

Rapper Phife Dawg of A Tribe Called Quest Dies at 45

- Aidan Collins

Malik Taylor, or better known by his stage name Phife Dawg, passed away Tuesday, March 22, according to a statement made by his family. His death resulted from long term problems stemming from his type one diabetes, which was first diagnosed in 1990. Taylor, who grew up in Queens, New York, was a rapper and founding member of A Tribe Called Quest, along with his childhood friend Q-Tip (Jonathan Davis) and his classmate, Ali Shaheed Muhammad. The rap group paved the way for alternative rap styles as they infused their music with jazz instrumentals.

In 1990 they dropped their first album, *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm*, which jump-started their career to become one of the most critically acclaimed rap groups in history. In subsequent years, they released *The Low End Theory*, which was named #154 on *Rolling Stone's* Best 500 Albums of All Time, and *Midnight Marauders*, which spawned the famous singles "Electric Relaxation" and "Award Tour." In "Electric Relaxation," he opens with one of the most memorable lines, "I like 'em brown, yellow, Puerto Rican or Haitian/Name is Phife Dawg from the Zulu Nation," delivered with his sharp confidence. Phife, with his unique high pitched-voice, was known for bouncing rhymes off of the Q-Tip's butter smooth flow with a balance of verses that Chinese philosophers would be jealous of. He brought the energy and humor that was so beloved by fans. His contribution to the group was key to their success and led to a string of five albums that would immortalize Tribe in hip hop history.

In 1998 the group split due to internal strife and led to the start of the members' solo careers. Tip went on to boom and find fame while Phife was sidetracked by his declining health. In Tribe's documentary, he went on to say that he was in denial but soon had to accept the harsh truth that if he did not do anything about his disease, it would destroy him. Phife would reunite with the group for live shows, in part to pay for the medical costs that plagued him. In 2008 Taylor underwent a kidney transplant during his battle with diabetes, a common outcome for those afflicted. Finally, at the young age of 45, his life was sadly taken. This can be a lesson for many people who do not understand the true danger of diabetes. Many people are ignorant and fail to capture the harmful toll that type 1 and type 2 diabetes take, especially on the black and Hispanic populations, which statistically have a higher chance of developing it.

Malik Taylor will be remembered for his sincere kindness, his deep love for his family, and devotion to God. Hip hop fans around the world mourn the loss of such a legend. Complex lyrics were only part of what made him such a good rapper; his style would go on to influence many future performers. In a time when gangster rap was at its height, A Tribe Called Quest gave birth to a subgenre that inspired Pharrell, Kanye West, and The Roots. Even in his toughest times, he always had a positive outlook on the road ahead of him. May Phife Dawg rest in peace and his creativity as an artist never be forgotten.