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CN&R
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SECOND & FLUME

by **Melissa Daugherty**

melissad@newsreview.com



Seeking intelligent life

When are the aliens going to show themselves? No, seriously. When I think about what's happening in the world today, I can't help but think about the fact that the federal government has vaguely acknowledged their existence. Then I cringe at how evolved lifeforms must view Earth dwellers.

It seems most people missed the memo on this news, but I'm not making this stuff up. Navy pilots training off both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts have had—excuse the 1970s film reference—close encounters with UFOs or so-called UAPs, unidentified aerial phenomena, the terminology the feds have adopted. It's well-documented with leaked—and now declassified—footage of such run-ins.

Let me repeat this: Flying vessels well beyond any modern technology—and yes, they're saucer-like, oblong actually—have been spotted here by distinguished members of the Armed Forces. In a few cases, they have come within a few meters of the United States' most sophisticated aircraft and then shot off at impossible rates of speed. It's something out of a movie, except it's not.

Speaking of which, sometimes I feel like we're living in the Matrix, because despite the revelation that advanced beings are actually, well, out there, ensuring that the universe is home to something greater than ourselves, it's like nobody knows it or cares. In theory, such knowledge would underscore our connectedness as human beings on this beautiful and relatively small blue dot. Yet, the opposite seems to be true. We form tribes that obsess over trivial matters. Meanwhile, we ignore very real existential threats.

Nuclear proliferation. Sectarian violence. Wars over natural resources, like Russia's assault on Ukraine. That unjust invasion is still happening, though somehow people are focused on Kim Kardashian wearing Marilyn Monroe's iconic dress to the Met Gala.

Here in the States, we're turning an authoritarian corner, with legal abortions now in jeopardy, one of the many delayed outcomes of the 2016 presidential election. We've taken many of our civil rights for granted, and our passivity is having profound consequences.

One of the biggest examples of our disconnectedness is how poorly we take care of our home. Indeed, we're destroying the only place we know can sustain our species. Every nation ought to be working together to power the world through renewable energy (solar, wind, etc.), which studies show can be accomplished within the next two decades. Nevertheless, we continue to tap the planet for an unsustainable resource and in the process spew toxic gases into the atmosphere.

Our actions are absurd when you think about it. Logic-defying. It's like, *Why capture the power of the giant yellow sky orb emitting free energy when we can pay to degrade the planet and leave it less habitable for future generations?*

At a certain point on this trajectory, Earth won't be able to sustain human life, which is why the futurist Elon Musk is working to colonize Mars. People love worshiping celebrity oligarchs like Musk, but it would be a fatal mistake to count on him or anyone else to save us.

Forgive me for being a bit of a bum, but the state of the world is enough to make a gal want to reach out to intelligent life elsewhere. I mean, beam me up already.

I jest, of course. In reality, we can't give up on our planet and humanity. We can't simply hope some advanced species will come to our aid. In fact, I can't see a reason they would offer their help. We certainly haven't proven our worthiness. Moreover, we don't even know if they're benevolent. Then again, if they're hostile, why would they bother to expend the effort to take us out when we're already on the path to self-inflicted mass extinction?

Melissa Daugherty is editor-at-large for the Chico News & Review



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