

Wave of 200 Teen Suicides Reveals Spiritual Warfare in South Dakota

Christians are being called to battle in the U.S. A *spiritual* battle, that is.

Between December and March, more than 200 teenagers on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota either committed suicide, or tried to.

"This is beyond anything we've ever seen; it's almost like 'serial suicides,'" states Ron Hutchcraft of Ron Hutchcraft Ministries (RHM). "This is not just a psychological issue: this is a spiritual battle with spiritual forces.

"The *thief*—speaking of the devil—'comes to steal, kill, and destroy,' and this is the result. You've got 12-year-old girls hanging themselves. You can't imagine a 12-year-old deciding to die; they haven't even lived yet!"

The Darkness Surrounding Pine Ridge

Home to the Oglala Lakota tribe, Pine Ridge is no stranger to bloodshed. The Oglala are "the people of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull," Hutchcraft explains.

"Pine Ridge was the site of the Wounded Knee massacre back at the end of the Indian era."

On Dec. 29, 1890, a misunderstanding over arms led to the slaughter of between 200 and 300 Lakota tribes-people by U.S. cavalrymen. On Jan. 3, 1891, 146 Lakotas were buried in a single mass grave.

"There was a woman with an infant in her arms who was killed

as she almost touched the flag of truce ... a mother was shot down with her infant; the child, not knowing that its mother was dead, was still nursing," recalled Oglala Lakota chief American Horse in an early 1900s interview.

Bodies were allegedly found as far as three miles outside the Pine Ridge camp.

Following this dark moment in history came generations of oppression: boarding schools, substance abuse, extreme poverty, domestic abuse, the list goes on and on. According to Hutchcraft, a deep darkness still grips Pine Ridge today.

- **Infant mortality is 300 times the national average.**
- **Nearly everyone—97 percent of the Pine Ridge population—is living below the national poverty line.**
- **According to current USDA Rural Development documents, the Lakota have the lowest life expectancy of any group in America.**
- **At least 60 percent of the homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation are infested with Black Mold.**

This is the devastation facing Pine Ridge residents every day. Teen suicide is nothing new here: Pine Ridge's suicide rate is 150 times the national average, but its frequency has started to grab **national attention**.

The laments on Facebook would "break your heart," Hutchcraft says.

"A 13-year-old sixth grader has taken her own life. My heart is breaking already, and the day has just begun."

"This knife feels so good against my wrist. Ain't nobody care anyway, my life will be better gone as it is."

"We just lost another child to suicide. Yahweh, help us!"

The U.S. Public Health Service is sending mental health counselors to talk to Pine Ridge teens.

Hutchcraft says the “suicide spike” is a spiritual problem. Many of the young people who’ve attempted suicide—or are close friends of a suicide victim—“have talked about an increase in spirit activity,” he shares.

“They call them the *shadow people* or the *dark people*,” Hutchcraft says. “There are spirit beings—demonic beings—that are stalking the reservation and convincing young people that they are worth nothing ... and [that have] started this ‘cloud of death’ over the reservation.”

Lyrics of the Getty hymn “O Church Arise” read in part: *O Church, arise and put your armor on, Hear the call of Christ our Captain. Our call to war, to love the captive soul, But to rage against the captor. Will you answer the call?*

Bringing Hope to Pine Ridge

RHM is sending a team of 20 Native young people to Pine Ridge to share the hope of Christ. It’s an unplanned and early start to their annual **“Summer of Hope” outreach.** “We really need the prayer of God’s people for this, because this is not just a psychological issue: this is a spiritual battle with spiritual forces. There’s not going to be any way to win this battle on-the-ground, unless it is first won in the heavenlies,” says Hutchcraft.

Please share this story on Facebook or through email with your fellow prayer warriors.

The team heading to Pine Ridge is part of RHM’s On Eagles’ Wings (OEW) ministry: a movement of Native young people that want to bring Hope to their reservations through Jesus Christ. **Learn more about OEW [here](#).**