



Academic Engagement NETWORK

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Website

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Keep Up With Us



April 2018 Newsletter

Latest Updates

AEN now has **588 members on 207 campuses**. In March, AEN recruited 44 new members. So far in April, AEN has recruited 16 new members. AEN recently completed a membership drive in which we reached out to members in different regions each week asking for names of potential members - we thank all the members who suggested names to contact.

AEN National Workshop in Washington, DC

AEN encourages all AEN members to register for our National Workshop, Tuesday, May 22 to Thursday, May 24, in Washington, DC. If you are interested in attending, we request that you please complete the **short online registration form**. AEN will cover the cost of roundtrip domestic economy airfare or Amtrak tickets and provide complimentary hotel accommodations for the first 75 AEN members outside of the DC area who register.

After hosting national conferences in 2016 and 2017, AEN is this year hosting a

politics, and in campus climates, and explore the strategic implications these have for our work on campus.

An initial keynote on the changing realities in the Middle East will be delivered by **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, Senior Fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. A second keynote will be provided by AEN Advisory Board Chair Mark Yudof, assessing the past year and the year ahead in terms of the First Amendment on campus. James Loeffler, a historian at the University of Virginia, will offer a brief overview of his new book, ***Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*** (Yale University Press), exploring the Jewish roots of contemporary international human rights. Finally, we will celebrate the publication of ***Anti-Zionism on Campus: The University, Free Speech, and BDS*** (Indiana University Press), edited by AEN members Andrew Pessin and Doron Ben-Atar, and including essays by several AEN members.

Members who attend the National Workshop will have the chance to actively participate in a series of plenary and small group discussions, some of which will be led by facilitators. The workshop will take place over 1.5 days and aims to be more dynamic, interactive, and strategy-focused than our earlier two national conferences. The workshop is designed to attract both veteran active AEN members as well as members who may be newer to the organization or its purposes.

Senior Associate for Membership and Diversity

We are pleased to announce that Melissa Landa, formerly an assistant clinical professor at the College of Education at the University of Maryland, has been hired by AEN to serve as Senior Associate for Membership and Diversity. In this position, Melissa will work closely with the AEN team in developing and implementing strategies to extend and deepen the membership, increase our diversity, and help make our network more dynamic, creative, and vital.

Melissa was born and raised in South Africa, majored in English at Oberlin College, did an M.A. in Teaching and Applied Development Theory at Tufts University, and completed her dissertation at the University of Maryland on "Early Childhood Literacy Teachers Who Choose to Work with Children in High Poverty Schools." Her book, *Early Childhood Literacy Teachers in High Poverty Schools*, was published in 2017.

Melissa has been an active committed member of the Academic Engagement Network since our rollout in late 2015 and spoke at our inaugural national conference in May 2016. She also has been an activist member and president of the Oberlin Chapter of Alums for Campus Fairness. Melissa has presented at numerous professional conferences in recent years and was a winner of two special awards at

"Countering the BDS Colonial Settler Narrative"

AEN has published the latest entry in our ongoing pamphlet series. "***Countering the BDS Colonial Settler Narrative***," is adapted from a keynote presentation at AEN's second national conference by Ilan Troen, the Stoll Professor of Israel Studies, emeritus (Brandeis University), and the Lopin Professor of Modern History, emeritus (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev). Troen's pamphlet rejects the settler-colonial paradigm in the case of Israel and emphasizes the rights of Jews as a people to self-determination in their historic homeland.

Conference on Antisemitism

The Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (ISCA) at Indiana University will be holding its fourth International Scholars' Conference, March 23-27, 2019. The topic of the conference is "Contending with Antisemitism in a Changing Political Climate." Please find the **call for papers** and the booklet of the previous conference on ISCA's website, <https://isca.indiana.edu/>. The deadline for proposals is June 1, 2018.

