



# I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture

*Patricia A. Turner*

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## **I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture** Patricia A. Turner

This book divides into two basic parts. In Chapters 1 and 2 I discuss historical examples of "rumor" discourse and suggest why many blacks have--for good reason--channeled beliefs about race relations into familiar formulae, ones developed as early as the time of the first contact between sub-Saharan Africans and European white. Then in Chapters 3-7 it explores the continuation of these issues in late-twentieth-century African-American rumors and contemporary legends, using examples collected in the field. Because Turner was able to monitor these contemporary legends as they unfolded and played themselves out, rigorous analysis was possible.

What follows, then, is an examination of the themes common to these contemporary items and related historical ones, and an explanation for their persistence. Concerns about conspiracy, contamination, cannibalism, and castration--perceived threats to individual black bodies, which are then translated into animosity toward the race as a whole--run through nearly four hundred years of black contemporary legend material and prove remarkable tenacious.

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