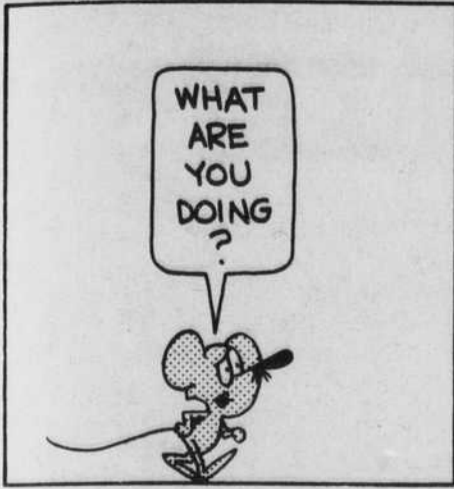


# Black Cat's BEBOP FABLES



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## Another Voice The Rev. Joseph Lowery Children Will Not Have "Died In Vein"

It is hard to imagine a horror movie that would even seem remotely realistic if its setting were in a place like Atlanta and 17 black children had been killed or kidnaped in 19 months. As horrible as it is, it is real; it is a nightmare that will still be real when we awake in the morning. Some sick and sinister minds are skillfully implementing schemes to kill black male children. The only thing more baffling than the acts themselves is the reason—why? What possible motives could fire the minds and hands of human beings to perform such heinous crimes?

Is the insane and expanding sex with children involved? Is it possible that sick minds were triggered into such deeds by earlier killings/abductions which may not be related? Have we here the macabre rituals of the occult whose history includes such satanic rubrics? Or could a number of these slayings be tied to the executions of blacks in other parts of the nation? Buffalo, New York, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, to name a few, are places where black males have been killed, two of whom had their hearts cut out.

The Ku Klux Klan is known to have been responsible for shooting blacks in Decatur, Ala., Chattanooga, Tenn., and Greensboro, N.C., and Klan/Nazi groups are active from California to New England. There is a training camp for killers near Decatur, Ala., where SCLC marchers were shot down by the KKK—with impunity. The "killer camp" in Alabama has been defended as necessary to prepare for the "Race war" that is sure to come. Could these hate groups think that Atlanta is the logical place to initiate and precipitate this race war? Or, is this an effort to undermine black leadership—in the center of black political power?

It is difficult to accept any of these possibilities, yet we cannot exclude any of them. Lee Brown has assured us that all of these theories have been fed into the investigation strategy and scope. Another mystifying factor, however, is that both black and white persons have been reported as culprits in attempted abductions. One young person advised me personally and convincingly that two men—one black, one white—attempted an abduction and later these same two were identified by other witnesses in a second abduction report, with identification being limited to black and white males and the color and make of the car.

Regardless of whether we think the police department was tardy in alerting the public and engaging in a massive attack on these crimes, it seems clear that every effort is being made to apprehend the criminals and that federal, state and local law en-

forcement agencies are engaged in an unprecedented, intensive campaign. Constructive criticism of police efforts may be helpful, for they are human and subject to human error which is applicable to all of us, but uninformed and "personal" attacks are so useless.

One of the positive results of this crisis is the spiritual strength that has characterized the reaction in the black community (and the support from many segments of the white community). While there is grief and alarm, and in some instances near-panic, for the most part the reaction has been courageously responsible. Only the strong can exercise restraint. Even members of the childrens' families have responded with the remarkable strength and faith that has brought us through many "dangers, toils and snares." The black experience has been characterized by an indomitable spirit that defied slavery, conquered segregation in varied forms and structures.

If the killers think they can subdue our strivings, deter our struggle, smother our quest for equity and justice, they are badly mistaken. They have not learned the lesson of history. The killing of our children will indeed enable us to "MAKE SURE they have not died in vain." Their lives—shortened by the hate—will strengthen our love for the future which is so wrapped up in our children.

If the killers hope to trigger a "race war," they must be convinced by now that the efforts of black and white citizens to address this issue together can do more to create a new sense of community and interracial cooperation.

No, we will not, as blacks against blacks nor blacks against whites, be tricked into turning on each other. We shall turn to each other in common efforts to rid our community of this murderous presence which threatens all—and then go on to building the kind of community that stands in adamant opposition to violence, injustice and hatred. Such a community spirit might just bring forth the information needed to break these cases.

Among other things, we need to set aside a few moments each day to pray and meditate for an end to these killings, the apprehension of the criminals, and commit ourselves to creating a healthy and safe environment for our children.

(The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery is president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.)

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