Microgrant Events

On April 12, Gabriel Brahm, Professor of English and Director of the Center for Academic and Intellectual Freedom at Northern Michigan University, hosted Mark Lilla of Columbia University to **address the subject of identity politics** in a talk on "Citizenship and Identity." Around 200 students and faculty attended Lilla's talk, which critiqued identity politics on the left and right. On April 18, Brahm hosted AEN member Cary Nelson, who led a small seminar for a select group of faculty and students, presenting his latest research on poetry about Jerusalem and the Holocaust. The next evening, Nelson gave a public lecture, "Academic Freedom in Times of Crisis: the Future of Collective Bargaining, Free Speech on Campus, and Prospects for Peace in the Middle East." Nearly 100 people attended this lecture, which focused on the poisonous impact of BDS on the campus climate. All three events received extensive positive feedback, with numerous faculty and students reporting that they enriched their understanding of the humanities in general and of Israel in particular. Brahm was particularly impressed by the "first-rate intellectual and moral instruction by two leading liberal Zionists who oppose both BDS and settlements, while supporting a two-state solution based on dialogue and rejecting rigid identitarian claims to purity." Photo credit: Gabriel Brahm.



On April 12, Jeffrey Blutinger, Director of Jewish Studies at California State University-Long Beach, hosted Tamar Arieli, a professor from Tel Hai College in Rosh Pina, Israel (and currently a visiting professor at San Diego State University) to speak about "Economic Development Between Israel and Its Neighbors." Faculty and students who attended the talk found fascinating Arieli's discussion of avenues of cooperation between Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinians.

On April 16, Yaron Ayalon, Professor of History at Ball State University, hosted Rafi Danziger, the former Director of Research and Information for AIPAC and Editor Emeritus of the *Middle East Report*. Over 50 people, mostly students, attended Danziger's talk, "A History of Missed Opportunities: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Since 1947," which was followed by nearly an hour of questions. Students responded positively to the event and reported that it helped to answer their questions about the US-Israel relationship, the importance of Israel as a strategic ally of the US, and the flaws of the BDS movement. Danziger also spoke to Ayalon's History of Israel class on April 17 and had lunch with a group of students. Danziger's talk was part of "Israel Week," a week of on-campus activities showcasing Israel at 70, its democratic politics, vibrant economy, and technological success.

hosted Yael Aronoff, an AEN member and Director of the Jewish Studies program at Michigan State University. Aronoff participated in a lunch with Honors students and a dinner with faculty members, the Chair of the Humanities Department, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences. After the dinner, Aronoff gave a public talk on "Shifting Sands in the Middle East," followed by a lively discussion with students, including a dialogue with a student from Saudi Arabia.

On April 23, Vanessa Schwartz, Professor of History, Art History, and Critical Studies at University of Southern California and Director of the Visual Studies Research Institute, hosted Dalia Manor, Director and Chief Curator of the Negev Museum of Art and Museum of Islamic and Near Eastern Cultures. Manor gave a lecture - "Man, Woman, Arab, Jew: Stereotypes and the National Imaginary in Early Israeli Art."

VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MAN, WOMAN, ARAB, JEW: STEREOTYPES AND THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY IN EARLY ISRAELI ART



DALIA MANOR

The Negev Museum of Art and Museum of Islamic and Near Eastern Cultures

Reuven Rubin, *First Fruits*, triptych, 1923, oil on canvas, Rubin Museum collection, Tel Aviv. 1. *The Shepherd* (left panel). 2. *Fruit of the Land* (central panel). 3. *Serenity (the Bedouin)* (right panel)

MONDAY
APRIL 23

12:00-1:30pm
SOS 250

RSVP to vsri@usc.edu

Graduate students are invited to attend a discussion of research opportunities in Israel following the talk from 1:30 to 2:00pm.



Dalia Manor, art historian and the Director and Chief Curator of the Negev Museum of Art and Museum of Islamic and Near Eastern Cultures in Be'er Sheva, Israel, will discuss 'types' that are frequently depicted in early Israeli art in the pre-Statehood period, from the founding of the Bezalel School of Art and Craft (1906) to the end of the 1920s, in view of the aspiration to create genuine national art in Jewish Palestine. Looking at canonical works by leading Israeli artists such as Ze'ev Raban, Reuven Rubin, Nahum Gutman and others, this talk will explore concepts that accompanied Zionist ideology of the period, such as the 'New Jew' and 'Negation of Exile,' along with Orientalist attitudes and gender stereotypes. The talk will focus in particular on the role of artists in the formation of national identity in the new-old country.

Interview with Jeffrey R. Brown

Jeffrey R. Brown, Dean of the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is the newest member of AEN's Advisory Board. In an interview with AEN Senior Communications Associate Raeeza Shams, Brown discussed his recent travels to Israel, his opposition to the BDS movement, and Israel as a center of innovation. Photo credit: Gies College of Business, UIUC.



motivation for these trips?

