

# Anthony's Scholarship Living with a Sense of Purpose

Gwendolyn Mechelle Morgan-Flowers

American Indian teens take their own lives at more than two times the rate of any other teen demographic in the USA, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of course, these numbers are just averages, so on certain reservations the suicide rate is exponentially higher. Can legislation decrease the numbers of reportable cases?

*I will introduce my clans in the Navajo Way.*

*Yá'át'ééh (It is good; welcome; hello) shik'éeí dóó shidine'é (my family and my people, friends)  
Shí éí Gwendolyn yinishyé (I am called Gwendolyn)*

*In Navajo culture, every person has four clans in the following order: the mother's first clan, the father's first clan, the maternal grandfather's first clan, and the paternal grandfather's first clan.*

***Mother's clan bilagáana***

***Father's clan bilagáana***

***Maternal grandfather's clan Cajun/French***

***Paternal grandfather's clan Welsh/Irish/English***

*Ákót'éego diné asdzáán nishłí (In this way, I am bilagáana woman).*

*I was born and raised on the Navajo Reservation. Suicide in the Native Communities is real. Among Native Americans, 40 percent of those who die by suicide are between the ages of 15 and 24. Among young adults ages 18 to 24, Native American have higher rates of suicide than any other ethnicity, and higher than the general population. These are my age groups.*

*I attend high school at St Michael Indian School, in Northern Arizona. It is a small Catholic school and has many teachings on suicide. It has not prevented suicides. Many of my schoolmates have approached me about what is happening in their homes and around them. The rapes and sexual abuse continue to plague the families. Alcohol and drugs are a daily discussion. I am overwhelmed at times listening to my friends thinking they have no way out. Listening I keep pondering how I can do something to help these generations to come.*

*I too have had suicidal thoughts. I was a lucky one. My parents took me to counseling and talk to me on a regular basis. They are both nurses and see the devastation that suicide has had to our Native Communities. I was very young when I had an encounter that changed my life, along with two other young girls. We were molested, and each of us were interviewed. First by the FBI and then by Forensics. This cruel act created suicidal thoughts of ideation.*

*Many things could help with the suicide prevention policy and legislation. Doors need to be open to collaborate. Training on suicide prevention for teachers, school counselors, health care and behavioral health care personnel, and law enforcements should be required.*

*Suicide prevention programs should be legislated to include every state, including the Indian Nations. Public health and mental health should be available to all regardless if they have insurance coverage. Pushing for*

*Universal health care and requiring school districts and colleges to adopt policies for preventive suicidal behaviors.*

*American Indian communities need to combat some of the contributing factors like bullying and sexual abuse. Advocating for the power of prosecution for the crimes committed on the reservation would be a powerful place to start. Poverty and unemployment have created a sense of loss and despair among my friends. Teaching intervention tactics could help each involved.*

*My dream is to help women and children. I plan on becoming a Lawyer and helping women and children. So many have helped me along the way and I want to "pay it forward". I know how harsh a place the World has become, but I believe each of us can make our Earth better. We have to work together to bring about beauty.*

*Walk in Beauty always.*