

# THE RAMAPO NEWS

A publication by the students for the Ramapo College community

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## Fired Cook Asks Sodexo To Rehire Him

By KERI ANN FLACCOMIO  
Staff Writer

Sodexo food services operating at Ramapo College terminated Haitian cook Lyonel Dieujuste in December on the grounds that he is not authorized to work in the United States, according to a company statement.

Several co-workers, fellow union members and members of the Ramapo community claim that Dieujuste was fired unlawfully and support his efforts to be reinstated.

Dieujuste worked as a cook at Ramapo for seven years. He was elected among his co-workers as a shop steward—someone to come forward and speak with management about any concerns that might arise, he said.

Tanya Aquino, a spokesperson for Service Employees International Union, CTW, CLC—the union to which Dieujuste belongs—said in a recent interview that Sodexo was looking for excuses to fire the leaders who make sure promises in employee contracts are upheld.

“So often the level or standard is set much higher for a shop steward like Lyonel,” Aquino said.

She added that “as leaders, they are unfairly made examples of” when outspoken about



photo courtesy of cleanupsodexo.org

**Former Sodexo employee, Lyonel Dieujuste, in a video produced by a grassroots organization trying to get the former Ramapo cook his job back.**

workers’ entitlements such as rights to health insurance and paid time off, as well as being treated equally with a level of respect and having a voice, all as outlined in contract.

Jeff Dannhardt, general manager of dining

services, and David Carreras, operations manager for resident dining, declined to comment on the issue. Both referred to a statement released by Sodexo’s public relations department.

“Employees are privy to privacy regula-

tions,” said Dannhardt, “so we certainly don’t comment on employee and personnel issues.”

The official statement from Sodexo said that “Mr. Dieujuste’s authorization to work in the United States expired on February 19, 2004” and that the company informed him “many times over the course of his employment” of the necessity to obtain reauthorization of legal documentation allowing him to work in the United States.

In addition, the company states that Dieujuste was told he “could consult with his union representatives if he needed help completing the required immigration paperwork.”

The statement further states that Sodexo sent Dieujuste a certified letter allowing him six months to produce the documentation, and that he was terminated on Dec. 1, 2009—six weeks before the earthquake in Haiti—for failure to produce this paperwork by the deadline.

Sodexo said this was in accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act, which prohibits a company from continuing to

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## ‘Lady Aye’ Speaks Out About Her Eating Disorder

By AMY FEZZA  
Staff Writer

Ilise Carter discussed both her personal experiences with body image and her profession of sword swallowing for the Women’s Center Eating Disorder Awareness Campaign. Carter used stories and demonstrations to keep the small audience engaged.

“I was at the Body Image Monologues the night before and heard about this event. It sounded so interesting. I’m curious to see how she will intertwine body images with sword swallowing,” senior Steph Young said.

“Lady Aye,” Carter’s stage name, is Carter’s idealized alter ego.

“Lady Aye is equivalent to Bruce Wayne. I am able to do things through her that the real Ilise is not able to do,” Carter said.

Both a burlesque dancer and a sideshow performer, this was Carter’s first time speaking in front of an audience about her eating disorder.

“I’m really honored that you guys asked me to come and thought that I had enough to say. Please bare with me this is my first time speaking to an audience,” Carter said.

Carter started off her discussion by admitting that she had never wanted to be a sword swallower, let alone a performer, until she was 30 years old. She explained to the audience that people should act on their aspirations.

“You should be very passionate about everything. Keep it up, but temper it. Keep the idea of ‘long term’ in the back



photo by Michael Jagendorf

**Ilise Carter, or “Lady Aye,” swallows a sword.**

of your mind. You’re going to have a long life, twists and turns will come,” Carter said.

Carter was born and raised in New York City and came from a smart, yet dysfunctional, family. Her brother had a personality disorder, and she feels her relationship with him contributed to body image issues that lasted years.

“I was always the weird kid in class, I was the loner,” Carter

said.

Throughout her teens, Carter believed that if she weren’t skinny or pretty, she would never be accepted or successful in life. This mindset led her down dangerous paths such as under eating, purging, crash diets and overeating during her teenage years and mid-twenties.

Carter felt that if she continued this way, she would be successful.

“I was smart and I knew for girls, that was unattractive,” Carter said.

Carter went on to study film at American University on scholarship. She studied there for two years. During college, Carter struggled to find her identity.

“I went nuts! Piercings, new hair color every week, I tried it all,” Carter said.

But these experiences weren’t enough for Carter; she still felt depressed about her body.

“If only I were thinner, I would be happier,” Carter said.

After college, Carter showcased her talents by working with esteemed director Ron Howard. At the same time, it was hard for her to be recognized as a female film maker, even with her connections. This added to Carter’s self-esteem issues.

Her experience on Sept. 11, 2001, caused her to realize that life was too short to keep beating herself up over this.

The 9/11 attack made her realize how lucky she was to be alive and that she needed a major life change.

“I was married to being a filmmaker, but I knew I needed to do something else that was going to set me on the right

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# Fired Cook Asks Sodexo to Rehire Him

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employ someone who is not authorized to work in the United States.

Sodexo officials did not return repeated calls seeking comment.

In a telephone interview, Dieujuste disputed the date provided by Sodexo for his termination, saying that he was approached about the paperwork on Dec. 3, 2009 and terminated on Feb. 2, 2010.

