

## An Introduction to Leon Ginsberg

by  
Sonia Abels

Sonia Leib Abels is the Founding Editor of *Reflections*.

While I was editor of *Reflections*, I invited Leon to write an autobiography. He agreed, and about three months later we had his story. Mary Ann Jimenez, the present editor, asked that I write the introduction. I invited Leon for several reasons: We are friends, albeit annual ones—we see each other every year at APM, CSWE; I know his work and have always encouraged colleagues to write about their careers; I think it's important that we publish personal career autobiographies of the people in our profession as social work's history embodies persons as well as institutions.

In his narrative, "A Personal Experience in 1990's Community Organization: Back to the Future," (*Reflections* 1996 Vol. 2#1), Leon wrote about community organization, with a modest portrayal of himself. Of course, the editorial comments focused on showing more of himself. In the narrative's abstract, he wrote: "For most of nearly 40 years of social work, I taught about, rather than practiced community organization . . . It was good to discover in 1995, during a local dispute over environmental contamination, that much of what I had taught still worked." I know Leon likes to write. During our editing process, he said that everyone enjoys telling about themselves. When he was commissioner of welfare, NASW NEWS published a series of back and forth letters in dis-

agreement around a policy; I always found that clashing perspectives offers a better understanding of the issues. Although his demeanor is traditionally southern in its presentation, he has appeared unafraid to take on substantive conflicts. He has been a social worker and an academic and continues a varied and complex career.

Philosophically, *Reflections* commits itself to publishing personal career biographies to enrich Social Work's narrative, and to give social workers the opportunity to gain insight into the personal meaning persons ascribe to the events and experiences in their life careers. As you will see, Leon has been a devoted advocate to our profession's purpose.

Social workers and social work academicians rarely are quoted in the news or sought out for their opinions on significant events. Yet, many in this profession know a great deal about how to improve social relations in families, communities, and institutions. Narratives can describe, and explain practice and make public the meaning it has for us and for those served. It is not to promote the profession, but rather directed toward social work's purpose—to repair the world. That's why *Reflections* tells stories, and why we invited Leon and others to contribute their autobiographies.

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