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To colleagues, journalists, policymakers, and the public:

An Open Letter on the Release of UAP Files: A Call for Serious, Interdisciplinary, and Humane Inquiry

A process of declassification and disclosure of records related to unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) is now underway in the United States. Whatever any single batch of files proves to contain, the broader shift toward open access marks a turning point in the public conversation about these phenomena. It is a moment that calls for clarity, humility, and care.

We are scholars, researchers, clinicians, and thought leaders who have been studying these phenomena across disciplines for many years. We are writing because the interpretive frameworks already circulating in the early response to the May 8th disclosure of files do not match the complexity of what is actually known about this topic. Voices have already spoken up claiming to “know” that the release on May 8th was all easily explainable and therefore uninteresting, encouraging you to look away. Other voices claim this release confirms their particular benevolent or malevolent narrative about the phenomena. These narratives are premature.

The honest scholarly position is that there was enough data even *before* the May 8th release that showed this issue is strange, compelling, and worthy of serious inquiry. This recent release was the first, with more to come over the coming months, and that confirms that there appears to be a great deal of data available on this topic that has been kept from public knowledge and research for generations. Given the depth of what has been hidden and the complexity already documented, no one is in a position to draw final conclusions from any single tranche of files. But 'look away' is not the right response either.

We want to be direct: these phenomena are real. Decades of serious research by intelligence professionals, military aviators, scientists, religious studies scholars, anthropologists, and people with direct experience with the phenomena point toward something genuinely complex. Anyone telling you they already know what it is, on the basis of a single day's release may be speaking with what sounds like confident certainty, but that doesn't mean they are speaking with knowledge.

You cannot draw mature conclusions from immature evidence. What is being released now is, at best, a new phase of inquiry: the evaluation of a body of evidence that researchers across many fields will need time to properly examine, especially with more information to come.

This work is not new. Dr. Jacques Vallée, an early ARPANET-era scientist and astronomer who worked alongside pioneers of the modern internet, has spent more than half a century arguing that UAP behave less like a vehicle and more like a recurring presence woven into human myth, belief, and imagination across cultures and centuries in ways that defy our preferred categories. Dr. Diana Walsh Pasulka, a leading religious studies scholar at the University of North Carolina, has shown how encounters and experiences with UAP and associated phenomena reshapes religious and scientific imagination simultaneously. Dr. Jeffrey Kripal, the J. Newton Rayzor Chair in Philosophy and Religious Thought at Rice University, has placed these encounters within the rigorously studied lineage of mystical and anomalous experiences that have been examined for centuries, and has called directly for academic engagement with “the impossible”. Dr. John Mack, former chair of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, journalist Ralph Blumenthal and NYT-bestselling author Leslie Kean, and many others have built rigorous bodies of work documenting what happens when credentialed observers, trained pilots, and ordinary people encounter something the standard frameworks cannot hold.

Furthermore, Dr. Ardy Sixkiller Clarke, professor emeritus of education at Montana State University, has spent more than two decades documenting Indigenous North American encounters across a spectrum of phenomena, including ongoing contact and relationships. Dr. Stephen Finley, a professor of religious studies and African American studies at Louisiana State University has examined how Black religious thought, particularly within the Nation of Islam, has engaged the phenomena as a serious cosmological matter. Their work, alongside that of many others, makes clear that the encounter traditions long predate the post-1947 Western frame in which the public conversation has mostly been conducted.

The “five observables” (anti-gravity lift, sudden and instantaneous acceleration, hypersonic velocity without signatures, low observability, and trans-medium travel) have been documented by trained military aviators and members of the Navy using instrumented sensor systems. We argue that the evidence supports recognizing a sixth observable: consciousness-related effects. Across decades of cases, researchers and experiencers have reported recurring patterns involving anomalous perception, unusual states of awareness, apparent information transfer, and consistent interactions between the phenomena and human consciousness. These patterns are widespread, cross-cultural, and persistent enough that we can no longer responsibly dismiss them. Excluding them from inquiry because they challenge prevailing assumptions would itself be unscientific.

While some in the academic community have historically disregarded this topic, this release represents a shift in access to the evidence and data necessary for scholars to evolve their thinking. Now is the time to embrace a broader worldview that looks closely at all the evidence, even when it is surprising. However, it is important to note that the science defaulted to for years (one that assumes metaphysical naturalism and lacks the courage to look at anomalous data for fear of worldview disruption) systematically excludes the people who have had direct contact with the phenomena: the Experiencer community. This is not just a moral failure. It is bad epistemology. You cannot understand a phenomena while refusing to listen to the witnesses closest to it. Experiencers are not a fringe population. They number in the millions, across every culture and every era. With what data we do have, we know that while their initial experiences

are roughly split between the difficult and the positive, the long-term arc, when processed with care and community, trends toward the integrative and the meaningful. Any honest accounting of what is being disclosed today and in the coming months must include their testimony as data, not as anecdotes to be discarded when they fail to fit a preferred theory.

Leslie Kean predicted some years ago that even a limited official confirmation would cascade rapidly into much deeper questions: ontological, theological, geopolitical, personal, and more. That cascade is now beginning. It will likely move faster than institutions are prepared for. It will pressure religious traditions, scientific paradigms, and political camps simultaneously. As one of those institutions, The Academy - inclusive of Colleges, Universities, and the community of institutions of higher education around the world - has a responsibility at this moment. So do journalists, clergy, educators, and public officials. The responsibility is not to provide certainty we do not have. It is to model the kind of patient, multidisciplinary, humane inquiry that the phenomena actually requires.

To the public: be patient with yourselves and with one another. The temptation toward premature certainty (in any direction) is strong. Resist it; curiosity is a more reliable guide than fear.

To journalists: please resist the pull of the simplest narrative. Seek out scholars from multiple disciplines. Take Experiencer testimony seriously. The story is bigger than the soundbite, and this is a once-in-a-species moment. Let's meet it with all of the things that make humanity great - our curiosity, our passion, our analytical capabilities, our ability to engage in rigorous debate, our ability to handle truth, and with the love and respect we owe each other as fellow members of humanity.

To our colleagues in the academy: step forward. The work is interdisciplinary by necessity, and no single field can carry it. Bring your training, your methods, and your willingness to sit with uncertainty. To learn more about the Visible College and work on this alongside us, come visit us at www.thevisiblecollege.org.

To policymakers: continue, but raise the standard. Today's release is a beginning, not a conclusion. The data the research community needs is far broader than what has been made public so far. Transparency, sustained over time, is what allows mature understanding to develop.

We do not claim to know what these files will ultimately reveal as they are released in the coming months. We claim only that the questions they raise deserve the seriousness, the breadth, and the humility we have spent our careers trying to bring to them. We invite anyone who shares those commitments to stand with us.

Signed,

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The Visible College is an interdisciplinary community of academics, researchers, clinicians, and citizen scholars committed to the rigorous and humane study of UAP and related anomalous phenomena. To add your signature to this letter, contact admin@thevisiblecollege.org