I made my first trip to Israel in late 2017 as part of a high-level delegation from the University of Illinois and the State of Illinois. We signed Memoranda of Understanding with several leading Israeli institutions of higher education, including Tel Aviv University, Technion, Ben Gurion, and Hebrew University. Our goal was to create a strong foundation upon which the University of Illinois could build long-term partnerships in Israel. My goal as the Dean of the Gies College of Business was to promote faculty exchanges, student exchanges, and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

My visit to Israel inspired me. The entrepreneurial spirit is so strong in Israel and it resonated with my vision of making the Gies College of Business a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship. On a personal level, I was also deeply moved by visiting Yad Vashem, by walking the streets of old Jerusalem, and by visiting other sites that were so packed with historical, religious, and cultural meaning. Within 24 hours of my arrival, it was clear to me that I wanted our Gies Business students to have the opportunity to experience this for themselves.

Thus, over Spring Break, approximately 35 James Scholars students from the Gies College of Business experienced Israel for themselves. The students were inspired by the dual nature of Israel: a place with such a long and rich history, and a place that now serves as a future-oriented center of high-tech innovation. There is nowhere else like it in the world. This was a trip these students will remember for the rest of their lives.

What were some important insights that you and your students took away from this visit? What was unexpected and surprising?

Prior to the trip, every participating student read "Startup Nation," so they had "book knowledge" of the extent of innovation in Israel. But to witness it in person, to talk to leaders at innovative companies like Mobileye, and to see the "facts on the ground" really drives home just what an ecosystem of innovation really looks like.

In addition, I believe everyone who visited left with a much deeper understanding of the history, culture, and politics of Israel. For example, most of us were awe-struck by how so much history of three major world religions are concentrated in such a small geographic area.

What are some follow-up actions that you and the students have planned to build on the connections you made during your visit?

As a follow up to my visit, I have been working closely with Prof. Moshe Zviran, Dean of the Coller School of Management at Tel Aviv University, to provide

summer. Both of us have connected our respective staffs to work together on a number of initiatives, including research and student exchanges. Both Dean Zviran and I are committed to finding multiple ways to engage that will benefit both schools' faculty and students.

During the recent BDS campaign at UIUC, you wrote your own **op-ed and also signed onto Cary Nelson's faculty letter against the referendum. What prompted you to take this public stance against BDS?**

There were several motivations. First, I care deeply about creating an inclusive environment in the Gies College of Business, and I knew from an earlier experience that BDS movements have the potential to foment antisemitism on campus. I wanted our Jewish students to know that the Gies College of Business stands against antisemitism and for engagement with Israeli institutions. Second, the Gies College of Business is a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, and there are few places in the world that exemplify these ideas as well as Israel. Finally, and above all, I believe that divestment and boycotts are antithetical to what a great public university stands for. We should be engaging with the world, not retreating from it when a subset of our community disagrees with a country's policies.

What specifically can business school faculty do to counter the arguments made against Israel by the BDS movement?

A faculty member need not agree with all, or even any, of the policies of the Israeli government to understand why BDS is contrary to the mission and values of a great university. It is not necessary to engage in debates over Israeli politics or policy to speak out against BDS. In the case of Gies, my focus is on the benefits of global engagement and how, with our emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship, Israeli institutions are natural partners. Israel is home to outstanding universities and a disproportionately large share of the world's leading scholars. BDS would deprive our faculty, staff and students – and the world at large – of the fruits of collaboration.

Campus Updates

This past month saw numerous BDS campaigns at campuses across the country:

Barnard College

A pro-BDS referendum at Barnard College **passed** by a vote of 64.3% in favor to 35.7% against, despite efforts on the part of the Israel on Campus Coalition to help pro-Israel students mobilize voters, write op-eds, hone their messaging, and develop sophisticated campaign strategies. After **pushback** from many alumnae, Barnard's President, Sian Leah Beilock, released a **statement** clarifying that Barnard will take no action in response to the referendum results. AEN had earlier

City University of New York

On April 15, a surprise BDS resolution was introduced at a plenary meeting of CUNY's University Student Senate. Upon learning that the resolution would be on the agenda, the AEN national office expeditiously contacted AEN faculty members at CUNY and suggested ways they might help to oppose the student BDS resolution, including by attending the meeting, writing to student delegates, and encouraging students to attend the meeting. AEN Advisory Board Chair Mark Yudof also quickly contacted CUNY's chancellor, James Milliken, to encourage a rejection of any BDS resolution. Ultimately, although the BDS resolution was discussed at the meeting, it failed to win formal consideration to bring to a vote.

