



BREAKING THE SILENCE:

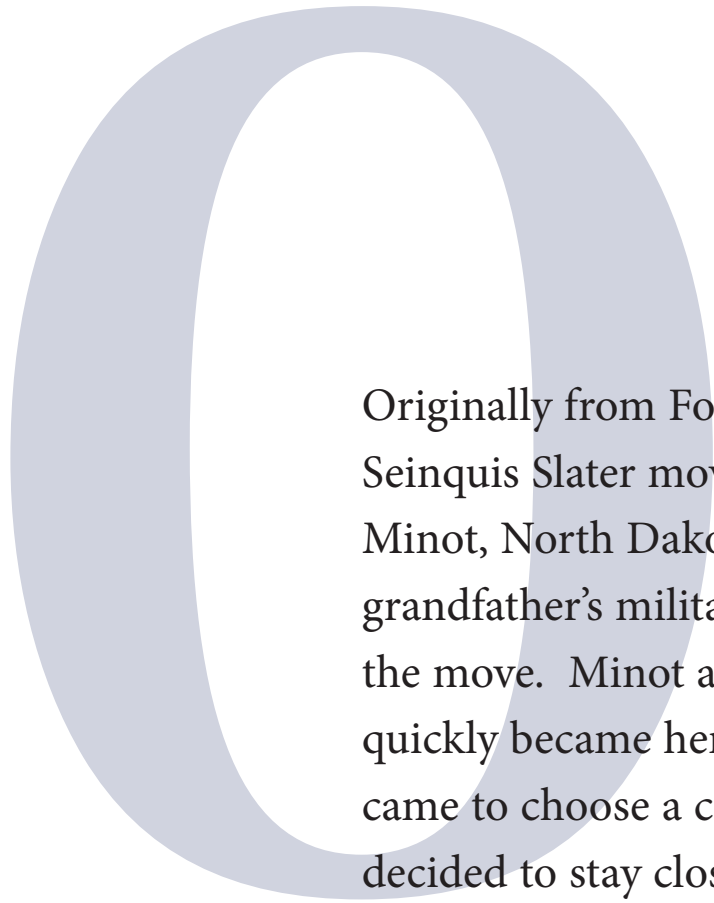
Seinquis Slater, a 2008 initiate of the Alpha Pi chapter at the University of North Dakota, was a typical college woman—studying hard during the day and having too much fun at night.



SPEAKING HER TRUTH

Then, following a devastating sexual assault, her life turned upside down. Now, Seinquis is a healthy, thriving graduate student and advocate against assault and violence.

This is her story.



Originally from Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Seiquis Slater moved to the small town of Minot, North Dakota at the age of 7, as her grandfather's military assignment required the move. Minot and the people of the area quickly became her home. When the time came to choose a college to attend, Seiquis decided to stay close. Her freshman year at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks began in fall 2007.

Starting her college experience just as any typical 18-year-old would—excited, having fun, making mistakes, enjoying her freedom—Seiquis moved into campus housing; became as involved in extracurricular activities as possible; and, in the following spring, joined the Alpha Pi chapter of Alpha Chi Omega. She found herself, at times, struggling with time management, but Seiquis kept her grades up, finishing the year with a 4.0 GPA. She expected her second year to be no different.



Pictured: Seinqis Slater with her mother at a "Parents' Formal."

How Everything Changed

As her sophomore year began, Seinqis was asked to participate in a friend's wedding. So, in October 2008, Seinqis found herself flying to Alaska for the nuptials, looking forward to every minute. Following the ceremony, the reception was definitely a party—food, dancing and a lot of alcohol.

Admittedly, Seinqis was underage and well beyond any smart alcohol consumption limit. She could not control her actions, nor could she hold herself up. Stumbling into the women's restroom alone, she collapsed inside one of the stalls. When another member of the wedding party, the best man, came into the restroom, it seemed as if he was

trying to help her. As others came into the restroom, he spoke on her behalf, telling them that she was fine and that he was taking care of her. Seinqis was so intoxicated, she was unable to speak.

When she woke up the next morning, she remembered very little of the reception. But as the morning went on, memories of the night before began to flash in her mind. She had not been safe in the restroom. The best man had not been taking care of her. Even with many others unknowingly in attendance, she had been raped.

