

## **Star New Jersey Teenage Athlete Was The Victim of a Kidnapping-Murder Conspiracy, Contrary to the ‘Suicide’ Finding of the State Medical Examiner, Asserts a Newly Filed Lawsuit**

*July 12<sup>th</sup> marked second anniversary of Tiffany Valiante’s suspicious death*

Egg Harbor Township, N.J. (July 18, 2017) — Shortly after 18 -year-old Tiffany Valiante’s death on Sunday, July 12, 2015, a state medical examiner ruled that the college-bound, Mays Landing star volleyball player had taken her own life. But now a newly filed lawsuit asserts that Ms. Valiante – whose body was found after a New Jersey Transit (NJT) struck her - was the victim of a kidnapping-murder conspiracy. It is believed that her death was misclassified as a suicide for a litany of reasons set forth in the complaint, and amplified in an attached report by a retired veteran medical examiner’s office investigator. Trial attorney Paul R. D’Amato, whose firm represents the Tiffany Valiante family, filed the lawsuit.

The complaint, filed in N.J. Superior Court – Atlantic County, includes counts of murder, kidnapping, and destruction of evidence against 10 co-conspirator defendants (listed anonymously for the time being), and states, in part, that, “... Tiffany Valiante did not take her life, but that she was the victim of a conspiracy to inflict bodily harm violently abducted on the night of July 12, 2015, and subsequently murdered by the Defendants while attempting to flee her imprisonment.”

Filed along with the complaint is the report of Louise Houseman, a former senior investigator in the Atlantic County Office of the Medical Examiner. Ms. Houseman, retired after more than 20 years of service, and a volunteer working on the case, concluded that based on her extensive analysis – and in the absence of eyewitness accounts or suicidal ideation - there was insufficient, reliable evidence upon which the finding of suicide as the ‘manner of death’ could be supported. She noted in her report, now part of the official court record, that the state medical examiner issued its ruling in the case less than 48 hours after Ms. Valiante’s death without the benefit of vital investigative information, including medical records, interviews with the victim’s family members, friends, coaches, physicians, and numerous others.

“I am convinced after having examined all of the relevant reports in the case, including those of NJ Transit, that while there are several plausible explanations for Ms. Valiante’s tragic death, suicide is not one of them,” stated Ms. Houseman. “For example, there is no reasonable explanation of how and why the sneakers Tiffany was wearing the night of her death were found - weeks later - more than a mile from the heavily wooded, dark, isolated location where she was struck by the train. If she walked barefoot in those conditions, the autopsy of her feet would have showed lacerations, abrasions or indications of soil, grass, stone or gravel. No such evidence was detected,” she stated.

Mr. D'Amato added, "A previous court proceeding allowed us to obtain a complete investigative record. Besides the extensive analysis by Ms. Houseman, our experts have included an out-of-state, nationally renowned forensic pathologist, a forensic technologist, and a railroad safety systems expert. As a result, we have no doubt that Tiffany did not take her own life and that the medical examiner's office made a grave error in misclassifying her death as suicide. It is our hope that this litigation will not only result in the proper classification, but also brings to justice those responsible for her death."

He said that, as detailed in the Houseman report, the investigative efforts by New Jersey Transit were at best inadequate and that the manner of death finding should long ago have been changed to, at minimum, 'undetermined'.

Explaining the legal theory of the complaint, Mr. D'Amato stated that a number of persons believed to have relevant information about the case would soon be served with subpoenas to testify under oath as part of pre-trial discovery.

"We are also not ruling out that there may be other individuals who were directly or indirectly involved in Tiffany's death," he stated. "While we strongly believe she was murdered, the complaint allows for the possibility that the co-conspirators did not intend to kill her, but that their violent actions still resulted in her death. One way or another, they were responsible for her being on the railroad tracks, and they must and will be held accountable for their unconscionable conduct."

The Valiante family stated, "We are united in our belief that Tiffany was killed and those responsible must be brought to justice. She was the most caring, compassionate individual who always put her family and friends – including her teammates – first in her life. And she loved life, every minute of it, and was the picture of happiness as she prepared to start her career at Mercy College. She will forever be in our hearts and deeply, deeply missed by so many." They also expressed hope that law enforcement would reopen the case as a homicide investigation.

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