Aquino said it is “a matter of using the rule when they want to,” claiming that other immigrants continue to work for the company without the proper authorization.

Aquino said that, after Dieujuste was fired, “[The union was] outraged, and that’s why we immediately started coordinating with Lyonel’s co-workers and students on the Ramapo campus.”

Believing that Dieujuste was fired unjustly, the union filed a grievance—the first level of a dispute mechanism that these workers have in their contracts—and is moving to file for arbitration unjustly, the next step in the process. Union members created a Web site to tell Dieujuste’s story and to circulate a petition for his reinstatement by Sodexo.

“Within two days we had over 300 supportive comments,” Aquino said, “so it really took off like wildfire when people started hearing what was going on.”

According to the site, some of Dieujuste’s co-workers allegedly “told him they felt discriminated against for being black or speaking Spanish.”

In a video interview posted online, Dieujuste said that he told management, “We are not going to take it anymore. You have to change the way you manage. You have to understand this is not your house. This is a company we’re working for. You can’t run it like you run your house.”

Dieujuste said that shortly after he complained to management about working conditions, he was questioned about his paperwork. He claims that he went to his lawyer and produced the paperwork, but was still fired. Dieujuste said he was terminated because “I really picked up a fight with him.”

***“If these people have a heart they will understand how much this job means to him.”***

***-Cassandra Wynn, third-year student***

After the earthquake in Haiti, the Obama Administration granted an 18-month Temporary Protected Status to eligible undocumented Haitian workers who were in the United States as of Jan. 12, 2010.

But the Sodexo statement said that although Dieujuste has applied for TPS and employment authorization, “the United States government has not approved these applications.” The company’s statement added, “Therefore, by law, Sodexo cannot employ Mr. Dieujuste.”

Dieujuste wants Sodexo to commit to his reinstatement upon his receiving TPS.

“They asked for the paperwork,” he said, “then the earthquake happened, so I thought they going to let me come in working, because the president granted TPS to stay for 18 more months so I could provide for my family. Everybody knows about it, so why they try to hide it?”

Students and alumni at Ramapo are upset by Dieujuste’s termination and have been extending their support for him

“Lyonel is a great guy and a hard worker,” David Dabney said, a Ramapo alumnus from the class of 2008. “I built a strong bond with him during the 3 years I was at Ramapo. The man worked like a dog for Sodexo, so many hours for so little pay to support his family.”

“If Sodexo was really concerned with not hiring illegal workers,” Dabney added, “they would have checked his paperwork when he was originally hired. It seems, then, that Sodexo is only concerned with a worker’s legality when it gives them a reason to

fire someone who is protesting for fair treatment in the workplace.”

“If these people have a heart they will understand how much this job means to him,” Cassandra Wynn said, a third-year student majoring in International Studies. “I worked with Lyonel for a little while and he was a really nice guy. He deserves this job and his reason for the job is even more important.”

Ramapo alumna and first-generation West Indian American Marisa Hurtault “was shocked to hear that this happened at Ramapo as [the college is] a very diverse and open community.”

“It is a shame,” Hurtault said, “that such kind workers from different backgrounds have been treated as second-class citizens. My hope is that if Lyonel is not reinstated that the College drop this food provider. Such behavior and abuse should never be tolerated.”

Dieujuste is requesting to be reinstated for the 18-month TPS period so that he can help his family survive the tragedy in Haiti and rebuild.

“They play the game with people like me who don’t really know much about the system,” he said.

A petition to reinstate Dieujuste is available online at [www.cleanupsodexo.org/lyonel](http://www.cleanupsodexo.org/lyonel).

## Carter Swallows Sword for a Cause

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path,” Carter said.

Carter had an array of jobs before finding her passion, and it was not until she was a music promoter that she discovered what she was meant to do.

Through this short-lived career, Carter came across many burlesque and sideshow performers. Carter was eager to give the profession a shot.

“I embraced the fact that I am a freak and realized that this could be something

that I would love,” Carter said.

Through her profession, Carter claims that she is now able to see what beauty is, as she is surrounded by “true” shapes of women.

“The female body comes in a lot of shapes and I was finally able to realize that,” Carter said. “This was a profession where I knew I could celebrate myself.”

Throughout the last three weeks, issues concerning eating disorders have been addressed by numerous events on campus.

“The Body Image Monologues covered many topics, from eating disorders to self mutilation, to gender norms,” Jill Grimaldi, program coordinator at the Women’s Center said. “

Carter explained that her career is not a cure for her body image issues, but it has helped her to make self-image improvements.

“Life will hand you things and you don’t even know it. If an event allows you to be yourself whether it’s being smart, funny, or loud, embrace it and use it, it can make you happy,” Carter said.

Carter became “Lady Aye” by the end of her discussion, stepping away from the podium. A human blockhead with sharp nails and an etiquette lesson with family silver were shoved up her nose. Solid swords were shoved down her throat. All of which were a spectacle for Aye’s brave audience.



photo by Michael Jagendorf

**Carter builds suspense before performing her sword swallowing talent.**

Are you a journalism major?

But you don’t write for the paper?

What the hell is the matter with you?

RAMAPO NEWS

Mondays & Wednesdays

7:15 p.m.

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