

# Features

## Unsolved Atlanta murders arouse residents' anger

United Press International  
 ATLANTA — Terry Pue sat in the all-night hamburger joint until it was nearly dawn and when he left, he told the girl behind the counter "ain't nobody gonna get me."  
 But somebody did.  
 When Curtis Walker got home from school, his mother told him not to set foot out of the house. But

when she wasn't looking, he slipped out the door.  
 He never came back.  
 Twenty black children have been murdered since July 20, 1979, and not one killer has been caught.  
 For 20 months, residents of the bleak and crowded housing projects and the run-down black neighborhoods have huddled

together under a reign of terror. Fanned by activists who persist in seeing the murders and/or the failure to catch a killer as a racial plot, and the steadfast refusal of police to discuss the case, anger is now taking its place alongside the fear.  
 Most investigators believe there may be at least 10 killers, their motives ranging from domestic stress and revenge in isolated cases to sexual perversion in many instances.  
 There have been attempts to label a large portion of these killings as statistical normalities; one

authority remarked recently the city normally has as many as 20 such cases a year.  
 But rudimentary statistics released by the Atlanta Police Department for 1975-78 fail to bear this out. In the worst year, 1975, seven black children were killed, but most were infant child abuse cases. In 1978, only one was murdered. Over that four-year period, 17 black children were murdered, 11 were under the age of 5, and only one of those cases remains unsolved.  
 The only link between all 20 victims is their race, their poverty, and the fact that not one of their killers has been arrested. All but two were boys, ranging from 9

to 16, and nearly all were abducted, killed and then dumped someplace other than where they were killed. The lack of a crime scene is the worst obstacle investigators face.  
 The best apparent indication of a link between some of the cases is the cause of death — 10 of the victims are known to have been strangled or suffocated — and the proximity of some of the bodies.  
 Sources say investigators may know the race of the killer in some of this year's cases. Skin tissue lodged under the victims' fingernails would reveal this, but authorities will not say whether they have found any.  
 Much has been made over synthetic fibers found on some of the bodies. But sources say these fibers, despite being evidence that might link a suspect with a body — if there was a suspect, are not identical and do very little to tie any of the cases together.  
 There is also strong belief at least some of the last seven killings — all by suffocation or strangulation — may be the work of the same killer, a psychopath stimulated by publicity surrounding the previous killings.  
 "We have created him," said a medical examiner working on the case.  
 Police say in most child murders, the killer will be found within his family. They are sure that is the case in only a few of these deaths. At least one, they feel, is the result of the victim's court testimony; others may have come from sour drug deals or riffs.  
 But most, they feel, are ultimately motivated by sex.  
 They believe that despite the fact not one of the boys' bodies showed any signs of sexual molestation or abuse, and that none

were nude — all but two were fully clothed. Some of the boys, in fact, were believed to have occasionally sold homosexual favors.  
 One investigator said the most likely sexual killer would be a sadist whose gratification comes from the very act of destruction.  
 "When there's a sexual motive, strangulation is the favorite method," says Georgia Crime Lab Director Larry Howard.  
 All of the boys, with one exception, appeared to have gone quietly to their executions. Probably with the offer of money, they were lured away, investigators surmise, probably by a man on foot. They probably walked together to his car, got in willingly and were killed later. Medical examiners insist there is no indication any victim was drugged or chloroformed. Only Terry Pue, who at 5-foot-5 and 102 pounds was one of the largest victims, bore any marks of a struggle.  
 No investigator or source close to the investigation gives any credence to the theory these are ra-

