

## Inside the Newsroom: Cal's real legacy is city's fertile field

By Chris Peck

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Remember this about Coach Cal. He didn't come to Memphis like the panda bears at the zoo.

We couldn't put him in a cage for our enjoyment. He wasn't our pet or our mascot.

That's the wrong way to think about John Calipari's Memphis stop.

Calipari came to Memphis because he saw an opportunity here.

He needed a place to step up, step out, step ahead and make a mark for himself. And he chose Memphis.

Memphis made Coach Cal.

He's now the highest-paid college basketball coach in America, because he came to Memphis and the city worked some magic for him.

That's a crucial difference from what this city so often feels.

For so long, Memphis' psyche has been haunted by losses, betrayals and pain.

Let's remember what Memphis did for Coach Cal and change the Memphis story line.

We're a place where careers are made. We're a place where people come to make a mark. We're a place where there are opportunities for talent to shine.

That's Coach Cal's real legacy for Memphis.

Rather than think about his departure as one more blow to the city's fragile ego, think of it a different way.

Wanna become somebody? Want to take a step toward an even bigger stage? Then come to Memphis and we'll help you do it.

In fact, the city has more people than a basketball coach who have looked at coming here as a golden opportunity.

Take a look around the city and you see all kinds of people who have come here by choice to move up.

Look in the arts.

Cameron Kitchin, the new director of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, came here from a smaller museum in Virginia. Why? Because the Brooks is bigger, better, and he saw an opportunity.

Or take Kevin Sharp, the director of the Dixon Gallery and Gardens. Similar story. He had a good reputation built at smaller institutions in Illinois and Florida. In Memphis, he got a bigger stage and a better museum.

Rehema Barber is one more on this track. She came from Connecticut to Memphis less than a year ago to run the emerging and exciting Power House contemporary art project in Downtown Memphis. Opportunity. That was her equation.

This is the story that Memphis needs to tell itself right now.

Sure, Cal is gone. And good for him. He used his days in Memphis to vault to the pinnacle of his career.

OK. Who's next?

Will it be Meri Armour, the CEO of Le Bonheur Children's Medical Center, who came to Memphis in 2007 from a lesser job in Cleveland, Ohio, to hoist Le Bonheur's reputation into the top 10 of children's hospitals nationwide?

Could it be Bob Compton, the millionaire entrepreneur who came to Memphis and now wants to make the city the world's foremost manufacturing center for orthopedic medical devices?

**How about Dr. Rajiv Grover, the dean of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis? Will he be the one who takes the U of M's business school to the top rank?**

All of these talented, driven people came to Memphis -- like John Calipari -- to make a mark.

That's what this place can mean.

Many a career has been made in Memphis. Businesses have taken root and flourished. FedEx and Holiday Inns are just the most well-known. Artists have found their groove, from Elvis to Three 6 Mafia.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital could fill the lower bowl at FedExForum with the talented people who have come here to be part of that creative enterprise. Example: Dr. Richard Webby, a New Zealand native, who came here and now is the World Health Organization's director of laboratory research on bird flu.

If you're feeling blue about Coach Cal's departure consider this. The best therapy available to Memphis right now is to nurture all the others who, like John Calipari, came here to build a foundation to an even bigger dream.

There are worse places to be than one steppingstone away from the top.

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