

A Man on a Mission for 'Unity In the Community:'

## Reggie Schell: Revolutionary Commander Who Asks Nothing In Return

(This profile was compiled with the collaboration of the *BlackSt\*r Staff* and Marcus Schell)

**R**ichard R. (Reggie) Schell's life as a warrior for the rights of Africans in America has been a real rollercoaster ride. He made his parents and four sisters proud by serving with distinction in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1962. Many personal bio's start out that *routine* way.

But it was only a very short time before his life made a radical left turn. He was threatened with death by the F.B.I., hounded throughout the '60s and '70s by former Mayor Frank L. Rizzo, Sr.'s., goons-in-blue; and harrassed by COINTELPRO-led double agents inside the Black Panther Party itself.

Not to be melodramatic, Schell has had more than enough

experience to neatly fit inside his own definition of 'warrior'.

His name and image were abruptly splashed before the nation in a tumultuous event in 1970. He and dozens of other Black Panthers were cornered by swarms of Rizzo's ferocious goons, forced onto the streets in West and North Philadelphia and stripped naked before the world media. At the time Schell was captain of the Philadelphia party. The thunderous showdown came at a time when the Panthers were planning a major party convention at nearby Temple University. After Rizzo threatened university brass, they backed down and the convention was abruptly shifted to North Philly's Church of the Advocate, under the solid direction of Fr. Paul

Washington, who dared the 'Big Bambino' to get in his way.

"We wanted to use our right to bear arms for self-defense," Schell told a newspaper reporter in those fiery days. "And we were provocative. But we

police." "We're trying to build unity in the community," he went on. "But I would still encourage people not to run away from the fact that they might have to use physical force."

A big break with the party in the early '70's led Schell to close ranks with the *Black United Liberation Front* and eventually form the *Malcolm X Party*, which ran him and other local notables—including Louis Sparks (*Zaire Ra*, of *John and Milton Street fame*) for public office. Schell ran for the 3rd Senatorial District in North Philly, a seat later held by Roxanne Jones and now occupied by Shirley Kitchen. The party described itself as a "...totally grassroots phenomenon, which has enjoyed the support of many Black and anti-war militants..."

Schell never abandoned

those wild times.

Now Schell and his neighbors observe the scenery slowly change, with the stolid rumble of gentrification eating away at the core of the neighborhood; transforming it to something planners label 'upscale.'

Undaunted, forever the strategist, Schell used his keen tactical sense to help launch an African nationalist, revolutionary journalistic mouthpiece, the *BlackSt\*r* newspaper, in August of 2001, with the help of its current editor and Leonard Forbes, a local publisher and writer.

Reggie Schell: a man on a mission, with a motive to move his people: "I have moved in the way that's most important to me," he told a journalist 25 years ago. "I understand myself and I understand the scene. I thought I was going to have to either make my peace with Rizzo and work for a poverty agency or go to work in a factory. But the people here stood by me. I had to become a fulltime father to my two kids. I discovered a whole other part of me. Before I just thought I had to be a warrior. Now I see the human



courtesy Marcus Schell

Vietnamese have their own history to tell.

Thought they look alike, they feel they're not alike.

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