LOCAL STORIES

# Meet Nguyen "Tom" Griggs | Educator & Martial Artist

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Nguyen "Tom" Griggs and we've shared our conversation below.

**At Nguyen "Tom" we want to hear more about how you thought about starting your own business?**

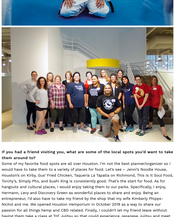
My parents worried for other people and struggled due to ignorance, bad business practices and general entrepreneurial indifference. When they had the chance to work for themselves, they jumped and never looked back. In my 20's, I worked in Insurance, Sales, IT and Education. I too face the same types of problems related to inter-team friction, poor communication, and lack of accountability. I felt I could bring a unique perspective given my background as an educator, lecturer, martial arts instructor and my love of people (why else would I start a company focusing on teams, leadership and conflict management. It turns out that my decision squared dives into the numerous challenges that so many people face at work and in educational settings. Recently, the focus on social justice access issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion (commonly referred to as DEI) has been a focus of my work. I'm a federally funded program through the Department of Education, that focuses on educational opportunity for economically disadvantaged teens, college students and adult learners alike. I know that if I could take my skills and knowledge and help young people, doctoral students and adult learners gain valuable skills, they would be better able to compete and attain their educational and career goals. And I also know that if I take those same skills and help the TRIO professionals and staff members better work together and effectively navigate conflict, they will be better able to support their students and program participants. I know that is what my target client groups are now TRIO and educational groups, followed by healthcare and business clients.

**Alright, so for those in our community who might not be familiar with your business, can you tell us more?**

(For clarity, I broke this question down into smaller questions and listed my responses below) Your Work (6 part question) Please tell us more about your business. We'd love to hear: 1) What are you apart from others My passion, purity and effective delivery methods and the mixture of martial arts, psychology and business-based approaches to connect with people and teach them how to overcome their challenges. 2) What are you most proud of or excited about? I'm excited most about working the TRIO groups, especially the students and the staff. There is a great deal that can done to help these young people and the college students. Likewise, there is much that needs to be done with the staff. Why not find a way to equip and train both groups for improvement, growth and success? I am truly proud of my business partner and my family for their support. 3) What are your goals? I am in today business-wise and was it was? I am still working on several small milestones. I really decided to legally form my company in December 2014. I was making slow and steady progress, but my dad passed in May 2016. This meant I had to focus on my parent business and much of what I was working on (along with growth) made my work secondary. 2) Where is your ideal client? Anyone who is interested in learning how to be more effective in getting results with people. 4) If someone was taught how to do this, what would everyone the challenges by telling nature takes it. I turned into gone of the gone and both being there and leaving on my family and close friends. When you experience a loss of someone you love dearly like a parent, and then you have to help support the other parent emotionally and spiritually, it's hard on you. But I discovered that for me, trying to operate with the same drive and passion for my goals wasn't there but my loyalty and duty to my family was. Although I was not ready to leave my business, I had to do what was right. I learned lessons you've learned along the way. I like 3) as a way of learning and remembering so here are three (3) lessons that I learned along the way: a) The L.O.Dragons Rule: We teach rank and little kids in martial arts the Lil Dragons rule which in short states You have two ears, two eyes and one mouth because you are supposed to listen and the TWICE as much as you talk. I teach this to people in business and life because it is a great way to remind people to make observations, thought and patience will be more beneficial than impulsive words or actions. b) Multiple Paths Get You There: Short version, you don't have to take the same path or do the same things to attain your success. Far too many people get stuck in the notion that success is found by following the same steps and sequences that others have utilized. But I challenge people to define success for themselves First, and think about how to get there. c) Always Keep Your Work! My dad taught me quite a few lessons but perhaps the most important one was to always keep your word. He would sometimes when asked to do something and those were yes, no and let me check on that, "yes" and "no" are obvious but when you do say "let me check on that" that means you'll actually do it and get back to the person in question. But give people an answer and do everything in your power to keep your word to them. 6) What do you want the world to know about you or your business? I want people to know that I am a caring and compassionate person. My family, friends, life coached us by helping me develop my brand and collateral and now starting helping me in the research, strategies and approaches aspect of my work. My story comes from my life and the variety of ups and downs that many of us experience. But things like martial arts, entrepreneurship and growing up in a family business helped to define my brand. The best synopsis of my brand is that I always encourage people to reach people find their inner black belts. Why you ask? Simply put, if you think about what a black belt entails, it means that one has gone through a journey that has led to a level of mastery, commitment and more learning. But of equal importance is the emphasis on character, spirit and presence. Finding your inner black belt should carry the harmonious ideas of having the confidence and competence of someone with a black belt while nurturing the ever love of learning that a white belt or beginner has.

**If you had a friend visiting you, what are some of the local spots you'd want to take them around to?**

Some of my favorite food spots are all over Houston. I'm not the best planner/organizer so I'm sure I will forget some of my favorite places. Here goes: Bun B's Trill Burgers restaurant, resultant on Kirby, Gulf Fried Chicken, Taqueria La Tapatia on Richmond, Tito's is Good Food, Tortilla's, Simply Pho, and Sushi King is consistently good. That's the start for food. As for hangouts and cultural places, I would enjoy taking them to our parks. Specifically, I enjoy Hermann, Levy and Discovery Green as wonderful places to share and enjoy. Being an entrepreneur, I'd also have to take my friend by shop that my wife Kimberly (Pepper-Stitch) and me. We opened Houston Hemporium in October 2019 as a way to share our passion for hemp based products and educate people on the benefits of hemp products without having them take a close at THC cigdiss so that could experience Hemp cigdiss and meet some truly awesome people.



**Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?**

1) Thank you to my family which includes my parents, son, tot and 2nd wife and my brother. All of them have helped me grow, learn, pushed me back and propelled me forward in many ways. Thank you and I love all of you. 2) Many, many thanks to all of the members of my martial arts families over the years. Through literal and figurative fights, my learning as a martial artist and as a human being. Without you, I would not be the person I am and I especially want to thank my THT Judges family here in Houston. 3) for their years of learning and growth. 3) Finally, I want to thank the educators in my life younger years and the many trebles warriors that I currently get to know. Too many teachers saw my potential and wouldn't let me slip or just "get by" without again pushing and challenging me. I college, I would not have been successful in my business endeavors. Thank you for challenging because their teaching acumen and instinct for improvement made me better and I wanted to pass that on to my students. And for the many educators in the K-12 and TRIO type programs, thank you for your work and passion. We need to do more to help the teachers on all sides.

**Website:** www.hthgroup.com
**Instagram:** nguyengriggs
**LinkedIn:** linkedin.com/in/nguyengriggs
**Twitter:** @NguyenGriggs
**Facebook:** @NguyenTomGriggs

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