Questions: Karen Golightly Otherlands Wednesday 12/14/16

1. What is your hometown? Mobile, AL
2. If you could move to another city, would you? Probably but would want to go somewhere internationally.
3. If so, what city? No place in particular.
4. What neighborhood do you live in? Cooper Young
5. How long have you lived in Memphis? Since 1987.
6. How would you describe the City of Memphis in three words? Southern Grit Special I like the whole idea of the southern grits and the grit, and it’s like the special of the day.
7. What were your first impressions of Memphis? –or- What was your childhood in Memphis like?

Moved from Nashville on my own to go to Rhodes. Went for a bike ride to ride down to the river and ended up on Lamar and I thought I was about to be killed. So I rode down to the river and watched the sunset and thought this is amazing. But the ride back was scary. So I learned from that experience that Memphis is really divided and that you had to be careful in some of them. And they were right next to each other.

1. What is your current impression of Memphis? Now that all seems like old hat. I try to be careful of my surroundings but I feel really safe here. Most of the time. I have learned about the culture, the music, all the weird people that live here, so I have figured out that Memphis is slow enough that if you want to do something innovative, nobody is doing that here yet. So if you want to shine in an area, it is easy to find an area that nobody is doing anything in. Even if it is baking rosemary cookies with caramel icing. Nobody is doing that here. And it is super cheap to live here.
2. Do you feel Memphis has improved while you have lived here? Oh, dramatically. I have been lucky enough to have lived here long enough to have been involved in all sorts of ways in the community. I’ve seen out east grow, education, public art, all different ways. I saw the square be great, have its demise, and then come back again.
3. What is your funniest story about living in Memphis? I used to work at Sun Studio as an intern and asked me to re-write their tour. I didn’t know anything about Memphis music. There was a guy named Gary Hardy who was the owner at the time. And there was a sound engineer there named James who helped me write the tour. So now they told me that I had to give the tour like eight times a day. That totally sucked, but the great thing about it was that these stars would come in and record there. One day Matt Dillon came in and was very kind and agreed to pose for a picture with me. So we were standing at the front of the store and I had my hand on the door frame and my boss came bursting in and slammed the door on my fingers. I screams and was completely appalled and embarrassed. And cried, and then I quit. He rehired me back but I warned him that he could never do that again.
4. If you could change something about Memphis, what would it be? I would change the crime. Because I would like to feel safer.
5. This web site only captures a snapshot in time. What would you like someone twenty years from now who reads this to know about you? I would like them to know that I am the mother of three kids. That I direct two non-profits that I am really proud of. Memphis Reads which is a community reads project where once a year we have everyone read the book and then we have the author come to town to talk to the community and the other is Paint Memphis which is an organization which is trying to create community one wall at a time. It is like my dream come true. It is not painless and a lot of hard work, but the artwork will still be there and will hopefully change the face of Memphis. I want Memphis to be a destination for people to come.
6. What is your favorite thing about Memphis? Maybe those Makedas cookies? Or the people. I have made so many friends. And the grittiness. It is not gentile but also with that southern hospitality. And if you could put that in a cookie it would be Makeda’s cookies.