



CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY Faculty Senate

Associate Professor Sonia Leib Abels (Social Work)

Sonia Leib Abels was born April 28, 1929 and died September 24, 2019. She received her MSW from the University of Illinois, at the Chicago Circle campus. Formerly an Associate Professor, she served on the full-time faculty in the Department of Social Work from 1970-1987. During her tenure, CSU developed one of the nation's first Council on Social Work Education-accredited BSW programs, in 1974. She was also active in CSU's First College.

Prior to joining the CSU faculty, Sonia Abels was a Visiting Professor at Hacettepe University, in Ankara, Turkey; Vytautas Magnus University, in Kaunas, Lithuania; and Walla Walla College, in Washington. After leaving CSU for California in 1987, she served as a Clinical Professor at the University of Southern California.

A statement released by the family reads: "A civil rights activist who helped integrate Chicago schools, Sonia was part of the founding cadre of professors at First College at Cleveland State University and then a field study advisor at USC. She helped to establish a school of Social Work in Vilnius, Lithuania after the fall of the USSR. She developed an annual conference on the impact of religious fundamentalism in social work, as well as a symposium on the success of "Truth and Reconciliation Hearings" in South Africa at the end of apartheid. Sonia went on to create the journal "*Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*" with her husband Paul, to assist in recognizing the power of healing through stories.

After creating the multidisciplinary journal, *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, Professor Abels served as its Founding Editor beginning in 1974 until 1999. She continued to serve on the Executive Board of the journal until 2012. Long committed to the struggle for social justice, Professor Abels served as co-editor of the *Reflections Journal's* Special Issue on Social Justice published in 2010.

Professor Abels was editor of two books in a narrative series: *Spirituality in Social Work Practice* (2000) and *Ethics in Social Work Practice* (2001), both published by Love Publishing. In 2001 she co-authored the book *Understanding Narrative Therapy: A Guidebook for the Social Worker* published by Springer publications.

Sonia Abel's research focus was social connections and social capital. She developed a social work ethics database, sponsored by California State University, Los Angeles, and the National Association of Social Workers, California chapter. She was also a longstanding member and frequent attendee of the conferences of the International Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

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She is survived by her husband, Paul Abels, daughters Barbara (Steve), Beth (James), Abby (Edward) O'Neill, and six grandchildren: Jonah, Jacob, Gus, Hanan, Jack, and Dayo.

She certainly has left an enduring legacy.

✪ Written by Professor Cathleen Lewandowski
and delivered to Faculty Senate on October 16, 2019