George Washington University

At George Washington University, a student government meeting to vote on a proposed BDS resolution on April 16 was canceled due to cited "security concerns." After a sit-in organized by Divest This Time, the student coalition promoting the resolution, the meeting was rescheduled for April 23. During that meeting, the BDS resolution was unfortunately **adopted** by a vote of 18-6-6. GWU President Thomas LeBlanc swiftly released a **statement** declaring that the university will not implement the resolution's proposals. An **alumni petition** calling for a stronger response is currently circulating.

During the campaign, the AEN national office worked with former GWU President (and current AEN board member) Stephen Trachtenberg to develop an **op-ed** (published in the *GW Hatchet*) against the BDS movement. AEN also advised faculty members at GWU about ways in which to support pro-Israel students opposing the BDS campaign.

New York University

New York University's student government passed a **resolution** scrutinizing the university's program in Tel Aviv. Furthermore, over 50 student organizations at NYU, led by Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, **endorsed** the goals of the global BDS movement and pledged to boycott Israeli academic institutions and NYU's own pro-Israel clubs, Realize Israel and TorchPAC. Ken Waltzer wrote a **blog post** for the *Times of Israel* critiquing the illiberal and discriminatory nature of the student groups' statement, and of actions to silence and ghettoize Jewish groups on campus. AEN also sent a letter to the president of NYU urging a statement against these developments.

Andrew Hamilton, the President of NYU, **condemned BDS** at a town hall meeting on April 19: "We believe the university exist[s] to bring people together not to separate them...For this reason I am opposed to BDS. The university will not

AEN Writings

Several AEN members recently wrote deeply analytical essays about the negative impact of the BDS movement within various academic disciplines, and in academic culture in general:

- In *Mosaic*, Jonathan Marks wrote, "How BDS Is Undermining Academic Freedom," **highlighting** the ways in which the BDS movement politicized the academy and threatened the principles of academic freedom. "For BDS is not just a fight between Zionists and anti-Zionists; it is part of a larger fight in which some professors, in pursuit of openly political ends, have risked destroying the principles and the safeguards that for over a century have protected the freedom of their colleagues and the independence of their institutions."
- In *Fathom*, Cary Nelson, along with Russell Berman, wrote "Anti-Zionism and the Humanities: A response to Saree Makdisi," **critiquing** the entrenched anti-Zionism within the humanities. "Contemporary anti-Israel writing...has no gray zones. There are no compromises, and there is no room for debate. It liquidates nuance. It simply directs one to choose sides in order to annihilate the other."
- In *Shofar*, Rachel Harris and Martin Schichtman wrote "BDS, Credibility, and the Challenge to the Academy," **describing** the pernicious impact of the BDS narrative on academic life. "BDS will not occasion, as so many of its advocates hope, the erasure of the state of Israel, but rather facilitate the demise of humanistic inquiry and permanently damage the academy that protects it."

In the *National Interest*, Jeffrey Herf **analyzed** the ideological roots of Hitler's antisemitism. "In the era of Nazism, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt defined Christianity utterly differently than did the Nazis, yet those who have tried to separate Nazism completely from the long Christian attack on Jews and Judaism push contingency too far. Doing so gives too little importance to the weight of the past."

In *Medium*, Cary Nelson **celebrated** the Zionist implications of the Passover holiday. "In many places Jews cannot feel liberated where they are without Israel as both a source of pride and a practical option. Even if you never exercise the option of emigrating, the fact that the option exists can make a difference. Therefore, the concept of Zionism as a national liberation movement is not only natural and very much alive, but also necessary."

In the *Algemeiner*, Andrew Pessin was **interviewed** about his new book (co-edited with Doron Ben-Atar and supported by an AEN microgrant), ***Anti-Zionism on Campus: The University, Free Speech, and BDS*** (Indiana University Press).

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Past Issues

"The best response, I think, is to repeatedly and vocally point this out, and thus promote and defend our book's principal message: that whatever you may think

about the conflict over there, the anti-Israel movement over *here* is profoundly antithetical to the academic and moral norms of the campus environment."

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