in a multi-dimensional universe of which our three-dimensional world is only part of the whole – than yes they are real."

Passport To The Cosmos was released in Trade Paperback last year by Three River Press

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**"Dry people scare small children.
Watch them, it's true."**

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LETTERS

Joe,

Your article on John E. Mack is part of disturbing trend, as of late, in some of Boston's local papers and magazines. Along with psychic readings at the Tremont Tea Room, ear candling and others, Dr. Mack's work on the subject of "alien abduction" falls firmly into the realm of pseudo-science or outright fallacy.

What is not revealed in your article is the method used to determine "abduction". One of the key problems inherent in Dr. Mack and his associate Bud Hopkin's approach to decide whether they are dealing with a case of abduction is to question their subjects with a battery of inquiries skewed towards the abduction theory.

Dr. Mack also uses the example of Brazilian makuras as evidence of the abduction phenomenon's pan-cultural existence. Alien abduction has had parallels drawn to the old Faerie legends; with their faerie rings, tales of being spirited away and of infants being taken and replaced with changelings. That these similarities exist should not immediately be taken as validation of the phenomena (certainly few today would say that faeries exist and are the culprits for such 'occurrences'). Instead, could we not consider that yes, indeed, [there] might be a collective psychological experience at work and that, based upon the prevailing culture, these experiences are given a name, face and identity? "Makuras," "faeries," "aliens?" Although I cannot at this time provide you with the anecdotal instances, there have been studies which suggest that certain natural phenomena, such as ball-lightning, might "short-circuit" the brain's electro-chemical signals and induce a state which gives rise to hallucinations and emotional states which coincide with those reportedly experienced during alien abduction scenarios.

Dr. Mack's imploring his colleagues to accept a universe that cannot be defined by scientific methods flies in the face of all that is science. What he recommends is not fact, [and is] not a rational, definable quantity. It is closer to the faith of religion than to the inquiry of science. His theories and those of other paranormal researchers are not, as he states, "part of our basic reality." They are the exact opposite. That there are whole cultures that accept these supposed phenomena as fact does not prove they are fact. It is unfortunate that a person of such standing and accomplishment as Dr. Mack did not feel that he was dealing with "a new psychiatric syndrome [for which a] cause had not yet been established". If he had, perhaps we would have a true and rational explanation for these phenomena and claims.

Instead, it seems, he has fallen into the trap of being seduced by the fantastic. I am somewhat disheartened to see that the Weekly Dig has as well.

Still your friend and admirer,
Joe Niedbala
scortch_1966@yahoo.com

Often, when criticizing the work of paranormal investigators like Dr. Mack, debunkers themselves resort to anecdotal evidence rather than hard evidence. Dr. Mack has been peer reviewed by none other than the folks at Harvard and none of them found him to be leading his patients or forcing a panacea on them. As he explained in both book and interview, those reviewing his work didn't like his findings but could find no real problems with his methodologies. No doubt that when artist turned hypnotist Bud Hopkins introduced America to the concept of alien abduction and repressed memories in the 70s, people were justifiably skeptical, but Mack's involvement over the last decade has brought new respect—and controversy—to the field. However, as long as debunkers use vague accusations of 'leading' a patient without evidence that Mack has done so, you all do nothing to help your argument.

Whether Faeries or Aliens, a long cross-cultural history of starpeople and mysterious abductions permeates mankind's mythos. Even if, as you say, there may be a "collective psychological experience at work," from where did it originate? Such a suggestion is open to just as much if not more questioning than Mack's observations that these people genuinely experienced something (something unexplainable) by today's limitations of scientific inquiry.

And I think that's the key here: questioning. Remember, we could have picked up the phone and called MUFON (The Mutual UFO Network) and interviewed any number of persons investigating the abduction phenomenon—instead, we profiled a respected and dedicated, brilliant local doctor who has changed the minds of many and challenged most of the rest who have come to know-his work on this topic.

In 1999 Harvard and the Doctor hosted an event where many scientists in many fields debated the phenomenon. Interestingly enough, those involved in some very high-sciences like experimental physics had far less difficulty in accepting the multi-universal terms in which Mack speaks. Recent scientific discoveries challenging the Standard Model, accelerating and decelerating light and quantum research have all begun to unravel and yet improve our basic knowledge of physics and the universe. Those who have witnessed Einstein's and Newton's discoveries miss the mark firsthand often don't find the concept of extra-dimensional existence all that unscientific. That is not the same as saying they believe in the abduction phenomenon, but such new thinking does allow for more time to be spent on asking, "What happened to these people?" as opposed to, "Did anything happen to these people?"

Reaching for the stars,

Joe Eich-Bonni



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