



R.I.P. Stephoun Elite Wallace

The late HIV epidemiologist founded the House of Marc Jacobs.

September 25, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Stephaun Elite Wallace, PhD, an epidemiologist and social justice and HIV advocate who was also a legend of the house ballroom scene, died Saturday, August 5, 2023. He was 45. A cause of death was not disclosed.

The director of external relations for Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center's HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) in Seattle, Wallace was also a staff scientist at Fred Hutch, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Washington and an affiliate professor at Yale, according to a statement from HVTN.

Colleagues and friends noted his passing, posting condolences and remembrances on social media.

During the COVID pandemic, Wallace worked to address health disparities, promote vaccinations and improve health and science understanding in the Black community. His efforts, including those with the COVID-19 Prevention Network, earned him praise from Bill Gates, who interviewed Wallace for the book *How to Prevent the Next Pandemic*.

"For many people, science is still very much a mystery; it still feels like there's a veil over this process," Wallace says in the video Bill Gates's *Heroes in the Field: Dr. Stephoun Wallace*. "Part of my role is to take this veil off.... Often, I encounter myths and misinformation about COVID-19. The distrust in science and medicine is rooted in day-to-day-experience with systems that routinely show them that their lives don't matter. Everyday experiences of racism and xenophobia contribute to people's hesitancy and skepticism."

Wallace grew up in Los Angeles during the '80s and '90s and is revered as a legendary father in the ballroom community, notes a memorial to him on [InCloudForever.com](#).

He was preceded in death by his parents, according to the site's biography, and he "leaves behind a brother, Jeremiah, a sister, Krystal, and a large and extended chosen family with children from many houses, including The House of Elite, which he reopened in 2004, The House of Blahnik, and The House of Marc Jacobs that he founded in 2021."
