

Rasheedat Fetuga

Gideon's Army

Rasheedat Fetuga, a former Metro Nashville Public School teacher and beloved community member, is a visionary leader who gathers youth in vulnerable communities to build peace. She is the Founder and CEO of Gideon's Army, a Nashville-based grassroots organization led by youth and families impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, disproportionate minority confinement, mass incarceration, and street violence. Rasheedat started Gideon's Army after her student, Lamar Hughes, was killed at sixteen.

Under Rasheedat's leadership, Gideon's Army has achieved significant milestones, including launching a Restorative Justice campaign in Metro Nashville Public Schools and Davidson County Juvenile Court. This resulted in district-wide adoption of Restorative Practices, a revised student handbook, and restorative diversions in juvenile court. Their Driving While Black Report, created in collaboration with 60 community and academic partners, led to a 90% reduction in traffic stops across the city, the establishment of a police oversight board, and independent investigations of officer-involved shootings. Gideon's Army also started Nashville's first grassroots community-led violence interruption program, seeing as much as a 43% reduction in contact shootings and homicides. Their collaborative restorative school programs have led to a 60% reduction in suspensions and a 70% reduction in expulsions at Pearl-Cohn High School.

Beyond direct service, Rasheedat's impact extends to national advocacy and policy work. She is a member and leader of the Black and Brown Peace Consortium, which launched the Fund Peace campaign in 2018 to advance community-led violence prevention strategies and influence national policy. This coalition played a pivotal role in establishing the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention under the Biden-Harris Administration. Through advocacy efforts, Rasheedat and her coalition secured \$400 million in federal funding for the Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative, as well as over \$4.4 billion from the Department of Justice in 2023 to support community safety, including \$90 million for violence interventions and \$150 million for school safety. These efforts directly benefited Nashville, which received ARPA funds and a DOJ grant, enhancing community violence prevention programs and initiatives. She also collaborated with federal officials to guide community organizations and leaders in accessing these resources.

In February 2023, Vice President Kamala Harris recognized Rasheedat at the White House for her exceptional leadership as a graduate of the University of Chicago Crime Lab's inaugural Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVILA). As one of the top violence intervention specialists in the country, Rasheedat received the Innovation and Exploration Prize from the University of Chicago and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for her capstone project highlighting her work with justice- and gun violence-impacted youth through Gideon's Army's Gid University program.

Born into the royal lineage of the Fetuga family of Ijebu Ode, Nigeria, Rasheedat is an Ijebu princess. Her last name, Fetuga, means "Our love is greater than the palace." She carries her family's legacy of prioritizing love and care for communities, bringing these values to Nashville's most vulnerable neighborhoods, as her grandfather did in Ijebu Ode.

A prolific speaker, dynamic trainer, and passionate advocate for liberation and peace, Rasheedat's work has garnered national recognition. When not working, you might find her frolicking in the forest and communing with the trees.

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Org website: <https://www.facebook.com/GideonsArmyUnited/>