**MEETING BROTHER BILL IN 1976**

 In 1976, I stood outside Brother Bill’s apartment door. I nervously adjusted my tie after knocking softly.

 “Yes?” he said. Opening the door, he eyed this Black man wearing a three-piece suit, shirt and tie. “I thought you could be a process server!” He told me later.

 I said: “My name is George Tooks. My brother and work partner, Eddie, and I had read *The Black West* and composed this song, dedicating it to you.” I handed him a cassette tape.

 He invited me in and as we listened to the song, he called out the names of the Sheroes and Heroes we were singing and talking about. “Stage Coach Mary!” “Cherokee Bill!” “Bass Reeves!” “Ben Hodges!” He laughed. “Bill Pickett!” “Buffalo Soldiers!” “24th and 25th Infantry, and 9th and 10 Cavalry!”

 We played *Black Son of the West* repeatedly, laughing and calling out names featured in his book.

 He offered me a glass of seltzer water and we toasted each other. Little did we know that – on that day – we formed not only a friendship – but a brotherhood that would last a lifetime of happiness.

 In 1996, with Brother Bill serving as consultant, under the banner of the Lenga Tooks Musical Workshop, Eddie and I wrote, composed and produced our last musical production in Harlem. [I’m proud to say] the musical, *DRUMS OF THE BLACK WEST,* had standing room only audiences every night. *BLACK SON OF THE WEST* was the featured song.

 And here it is.

**George Tooks**

**January 11, 2020**