

The Moon Was Once a Dream

A president's childhood moment fuels a new era of discovery.

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43 years

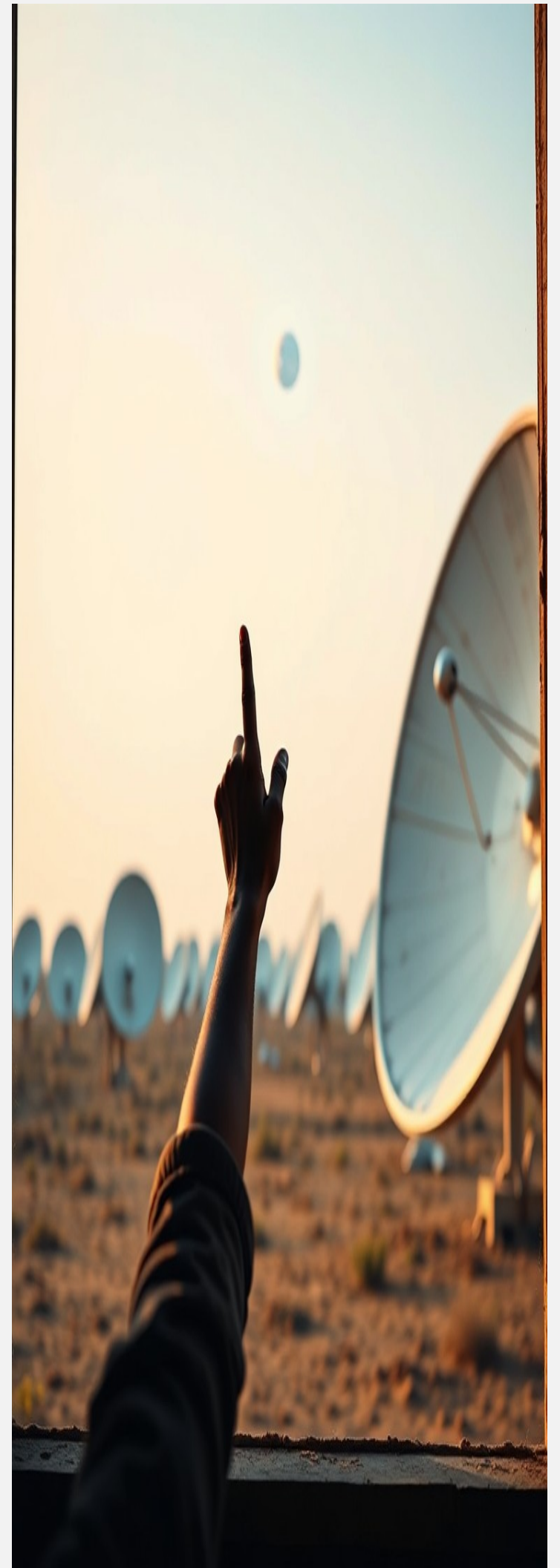
Time from LIGO concept to first detection

The interval between initial vision and scientific proof of gravitational waves.

This 43-year span underscores the patience required for transformative science. At Caltech, such long-term bets on fundamental research are not just encouraged—they are foundational. The ability to sustain investment over decades is what enables breakthroughs that reshape our understanding of the universe.

Source: Caltech • Published October 30, 2026

<https://www.caltech.edu/about/news/the-inauguration-of-ray-jayawardhana-as-caltechs-10th-president>



01

Wonders Are the Seeds of Innovation

Ray Jayawardhana's memory of his father pointing to the Moon in Sri Lanka was not a nostalgic anecdote—it was a formative moment of intellectual liberation. That question, 'If people could do that, what could we not do?', is the engine of scientific ambition. For AI in commercial space and aviation, this means nurturing curiosity at every level, from engineering teams to mission planners, ensuring that bold ideas are not only welcomed but funded and protected over time.



02

Innovation Demands Cultural Freedom

Jayawardhana's leadership philosophy mirrors the same cultural openness that enabled breakthroughs like mRNA vaccines and GPS. At Caltech, the fusion of chemistry and biology—once seen as a career-ending risk—became a cornerstone of progress. For AI in aviation and space, this means fostering interdisciplinary environments where AI engineers collaborate with astrophysicists, pilots, and policy experts without siloed thinking. True innovation thrives not in isolated labs, but in ecosystems where ideas cross boundaries.

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