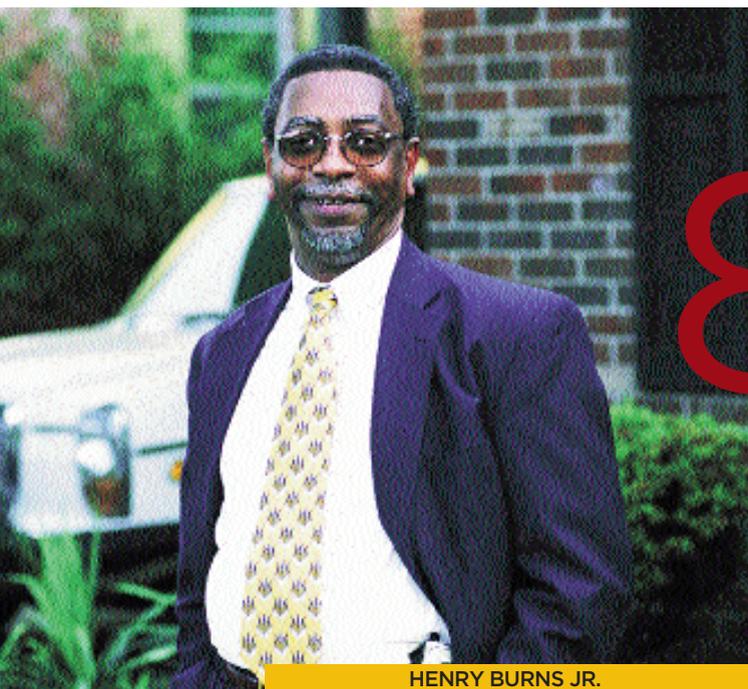


# MEMPHIS, TN

Cleveland native Henry Burns Jr. planned to live in Memphis for only two years when his job transferred him there in 1989. "That's how much I ended up liking it," says Burns 15 years later. A divorced father of two adult children (a son, 28, and daughter, 25), Burns has worked in the restaurant business for close to 30 years. He has managed to do well for himself in Memphis. The 54-year-old restaurant manager for Cracker Barrel earns an annual income of \$65,000—more than twice the average annual pay for African Americans in Memphis.

Three years after moving to Memphis, Burns purchased his home for \$62,000. The three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bathroom dwelling is located in Memphis' middle-class Whitehaven community. Once a predominantly white neigh-



HENRY BURNS JR.

borhood, notes Burns, Whitehaven's demographics—60% African American and 40% white—are representative of Memphis today.

Memphis is growing, says Burns, and with a new basketball team (the Memphis Grizzlies), construction of a \$250 million sports arena, and a riverfront development project, Memphis is on its way to becoming the belle of the South. "Memphis is sort of the hub of the South," Burns says, pointing out that it has attracted more businesses over the past 10 years.

The city's educational system continues to be a bone of contention for Burns and other residents. Both of his children graduated from Memphis' public school system, which has been through three superintendents since he moved there. "Everybody comes in with a dynamic plan to fix the system, fix the learning process; so we end up spending a lot of money, they end up leaving, and we're back to square one again," says Burns, noting neither of his children are college graduates.

The grandfather of three has concerns about the quality of education for the next generation. When the time comes, Burns says he may consider sending them to private school.

—Aisha I. Jefferson

**SITUATED ON THE LOWER CHICKASAW BLUFF ABOVE THE MISSISSIPPI** River, Memphis is home to the blues, the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, and 397,702 African Americans who make up 61% of the total population—the third highest black percentage of the top 10.

"Memphis evolved from a racially segregated city to an urban metropolis with an African American majority," says Mayor Willie W. Herenton. In 1991, the Memphis native made history as the city's first elected black mayor. Last October, he attained another historical triumph by becoming the city's first mayor elected to a fourth consecutive term. African Americans occupy local government, including seven of 13 city council posts.

"Bluff City" is best known as a manufacturer of textiles, heating equipment, and automobile and truck parts. It's also a major transportation center, serving as FedEx's headquarters and a Northwest

## Main Industries

Healthcare, biomedical research, high technology, and communications

## Landmarks

National Civil Rights Museum, Soulsville: STAX Museum of American Soul Music, Memphis Rock 'N' Soul Museum

## Annual Events

Southern Heritage Football Classic, Juneteenth Freedom & Heritage Festival

## Top Black Officials

Willie W. Herenton, mayor; Harold E. Ford Jr., U.S. Rep.; James Bolden, police director; Carol Johnson, school superintendent; Joe Brown, chairman, city council

## Websites

[www.cityofmemphis.org](http://www.cityofmemphis.org);  
[www.blackmemphis.com](http://www.blackmemphis.com)

Airlines hub. These features, Herenton says, help create employment opportunities. Unfortunately, they're not enough.

Although future job growth looks bright—19.2%—recent job growth appears bleak at -0.8%. The black unemployment rate—11.3%—is above the national average for African Americans and the total U.S. population. Memphis is near the bottom of **BE's** list with a median black household income of \$31,417 and just 24.3% of black households earning above \$50,000.

What makes Memphis appealing? Affordable housing. Black homeownership at 57% is above the national average, and second only to Birmingham, Alabama. The average price for a new home is \$183,095, the lowest next to Houston. Memphis' cost of living is the lowest among the top 10 and its medical cost index is well below the national average.

Of note, Memphis and Atlanta were the only cities where respondents reported positive African American community/local law enforcement relationships. However, Memphians were dissatisfied with public safety given an exceedingly high violent crime rate.

Although Memphis has the lowest pupil/teacher ratio of the top 10 at 14.2, it has the worst record for African Americans holding high school diplomas at 69.6%. Not surprisingly, respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of public schools. Having worked in the city school system as a teacher, principal, and superintendent of schools, Herenton reiterates his commitment to improving the education system.

—A.I.J.