

Dedicated to Susan Massad, M.D.
Co-founder, Reimagining Dementia Coalition
May 1938 – November 2021

Named by New York Magazine as a “Doctor of the Year” in 2004, Susan Massad was an activist physician and community organizer for more than 55 years and whose kind and welcoming spirit impacted the lives of thousands. While she will be sorely missed, her deeply humanist contributions to community medicine and health, and her creative approach to challenging the “tragedy narrative” surrounding dementia will forever be recognized as a significant contribution to culture change work.

Over the years Susan wrote and presented on her radically social approach to medicine and health – including her discovery of what she termed the “health team” – that emphasized collaborative decision-making, the belief that illness is a communal experience, and that significant emotional growth remains possible for all involved. You can read the story of Susan’s own end-of-life health team as reported in *Kaiser Health News* [here](#) and her life [here](#). Additionally, some of her writings have been compiled in [*Medicine Across Borders: The Subjectivity of Health and Healing*](#).

Susan and Mary Fridley (coordinator of Reimagining Dementia: A Creative Coalition for Justice) pioneered the Joy of Dementia (You’ve Gotta Be Kidding) workshop series, which grew out of their desire to “bring the joy of creativity, the power of performance and an understanding of improvisation as a way of life to the broader dementia community and the public”. These workshops and conversations have been held across the U.S. and internationally. Susan’s strong commitment to supporting the relational possibilities of people living with dementia is reflected in her co-founding the Reimagining Dementia Coalition and was expressed in all of the work she did with the coalition. She will be missed enormously.