



Humans in Space *Hakluyt Prize 1999*

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Katherine Harris wrote this letter to far too many world leaders to list here, but they include the head of state for ten of the most influential countries in the world and over a dozen senior officials concerned with space exploration. This letter was entered into the Mars Society Hakluyt essay writing competition and won first prize in 1999.

Dear (insert name here),

I am a 17 year old girl who has a dream. That dream is for humanity to go to Mars. I've written this letter to advocate a manned mission to Mars and to outline the benefits that such a mission would provide.

“*The pioneers of the present and the future have the planet Mars as their goal*”

The urge to explore the unknown is ingrained in the human spirit. It is the inquiring minds of bold dreamers and explorers such as Magellan and Copernicus which help to extend the boundaries of knowledge, enabling the human race to understand more, to see further. Pioneers of the past sought out new land to establish their utopia. The continent of America was their New World, a place for fresh starts and for realizing dreams. The pioneers of the present and the future have the planet Mars as their goal.

A manned mission to Mars will benefit all human societies. One such benefit is knowledge. No other scientific expedition has the potential to teach us so much. By going to Mars, we will learn about planetary geology, atmospheric properties and climatology. If any type of life form is found on Mars, it would be a revelation that would drastically reshape the way humans view their place in the universe.

“*A mission to Mars could cause the computing, robotics and engineering industries to blossom, creating new jobs*”

In addition to scientific benefits, an expedition to Mars would have advantages directly for Earth. The technology used to go to Mars and sustain human life there could have applications on our home planet. Industries that would be involved in a mission to Mars such as computing, robotics and engineering would blossom, creating new jobs and stimulating the global economy. Mars is the planet most like Earth in our solar system. This presents an opportunity for comparative planetology which can reveal much about past conditions on Mars and potential climatic conditions on Earth. A mission to Mars will also serve as a source of inspiration for the populations of Earth. The challenge of a new frontier will ignite the passions of the world's youth.

A common misconception that people have regarding a possible mission to Mars is that they don't believe we have the necessary technology for such a mission. In an age when science fiction is extremely popular, it is understandable why people envision massive space ships à la Star Trek as the only feasible method of transportation for such a long expedition. However, this is completely false. The technology we have at present is advanced enough to send a manned crew to Mars. We are not lacking the technological means to go to Mars, we are lacking something much more important. Incentive. After the historical moon landing in 1969, interest in the space program died. Once the goal of a manned mission to the moon had been fulfilled, the will to go further was temporarily extinguished. That desire and will needs to be reignited. Without the support and enthusiasm of the people backing up an expedition to Mars, the governments which



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fund the space programs will be unwilling to initiate such a journey.

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determination*

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That's where I'm asking for your help. The power to instigate a manned mission to Mars is in the hands of influential people like yourself. It is a noble cause to support for many reasons, from political and scientific to inspirational and spiritual. An expedition to Mars will be a test of the world's nations vigor, strength and determination. This is an enterprise worthy of being associated with your name.

I am only one voice, but the message that I m trying to convey resonates with the voices of space enthusiasts everywhere. We believe that mankind's destiny is on Mars, and we need your help to get there. Please join The Mars Society, an international organization formed to make the dream of exploring Mars a reality. You will be supporting one of the greatest collective human endeavors of all time.

Thank you for your time,

Katherine Harris