

A Sober Look at The Alien Abduction Phenomenon via The Upcoming John Mack Film

'John Mack' movie will "shift the collective perspective" on abduction phenomenon says producer

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I chatted recently with producer Denise David Williams about her ongoing efforts to bring to the big screen the extraordinary life and work of the late Dr John Mack. A Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Harvard psychiatrist, Mack controversially devoted the later years of his life to the study of the abduction phenomenon and made great strides toward bringing the abduction debate out of the murk of the UFO subculture and into the light of popular engagement.

After attending USC Graduate School in Film, Denise David Williams began work in the film industry at LucasFilm as an assistant in pre-production on *E.T.* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and went on to work as a Production Executive at several major companies including 20th Century Fox, AIP and IndieProd where she was responsible for acquiring and developing material for major motion pictures. She was Vice President of Kopelson Entertainment when the company produced *Platoon* – which won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Now, Williams is working to raise funds for the development of a screenplay inspired by John Mack and his abduction research. Williams' decision to raise initial funds at a grassroots level was made after a 14-month partnership with prospective producer Robert Redford ended with the star demanding 100% creative control of the project – something Williams was unwilling to grant. "That is not an option," she told Redford.

It was clear from our conversation that Williams has a bold vision for John Mack the movie, and it's not a vision that conforms to genre expectations. "I don't see this as a sci-fi project; I see this as a very authentic story along the lines of *A Beautiful Mind* meets *The Insider*, maybe structured along the lines of *The Social Network*... and that requires a writer who can write great characters and emotion and conflict.

"This is film is unique, and it would take the 'alien' dialogue to a whole new level... it would give the subject authenticity because of who John Mack was, because of his credentials, because of the sincerity of his work and because of the ridicule he endured. It

really has the potential to strike-up a dialogue about the fact that we're not alone in the universe in a way that is not intended to instill fear."

Williams says she is now seeking to attach an A-list actor to the pitch and is currently actively pursuing a number of stellar names for the meaty role of Mack. "One possibility would be to attach an actor and then we would find development money fairly easily. But even without an actor at this stage, we will still find development money and hire a writer and develop the script, and once we have a script we will go back and make a deal with a studio."

Despite being confident of attracting major talent to the *John Mack* project, Williams is resolute that her vision remain true to work and spirit of Mack the man.

"As the producer, I want to ensure that the *John Mack* screenplay has all the depth and complexity that it has the potential to have. A movie like this can help to shift the collective perspective; it introduces a more subtle, more gentle, more positive view of the subject matter, which we need. It's exploring the effect of alien interactions on a human being... the entire effect... how that person is transformed, and how this subject trans-formed John Mack, because clearly he was transformed.

First and foremost, our goal is for a film that's incredibly entertaining and provocative, where you come out of the theatre and you just go 'wow!', but also that it's a film that pushes a conversation into the mainstream about the fact that we're not alone in the universe, and that whatever is here with us is not necessarily here to threaten us, to frighten us, or to conquer us, but it's here, and let's have real dialogue about it. It's definitely time to bring it into the collective consciousness. I really believe this film is meant to be."



Robbie Graham is a leading authority on the cultural and political interplay between UFOs and Hollywood. He is the author of *Silver Screen Saucers*. His articles have appeared in a variety of publications including *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and *Filmfax*. He holds a First Class Honours Degree in Film, Television, and Radio Studies from Staffordshire University, and a Masters Degree with Distinction in Cinema Studies from the University of Bristol.