Her Silence

When she spoke of the incident to a friend at the wedding, Seinqis's claims were dismissed, and she was told she simply had drunk too much. With resonating doubt, she told no one else.

Throughout the semester, Seinqis withdrew from friends, family and priorities. Her GPA dropped to a 2.0 and she was not handling pressure well. Knowing she had to "get better," she focused on the only thing that did not need emotions: school. In spring 2009, Seinqis threw herself into her studies. Wake up; go to class; go home; study; go to bed. This was her routine, keeping her distracted and busy. Her grades improved, but Seinqis did not.

Recognizing she was unhealthy, her boyfriend at the time encouraged her to seek counseling. Reluctant because she did not believe there was a problem, she agreed and began counseling at the University of North Dakota Counseling Center. A year following the incident,

the counselor diagnosed Seinqis with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Seinqis remembers, “It is the hardest thing to tell someone that loves you, that you have been sexually assaulted. But being able to talk with the counselor definitely helped.”

Speaking Out

As the counseling sessions continued, Seinqis began to share her ordeal with friends and family, and she began to quietly advocate for the campus Women’s Center. Seinqis was encouraged to speak out to others—other young women who may be in the same situation—but she was afraid. Finally building up the courage, in October 2010, Seinqis spoke of her ordeal and the scope of feelings that she experienced and was still experiencing during the university’s Take Back the Night rally.

Seinqis remembers, “I was scared out of my mind, but I got on stage, told my story with every detail and encouraged women to break the silence. Afterwards, people sent me messages on Facebook and emailed me, wanting to talk about their stories. The Counseling Center even had an increase in women coming to them.”

With her newfound empowerment, Seinqis offered support by listening to other women as they spoke of their ordeals, and by helping with domestic violence awareness opportunities through her Alpha Chi Omega chapter. And although she feels strong now thanks to her efforts toward others, speaking to her friends and family about the incident, and finally coming to terms that it was not her fault, Seinqis knows that this will be a life-long struggle.

“You’re never over it. You never don’t have the associated feelings. But it is how you cope with those feelings that



Pictured: Seinqis Slater with her role model—her grandfather.

lets you move on.”

Seinqis graduated in May 2011 with a bachelor’s degree in Sociology. By the time of her graduation, Seinqis had been involved in student government; the university’s curriculum committee, essential studies committee and Greek life coordinator search committee; Panhellenic council, the North Dakota Student Association; Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity; and much more. Among her many honors, Seinqis

was named a NASPA Undergraduate Rising Star by the student affairs administrators in higher education, was given Student of the Month recognition by the University of North Dakota, was awarded the ALANA H.O.P.E (Helping Our People Excel) Award by the University of North Dakota’s multicultural student services, and was awarded the Gordon Henry Award by the University of North Dakota’s Greek life. Seinqis is currently pursuing

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a master's in educational leadership, and she is employed full-time with the University of North Dakota as a traveling representative for enrollment services.

Her Regrets

When asked whether or not she ever confronted the man, Seinquis stated, "I have never confronted him. At the time, I didn't want the bride to think less of me or him. I was not ready for the confrontation. I thought that if I never saw him again, I would get over it. Yes, I do wish I had said something, but by the time I realized this, I felt like it was too late." Unfortunately, this is not her only regret.


"Many underage women are offered alcohol depending on the situation they're in. My advice to those women would be: just don't do it. If you choose to though, really know the people you are around and be able to trust those you surround yourself with. I learned this too late."

Advice to Others

Now, three years following her ordeal, Seinquis maintains that speaking out against, or just speaking to someone, period, is the best advice she can give to anyone in the same situation.

"Break the silence. You are going to encourage others and help yourself,

even if you do not realize it right then."

And to her Alpha Chi Omega sisters who are in their darkest times, Seinquis encourages that "through the best of time or worst of times, 'Together let us seek the heights' truly has so much meaning. Talk to and lean on your sisters when you need someone to listen; they will be there for you. When I was down, I always new tomorrow would be a better day because I had a family of women who understood what I was going through and were willing to help me. Always stand up for yourself; communicate with your sisters, friends and family; and never give up on your life goals, no matter which obstacles you face." 

To learn more about counseling options for those who have experienced sexual assault and/or other abuse, please visit womenshealth.gov. To learn more about Take Back the Night and to find a rally in your area, visit takebackthenight.org.