recall a killer acted by racial hatred who slew children at random. The method of killing also does not fit a racial hatred pattern, say the experts; such a killer would be much more likely to shoot his victims and leave them where they fall.  
 Many black leaders are disgusted with the way the city went begging for vast sums of money to fund the investigation, and with the police policy of total silence on the murders. Four prominent black legislators have announced their support for a white candidate for mayor — the present mayor, Maynard Jackson, is black.  
 And in at least one housing project, some of the residents denounced the police force as incompetent and uncaring and set up their own armed patrol to watch over their children. A few weeks ago, a black man, told by a frightened woman that she saw a car with white people in it trying to grab a black child, opened fire on the car. No one was hurt.  
 "The police don't say nothin' because they don't know nothin,'" groused a black man standing outside his apartment.  
 Public Safety Commissioner Lee P. Brown has laid down strict orders against discussing the case, because, he says, he doesn't want to tip the police hand to the killers. Everyone can understand that, but authorities in other cities, with experience in mass killings, say the time has come for Atlanta police to lay their cards on the table.  
 The silence seems all the more strange because of the city's showboat antics last fall.  
 Fear reached the point of hysteria — demonstrated when, with murders unsolved, blacks being killed in other parts of the country and Ku Klux Klan activity rising, a boiler exploded at a housing project day care center, killing four children.  
 Explaining it was an obvious accident and not a bomb did little to allay panic. So the city — despite already having been burned for creating massive hoopla by hiring a strident psychic — drummed up a \$100,000 reward and Mayor Jackson ordered a house-to-house canvass of the entire city. Police and firemen, grousing over the massive waste of manpower, knocked on every door, from the shanties of Cabbagetown to the mansions on Paces Ferry, politely asking if anyone had seen anything suspicious. It did appear, however, to produce probably its only intended effect — relative calm returned to black sections.  
 Investigators have little doubt the publicity has led to more deaths — but it has apparently had little effect on potential victims. Despite frantic mothers and \$60,000 worth of police flyers urging children to beware, police making a test had no trouble enticing black children into private cars with a \$5 bill.  
 An almost circus atmosphere has grown up around the killings. Psychics flock to the city; those who don't come, write. One consultant the city picked up is a professor at Duke University who is trying to correlate the flood of visions.  
 Television personalities have solemnly urged "the killer" to hand himself over to them. Reporters have rushed onto the air with breathless reports of "unusual abrasions" on bodies that had been in a river for two weeks, and "unexplained" graffiti on restrooms.  
 Lester Maddox, the staunchly

segregationist and one-time p... error, took out an ad urging... killer to give up, if not to... then to him. The most success... that line apparently belongs to... Rev. Earl Paulk. Paulk, a sim... man, has had a number of... from men claiming to be the... killers; some he believes may... been real. One of them was... cently arrested, however, a... charged with making harass... calls. Police said he was no...  
 People in touch with the... investigation insist the special... force, which has grown from... men to a staff of 106 since its... tion last July, is doing every... within its power to crack the... The pressure on its officers is... overwhelming.

But W.K. Perry, veteran... of the Atlanta homicide squad... retired in anger a few days... the first two children's bod... were found in 1979, says the... force is "too little and too late."  
 Perry says he quit beca... Brown and his Police Chief... George Napper, were so absorb... by "community relations" th... they would not give him m... men to handle a soaring mur... rate. He makes no bones abou... bitterness.

Perry says the task force, a... grew, became a dumping grou... for men other departments... wanted to get rid of; he said... officers with no interest in work... murders and no investigative... perience were assigned to the... force, and police recruits, with... experience of anything, were... brought in to handle the flood... calls.

"This is a terrible mistake,"... Perry, now a private detect... who is following the case close... "I've worked over 2,000 hom... cides, and I know you've got... have the ability to pull informat... out of people."  
 "They got the wrong people... the field and the wrong people... the phones," he said. Brown... Napper, Perry says, are highl... intelligent, well-educated men... "they are oriented to commu... ity relations. They don't know... good, basic police work."

Whatever they may und... stand about police work, Brown... and Mayor Jackson are master... fund-raising. In a campaign... aggressively organized that... times it overshadowed the invest... gation, they begged, pleaded... demanded money from the... Reagan administration, big bu... ness and the public. They com... plained the investigation was... ing up to \$170,000 a month... budget.

The Reagan administration... coughed up nearly \$1 million... peripheral social services, and... sisted there was no legal way... funnel money directly into the... vestigation. But the pressure... black organizations around the... tion and in Congress grew... heavy that Reagan finally knu... led under and sent the city \$1... million. A concert by Sammy... Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra rais... another \$150,000, and private... civic donations poured in at such... fluid rate that Jackson recentl... announced the city needed... more money.

But the money is causing prob...  
 Fifteen task force investigat... are from surrounding jurisdic... tions, none of which pay the... officers overtime. They volun... their time and hope for time... later. Atlanta officers are paid... overtime, and the sight of some... of the Atlanta officers making \$1,4... a week in base pay and overtime... sources say, rankles the outsiders.

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