

# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

T.R.I.G.G.E.R.  
PROJECT



AN INTERVIEW WITH

## TIA BELL CEO/FOUNDER THE T.R.I.G.G.E.R. PROJECT

### WHEN DID YOU BEGIN WORKING IN THE YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION SPACE?

When I was 10, my mother became a victim of gun violence. At that age, I knew the realities of what happens after gun violence occurs. So I begged the protectors in my community not to retaliate or cause more pain. And more formally, when I finished my Master's in Youth Development, I started an organization called FOur Youth, which later became The TRIGGER Project.

### WHAT IS THE MISSION OR PURPOSE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

To prevent gun violence through positive youth development and public health. Our greater vision is to change the normalcy of gun violence in Black communities and change the narrative of gun violence.

### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN THE T.R.I.G.G.E.R. PROJECT?

I'm the founder of the TRIGGER project, but I'm a community mom. I have over 1,000 surrogate "babies" who I love and adore. I'm a youth advocate at heart, and I step into leadership roles to support those younger than me.

### WHAT RESOURCES DOES THE T.R.I.G.G.E.R. PROJECT PROVIDE TO YOUTH?

Giving them a place and a space to belong, emotionally and physically, without judgment. Allowing them to choose their own path away from the gun and supporting them with that. We give them opportunities to be creative, access economic opportunities, and be leaders.

### WHY IS YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION NEEDED IN WASHINGTON, DC?

The first homicide of the year in 2023 was a young person. Their heart could still be beating today if there were systems in place to better support youth exposed to gun violence. There's only a focus on intervention and interruption services. There isn't one thing in place other than TRIGGER where a young person can go for help if they've lost someone to gun violence or are involved in gun violence.

### HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE T.R.I.G.G.E.R. PROJECT GROW IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

A TRIGGER office would be in every school, and there would be a physical location modeled after a college campus. We would have dormitories for a safe stay, academic opportunities, student health and resource centers, and a cafeteria. There would be a physical place for anyone to belong and be unconditionally loved.

### WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

Website: <https://thetriggerproject.org/about-us>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thetriggerproj>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thetriggerprojectdc/>

To Learn More, Visit  
<https://yvpc.sph.umich.edu/>

**M** | YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTER