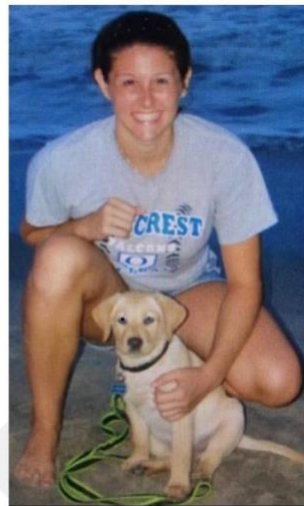


**Asserting Their Daughter Was the Victim of a Hate-Crime Murder – Not Suicide - Tiffany Valiante’s Parents File New Lawsuit Hoping It Leads to A “Full Investigation” of 2015 Death**

*Believed to be first filing under the N.J. Constitution’s Crime Victims Bill of Rights*

Atlantic City, NJ (10:30 a.m. Friday, July 11 , 2025) – New evidence, including recovered hate-filled text messages targeting Tiffany Valiante before she was struck by a New Jersey Transit (NJT) train, is at the heart of a [gender-bias and wrongful death lawsuit filed](#) by her parents; they hope it leads to the “first full investigation” into her suspicious death 10 years ago on July 12, 2015. The parents’ legal team asserts the state wrongly ruled the popular gay teenager’s death a suicide and allege she was a hate-crime murder victim whose body was positioned on the NJT tracks to conceal the killing. The complaint, believed to be the first such lawsuit filed under the [New Jersey Constitution’s Crime Victims Bill of Rights](#), names several defendants including New Jersey Transit and those, to be named later, responsible for the killing, was announced at a news conference today attended by family members and Tucker, her beloved Labrador retriever.



“Tiffany’s parents, victims in their own right, under the N.J. Constituion’s Crime Victims Bill of Rights, are entitled to the considerable evidence still in the hands of the defendants who’ve closed this case without the benefit of a full investigation,” said the [D’Amato Law Firm](#), the parents’ attorney. “We intend, working with our all-volunteer team of highly skilled forensics professionals, to finally obtain that critical evidence and conduct the investigation the defendants – who rushed to judgement - failed to perform. Following that investigation, we expect to have, and present to the prosecutor’s office, the evidence that will help identify by name all those directly responsible for Tiffany’s death; it is long past time they’ve been held accountable for their crimes.”

The filing includes analyses by the renowned forensic pathologist, Dr. Wayne Ross, [Cornerstone Discovery](#) digital forensics, a former South Jersey-based FBI special agent, and the onsite Medical Examiner’s emergency-response nurse who pronounced Tiffany at the scene. The complaint is brought on behalf of Tiffany’s parents by the firm’s trial attorneys, Paul D’Amato, Stephen Van Natten, Alexa D’Amato Barrera.

The complaint raises for the first time the specter of a pre-meditated hate crime; an assertion based in large part on a forensic review, using current tools and technology, of recently-recovered, violent anti-lesbian messages (among thousands of total messages analyzed) directed at Tiffany in the months before her death. Tiffany’s sexual orientation at the time was known to and accepted by her family, numerous friends and acquaintances throughout the tight-knit Mays Landing community. However, it is alleged that NJ investigators abruptly – within just hours of responding to the scene - dismissed her death as a suicide. It is alleged they misclassified her death having never inquired about her sexual identity, let alone

consider the possibility she was murdered because of it. Besides the hate-crime murder count, the complaint includes counts of kidnapping and conspiracy.

Every highly-experienced independent forensic pathologist that has reviewed the case since has been critical of those investigators for, among numerous other shortcomings, failing to first rule out homicide before rushing to conclude her death was self-inflicted. Michelle Amendolia, NP, the Medical Examiner's Office nurse who pronounced Tiffany dead at the scene – and who has since responded to thousands of deaths, including others along the NJT right-of-way - said in her statement it seemed like there was an institutional mindset among investigators that anyone found dead on railroad tracks was automatically a suicide, even if the evidence was indicative of homicide. Looking back, especially at the highly unusual blood-spatter pattern on the tracks, she said at best the cause of death should have been classified as “undetermined” until a full investigation was conducted. Such a comprehensive investigation can only be conducted if the court orders access to and the release of the evidence addressed in the lawsuit.

