

# Urban legends as a part of american culture

Sociology



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Urban Legend Urban legends have long been part of the American culture. Jan Harold Brunvand was regarded as the one who coined the term "urban legend" in 1979 in his book review appearing in the Journal of American Folklore. Brunvand also published a collection of urban legend entitled *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings*. In this publication, he acknowledged that "legends, myths, and folklore do not solely belong to so-called primitive or traditional societies," and that "one could learn much about urban and modern culture by studying such legends (Urban Legend 3)." This paper will look at the KFC urban legend and illustrate how it depicts the culture modern America. 1

Peter van der Linden and Terry Chang describe urban legend as "appears mysteriously and spreads spontaneously in varying forms; contains elements of humor or horror (the horror often "punishes" someone who flouts society's conventions); makes good storytelling; and does NOT have to be false, although most are (The AFU 3)." They added that "urban legends often have a basis in fact, but it's their life after-the-fact that gives them particular interest."

One of the most famous urban legends is called Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) hoax which circulated throughout the internet. This urban legend falsely claims that the fastfood chain is using genetically engineered organisms (GMOS) instead of chicken. This, it says, is the reason why KFC does not use Kentucky Fried Chicken in its name anymore. The study, according to the source of the message, was conducted by KFC at the New Hampshire University. The urban legend illustrated the chicken being used by KFC as genetically modified organisms which are "kept alive by tubes inserted into their bodies to pump blood and nutrients throughout their

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structure." They also added that these " chickens" have no beaks, no feathers, and no feet and that heir bone structure is " dramatically shrunk" to get more meat out of them.

Looking closely, this urban legend says so much about the current popular culture in the United States. It was stated that a nation's " literature" is closely tied to the type of environment it originated from. Thus, the KFC urban legend mirrors the trends and facets in the society where it is being propagated.

The KFC hoax is a strong proof of the fact that Americans' income is being consumed outside their home. This is supported by the rapid proliferation and popularity of fastfoods like KFC. Also, it should be noted that the relatively advanced technology present in the economy is highly regarded to produce such GMOs. The technological revolution in genetics which made cloning and breeding of new organisms added to the appeal of this urban legend. The real possibility of producing and marketing GMO is clearly shown. It is worth mentioning that urban legend like this will be unbelievable in a less technologically adept community. It can also be seen that a distinct American culture of respecting authority and experts became a highlight of this hoax. The connection of an institution, the University of New Hampshire is made in order to make the urban legend more believable to public. Lastly, the new mode of communication facilitated by the internet technology makes the propagation of this fraud to the public. In the last part of the e-mail message, it reads that the message should be forwarded and let other people know. Thus, this urban legend eventually traveled worldwide through the internet.

Urban legends are mirrors of the society as they provide a glimpse of its  
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present and evolving culture.

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2006. 01 June 2006 Appendix: The Kentucky Fried Chicken Hoax

KFC has been a part of our American traditions for many years. Many people, day in and day out, eat at KFC religiously. Do they really know what they are eating During a recent study of KFC done at the University of New Hampshire, they found some very upsetting facts.

First of all, has anybody noticed that just recently, the company has changed their name Kentucky Fried Chicken has become KFC. Does anybody know why We thought the real reason was because of the " FRIED" food issue. It's not. The reason why they call it KFC is because they can not use the word chicken anymore. Why KFC does not use real chickens. They actually use genetically manipulated organisms. These so called " chickens" are kept alive by tubes inserted into their bodies to pump blood and nutrients throughout their structure. They have no beaks, no feathers, and no feet. Their bone structure is dramatically shrunk to get more meat out of them. This is great for KFC because they do not have to pay so much for their production costs. There is no more plucking of the feathers or the removal of the beaks and feet.

The government has told them to change all of their menus so they do not say chicken anywhere. If you look closely you will notice this. Listen to their commercials, I guarantee you will not see or hear the word chicken. I find <https://assignbuster.com/urban-legends-as-a-part-of-american-culture/>

this matter to be very disturbing. I hope people will start to realize this and let other people know.

Please forward this message to as many people as you can. Together we [can] make KFC start using real chicken again.