

## The Exo Files

Cosmic Politics? To Believers, No Idea Is Alien

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Extraterrestrials exist and they visit Earth routinely, according to people who know this for a fact.

Moving on.

What does this mean for Washington, for America, for the planet? It means, according to the roughly 400 people attending the fifth X-Conference over the weekend, that politics isn't local anymore. It's galactic. It's universal. This is *exopolitics*.

In the ground-floor banquet hall of the Gaithersburg Hilton, there are no alien costumes. There are PhDs, ex-military men, activists and concerned citizens. They sit in on lectures with titles like "Obama and Disclosure." They browse tables stocked with books such as "Exopolitics: How Does One Speak to a Ball of Light?" They talk about black budgets and quantum cosmology. They watch the last 15 minutes of "The Abyss," during which Ed Harris swims hand in hand with a jellyfish-like alien.



At the X-Conference, attendees say they want full disclosure of government files about UFOs and extraterrestrials. (By Dan Zak -- The Washington Post)

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People in the exopolitical movement want full disclosure of any U.S. government files on unidentified flying objects and extraterrestrials. Only then, they maintain, can mankind deal with the sociopolitical implications of the universe: the rule of law in outer space, the sharing of technology between civilizations and the physics of one-on-one interaction with ETs.

"No, we're not alone," said Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man to walk on the moon, speaking first at the X-Conference on Sunday and then at the National Press Club yesterday morning. "Our sun will burn out in due course, and we have to be off this planet. . . . Our consumption rate of non-renewable resources is not sustainable. . . . Our destiny is to become part of the planetary community. It's time to start thinking in those terms."

Forget "eco." The most urgent prefix today, the X-Conference suggests, is "exo." We need to evolve into an exoculture. We need to be exoconscious, to reframe our minds for interstellar relations and interdimensional experiences.

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"If we live off-planet, we have to change our mind and bodies," says Rebecca Hardcastle, a hypnotherapist and exoconsciousness coach who lives in Phoenix. "Your emotions, life force and what you've been taught is a belief system that cords you to the Earth. We must change our frame of reference."

Hardcastle, wearing pearls and a black dress and sitting at a table, says she has been contacted by ET intelligence since she was 3. She, and others in the exopolitical community, say we need to learn remote viewing and teleportation, we need to propagate the practice of ESP, we need to let ETs change us, and we need to integrate technology and consciousness so we can participate in the universe.

What's the secret to moving in that direction?

Diet and exercise and balanced living, says Hardcastle. Yoga and peacefulness, say others. Small steps for man.

To be sure, conspiracy theories and creepy claims are a big part of the X-Conference. Even an audiovisual glitch is a cue for mild paranoia: "Something happened with our system," says a nervous AV guy after a microphone blows out during a lecture. "It happened suddenly, systemwide. Something hit it and took it down."

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When California podiatric surgeon Roger Leir takes the microphone, the topic is extraterrestrial implants.

"How many of you have seen a UFO?" Leir asks the audience before showing video of alleged implant extraction surgery.

More than 100 people put up their hands.

"How many think you've been involved with the alien abduction program?"

Five hands go up.

"How many of you think you've been abducted and *have never returned?*"

There is laughter. There is also a sentiment of acceptance and adaptation. Once we get our act together, once we understand our *own* selves, the ETs will engage us, says Michael Salla, president and founder of the Hawaii-based nonprofit Exopolitics Institute, which offers an online semester in galactic diplomacy for a little more than \$1,000.

"Humanity is still tribalistic, driven by elite interests rather than global ones," Salla says. "But with Barack Obama, for the first time in our planet's history, we have a global leader. It's a tremendous advance in our global society."

On the TV in the lobby of the hotel, Obama shakes hands with Hugo Chávez. Later, there's a CNN report on the disclosure of torture memos from Guantanamo Bay. These are good signs of open-minded diplomacy and government transparency, some conference attendees say. Plus, over the past year, the British government has released thousands of documents pertaining to UFOs, about 5 percent of which are truly inexplicable. The exopolitical movement was also encouraged by Obama's selection of John Podesta, noted champion of UFO disclosure, as his transition chairman. And Mitchell the astronaut is out in full force, saying the existence of ETs was confirmed to him 10 years ago by a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (who subsequently denied it, but that's how these things go).

The ridicule is ebbing, conference attendees say. The exopolitical movement has gone grass roots; the education and outreach phase is underway. One man at the conference is collecting 4,000 signatures to put forth a ballot initiative for a Denver Extraterrestrial Affairs Commission. Another is calling upon the United Nations to create an "extraterrestrial civilizations liaison."

For Nick Pope, who was in charge of UFO investigations for Britain's Ministry of Defense in the early '90s, the bogies in the sky are simply a matter of national security.

"If we ignore UFOs because of the baggage that term has in people's minds -- because we don't believe in flying saucers -- it opens up a gap in our capacity to deal with these things," Pope says. "It's dangerous. We're ignoring a potential air-safety issue."

Exopolitics: It's about air-traffic control. It's about honest government. It's about self-empowerment and healthy living and bold declarations of reaching for the stars. Ask too many questions, though, and you'll see exopolitics is also about a race of humanoids who live under the barren surface of Mars and may, at some point, desire to mooch off Earth's rich resources.

Exopolitics "provides a conceptual framework for dealing with our highly populated universe," says author, lawyer and activist Alfred L. Webre, who coined the term 10 years ago and has watched it creep into the mainstream.

He also says the Martians are keeping to themselves for now.



A panel of exopolitical activists and people who say they have witnessed extraterrestrial occurrences: From left, former Air Force medic Bill Kirklin, retired Air Force Maj. Milton Torres, exoconsciousness coach Rebecca Hardcastle, former congressional candidate Joe Buchman, futurist Alfred L. Webre, Victor Viggiani of Exopolitics Toronto, Exopolitics Institute founder Michael Salla, institute director Angelika Whitecliff and journalist Paola Harris. Webre, center, coined the term "exopolitics" 10 years ago, and about 400 people attended the fifth gathering of like minds over the weekend in Gaithersburg. (By Dan Zak -- The Washington Post)