Regarding the pivotal recovered text messages, the complaint asserts that no one in law enforcement, in response to explicit requests of those agencies, ever contacted the family's highly experienced digital forensics firm, Cornerstone Discovery to provide specialized assistance regarding the possible link between Tiffany's digital devices (phones and computers) and her suspicious death. Jason Silva, a Cornerstone Managing Partner said, “Our comparative analysis of past and present data downloads of Tiffany's digital devices, expressly points to Tiffany as a target of ridicule, harassment and threats” He said that is illustrated, in part, by the following message transcripts, also contained in the complaint:

- *"You know that one really ugly annoying bitch (referring to Tiffany) that somehow thinks it's okay to come at other girls for their weight?"*
- A male “friend” known to Tiffany texted Tiffany: *"What's your problem with me..." then called Tiffany a bitch and a dyke and threatened to show her what a scumbag he can be.*
- A female “friend” known to Tiffany texted Tiffany: *"I fucking hate your guts. You're dead to me..."*. It continues: *"Trust me, a lot of people don't like you."*
- Yet another female “friend” known to Tiffany texted Tiffany: *"When are you going to realize you are a disgrace to the lesbian race #youanuglybitch."*
- Reacting to those and other hate-filled messages, Tiffany texted a known Male friend: *"Can you fight (name redacted)?"*

The filing asserts, “Because there was a rush to judgment by investigators in concluding in less than 12 hours that Tiffany died by suicide, an appropriate criminal suspicious death investigation was never conducted. A fair balancing of the equities by the Court should lead to an Order requiring the NJT Police and the State Medical Examiners Office to provide the long overdue relief requested by her parents so their highly experienced, pro bono forensic team – headed by Dr. Wayne Ross - can complete its investigation. [#JusticeforTiffany](#) – for her family and all citizens of New Jersey - requires accountability and should no longer be delayed.” They added, “It is now abundantly clear that this case was closed abruptly – in a rush to judgement - without a reasonable factual basis and that the parents are entitled to the full investigation they seek. ”

In addition to the Cornerstone data-discovery probe, the forensic pathology investigation has identified equally troubling issues and questions regarding the official death investigation. “It is Dr. Wayne Ross' professional opinion that the death of Tiffany Valiante was ***not a suicide*** – it appears she was murdered and her body placed on the tracks to conceal the crime - and that the New Jersey Transit (NJT) trainee, student-engineer operating the train that struck Tiffany near midnight

July 12, 2015, could not have possibly made the observations contained in the NJTPD's reports relative to his observation of human movement ahead on the New Jersey Transit tracks".

Mr. D'Amato added, "They never even considered the possibility her death was a hate-fueled murder, and the train strike was arranged to conceal the crime; the Medical Examiner relied heavily on those contrived observations of the student engineer to quickly and callously close the case, label her death a suicide, and just move on."

The filing requests that the forensics team be permitted to conduct the type of best-practices investigation to which Tiffany and her family are entitled under state law. Specifically, they are requesting the opportunity, as soon as possible, to forensically examine all the state's documentary and physical evidence; including:

- The Interior and exterior of the New Jersey Transit Train that struck Tiffany Valiante; it is now clear, based on documents received since the state "closed" the case, that NJT, for reasons yet unknown, was not forthcoming in providing all relevant information, including that related to the train's operating - or inoperative - cameras.
- The specific point-of-impact on the NJT equipment in question and along the right-of-way in question.
- All evidence in the possession of the State Medical Examiner's Office and the New Jersey Transit Police Department in order to conduct a proper, best-practices comprehensive forensic accident reconstruction based on available reports and records, and through firsthand inspection and operation of the actual equipment.

There are dozens of specific examples of investigative oversights and failures detailed in the complaint, including those highlighted by the work of the independent forensic pathology and digital discovery teams. The complaint also highlights failures to consider that a toxicological analysis revealed there was no illicit or illegal drugs or alcohol found in Tiffany's system. There were also failures to:

- Interview as part of the investigation the emergency-response nurse, who pronounced Tiffany at the scene, to learn why she was puzzled by the "near surgical precision" of the victim's dismemberment, uncharacteristic of a blunt-force trauma train strike.
- Perform a comprehensive physical autopsy, and a psychological autopsy that would have – through interviews with family, friends, teachers-coaches, etc. - revealed she was not depressed and had no suicidal thoughts or intentions.
- Perform a rape test kit to determine if she had been sexually abused.
- Consider that Tiffany's ever-present headband, shorts and casual canvas shoes (all clearly visible on the last photos of her the night of her death) were not found at or near the point of impact with the Train.
- Consider that Tiffany's feet did not show any marks from walking on the train tracks and/or rocky track bed ballast.

In October 2022 the Netflix True Crime series 'Unsolved Mysteries' debuted with a segment entitled, "Mystery at Mile Marker 45", <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/unsolved-mysteries-mystery-at-mile-marker-45>. The episode has been watched by more than 20 million viewers since its release. And the [#JusticeforTiffany Change.org petition](https://www.change.org/p/justice-for-tiffany-change-org-petition), urging the case re-opening, has now been signed by more than 15,000 individuals and viewed worldwide by more than 200,000. The firm has also received invaluable investigative assistance over several years from highly regarded private investigators Chuck Atkinson (New Jersey State Police Det. Sgt. (Ret.), and Jim Brennenstuhl (Officer, Galloway Township Police Department (Ret.).

