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## Calvin Sims, Knight in Cowboy Boots

Successful computer consultant turns storyteller to help youth

By **Mary Silver**

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[Epoch Times Atlanta Staff](#)



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COWBOY SIMS: African American cowboy, master storyteller, and champion of troubled youth. (Courtesy Calvin Sims)

ATLANTA - Calvin Sims disembarked from a jet in Zurich. A limousine was waiting to take him to a 400

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year-old restaurant in a castle, because his clients wanted to show how much they valued him. Then he had an epiphany. "Am I not the same little boy nobody wanted? The revelation I got was to go back home and tell young people if I can do it, you can do it. It was like a weight had lifted off me."

Home was Vine City, one of Atlanta's toughest, most violent neighborhoods. His mother abandoned him there, leaving him with his babysitters, a cruel, hard drinking family. They abused him. His mother died when he was still small and he stayed with that family until he joined the Marines. His maternal uncle used to play checkers at a place across the street. He observed young Calvin dispassionately, but never greeted him and never rescued him.

Television was a ray of hope: The Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, all the Westerns. "Normally I was not allowed to touch that TV, but on Saturdays they would all be hung over. They would be asleep. I would get up early and watch the Westerns. All human beings need heroes, and children need heroes desperately. I saw those men in those shows, men of honor. I saw them treat women with dignity, say "ma'am and tip their hats. They had chivalry. I saw that integrity and I knew that was who I wanted to be."

As soon as he was old enough he enlisted in the Marines, and there found the culture of honor and stoicism he had admired in the fictional shows. The traits that had been ridiculed and berated by his foster family were rewarded in the Corps.

After finishing his service, he returned to Atlanta and got a job at Life of Georgia, where he was assigned to a big room full of giant, old fashioned computers. "They wanted me to sweep the floors. They had no intention of letting me touch those computers!" Every evening he left work at 5:00, went across the street to the Varsity, and got two hot dogs all the way (that's with mustard, ketchup, chili, cheese and onions). He watched the news with his all the way dogs and then returned to the computer room. He taught himself everything he could about how the computers worked, staying until two in the morning many times.

One day there was a computer problem at the company and he stepped forward to fix it. The career that would take him around the world as a computer consultant had begun. He developed expertise in making systems talk to each other and went to Zurich to help make the Euro work. He was gratified by his success but his real joy has come since he acted on the epiphany.

"All the suffering I went through, all the pain, it is redeemed if I can use it to help others. That purpose gives meaning to all the evil and misery I experienced."

Mr. Sims became a storyteller. He visits schools, still traveling the world, to tell true stories of the American West. He dresses in full cowboy regalia and he sometimes brings his horse. He does trick roping and dramatic, loud, bullwhip demonstrations. He brings cowboy gear and explains its origins and use. The historic stories he tells are all about honor, virtue and determination. He treats his audience with great gentleness and respect.

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During the interview his phone rang. He apologized, saying, "I have to get this, it's my daughter." They conferred over a problem she was having at school. He made sure she was ok, told her he loved her, and promised to meet with a school administrator the next day. Certainly he will arrive at the school with a white hat and on a white horse, spiritually if not physically.

Mr. Sims' motive is character education. He has just published a book, "When the Student is Ready, the Teacher Will Appear," about how to teach children. Booker T. Washington is on the cover, and the book is dedicated to Mr. Sims' daughters. On rap music, he writes, "Culture is fluid. A trend that starts in one community often migrates and proliferates in another. Rap music originated in the black community, yet today 77% of this music is purchased by white youth. We must all take steps to preserve character and integrity in all cultures."

Gregg Johnson, of Los Angeles, Master Teacher, wrote, "With the Calvin Sims approach, we're empowered to really believe in our children and become key players in making a space where student learning emerges naturally through the thrill of self-discovery. ...It's incredible to watch it happen, and there are very few things in life more rewarding than seeing the little miracle that occurs when Calvin works his magic and the intense flowering of a child's intelligence is allowed to blossom."

Mr. Sims will speak and sign his book on Saturday, June 24 at 4:00pm at the Peachtree Branch Library, 1315 Peachtree St. Atlanta Ga. 404-885-7830

Would you like to order a copy? Please call Mr. Sims at 678-528-7414. You may also visit his website, [www.storytellers.net](http://www.storytellers.net).