



Academic Engagement NETWORK

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September 2018 Newsletter

Ken Waltzer Retirement

Ken Waltzer will be retiring as Executive Director of AEN effective December 31, 2018. Please see his statement below:

Dear Members:

I write to inform you about my decision to retire as Executive Director of the Academic Engagement Network effective at the end of the 2018 calendar year.

It has been a remarkable privilege to work closely with Mark G. Yudof to build the AEN and help create a significant faculty presence opposed to BDS on campus, supportive of academic freedom and free speech, and prepared to respond to antisemitism when it appears. It has been an equally remarkable privilege to get to know so many committed faculty members, help build linkages in an expanding national network, and occasionally contribute in print to the public commons concerning our key issues.

I will have been in the AEN position for three years in November since retiring at Michigan State University. At the beginning there was only an idea. Now there is a mature organization, still growing, with 620 faculty members on over 200

campuses, and numerous key activities, relationships, and measurable outputs. It is now time to attend to my health and share more activities with my family.

As arranged with Mark Yudof, I will continue to serve in the Executive Director position through the end of December 2018. Thereafter I will continue as needed to be a consultant for AEN, participate in the short course initiative with the Brandeis Schusterman Center during 2018-19, and work (with Mark Yudof) on a reading compendium about free speech issues on U.S. campuses. I will also help as I can to assist in recruiting a capable new executive director and smoothing his or her transition to AEN leadership (see the separate call for expressions of interest).

I want to thank our capable staff for all they have contributed – Mike Atkins, without whom it would have been impossible, Raefea Shams, Linda Maizels, Melissa Landa, and Brad Isakson. It has been my pleasure to work with these folks in a team.

The cause that has brought us all together continues to demand our thought, energy, and activity. I look forward as a member to new ideas, new energy, and new creative activities in the next period of AEN's history. Thank you to everyone.

Please see the updated Executive Director position description to be sent in a separate email, accompanied by a list of desired attributes for the job. Interested applicants will be asked to send a cover letter, C.V., and two writing samples to Deputy Director Mike Atkins at mike@academicengagement.org, by November 1, 2018. The cover letter should be addressed to Mark G. Yudof, Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Latest Updates

AEN currently has **618 members on 216 campuses**.

Congratulations to AEN members Miriam Elman and Thane Rosenbaum, on being named two of the **Algemeiner's "Top 100 People Positively Influencing Jewish Life"** in 2018. The blog **Legal Insurrection**, for which Elman is a frequent contributor, **expanded** on her background and accomplishments.

Congratulations to AEN member Ellen Cannon, whose article, "Contemporary Jewish Politics and Historiography: The Case of the BDS movement," was published in the **Routledge Companion to Jewish History and Historiography**. "As we move further into the twenty-first century, the winds of change are apparent and unsettling. America, Israel, the West and Jews in general are increasingly accused of being racist, oppressive, imperialistic colonizers, usurping capitalists and the source of most, if not all, world problems...This study will limit its focus to the

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement focusing on its techniques of mobilization, ideology, and polemics."

Upcoming Events

Alums for Campus Fairness, which seeks to mobilize alumni to combat BDS and anti-Israel sentiment on campus, is inaugurating a webinar series. Its first **webinar**, on October 4, will feature Mark Yudof and Ken Waltzer of AEN - please **click here** to RSVP.

Mark Yudof will be visiting the Dallas area October 14-16. The visit will include meetings with the President, Provost, and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of North Texas; meetings with AEN faculty and students involved with Hillel and Jewish and Israel Studies; and public talks at UNT and Anshai Torah synagogue in Plano.

On November 7, AEN will be holding a faculty convening in Miami, FL. Please let us know if you would like to attend.

Please stay tuned for more information about our upcoming short courses and speakers bureau program.

AEN Microgrant Program

AEN micro-grants are now available to AEN members in amounts of up to \$4,000 for the 2018-19 academic year. These grants are aimed to support faculty in developing innovative, on-campus programming about Israel, BDS, antisemitism, free speech, academic freedom, and other topics relevant to AEN's mission.

AEN's most recent microgrant-supported event was **"Israel at 70: Complexity, Challenge, and Creativity,"** which brought together more than 40 scholars from the United States and Israel to Michigan State University September 16-17 to discuss Israeli society, culture, politics, advances in technology and science, and more. Several AEN members participated in the convening, including Ken Waltzer (AEN/ Michigan State University), Rachel Harris (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Donna Divine (Smith College), Yael Aronoff (Michigan State University), Amy Elman (Kalamazoo College), Alan Dowty (Notre Dame University), and Miriam Elman (Syracuse University). The program was co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program, the College of Arts and Letters, James Madison College, the Eli Broad College of Business, the Israel Institute, and many other departments, programs, and organizations. The conference was covered in the **Algemeiner** and the **Detroit Jewish News**.



ISRAEL AT 70: COMPLEXITY, CHALLENGE, AND CREATIVITY

Academic conference on
September 16-17, 2018 at the
Kellogg Center at Michigan
State University



Jewish Studies Program
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel and reflect on that history, the Michigan State University Jewish Studies Program is very proud to sponsor its largest academic conference ever: "Israel at 70: Complexity, Challenge, and Creativity" on September 16-17, 2018 at MSU's Kellogg Center. The conference brings together 40 internationally recognized scholars from Israel and the United States under one roof to discuss Israeli society, culture, politics, foreign policy, and agricultural, biomedical, water, environmental, and business innovation.

If you are interested in attending please register at <https://msuisraelat70.eventbrite.com>. If you have any further questions please contact Amy Shapiro at 517-432-3493.

Co-sponsors include the College of Arts and Letters, James Madison College, the Eli Broad College of Business, the Institute for Quantitative Health Science & Engineering, the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, the College of Social Science, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Department of Linguistics & Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages, the Asian Studies Center, the Science, Technology, Environment, and Public Policy Program, the Israel Institute, the Academic Engagement Network, the Ravitz Foundation, and the Lester & Jewell Hillel Jewish Student Center.

Other upcoming programs include:

- A visit by prominent Israeli author Yossi Klein Halevi (October 2018)
- A talk by James Loeffler about Zionism and human rights (October 2018)
- A lecture by David Makovsky on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (November 2018)
- A talk by Alan Dowty on pre-state Zionism, Israel, and Jewish-Arab relations (November 2018)
- An exhibit featuring original historical artifacts from the era of the founding of Israel, including posters, political pamphlets, broadsides, and articles (Spring 2019)
- A one-day symposium on Israel-India relations (Spring 2019)

If you have an idea for an event, please fill out a **micro-grant application** on AEN's website. AEN staff are also available to help with brainstorming ideas, recommending speakers and special guests, and advising on outreach. We look forward to hearing your ideas and to helping in any way possible.

Campus Developments

The University of Michigan is facing massive public criticism after John Cheney-Lippold, a professor in its Department of American Culture, **refused** to write a letter of recommendation for a student wishing to study abroad in Israel, explicitly **citing** his support of the BDS movement.

The University initially released a statement characterizing Cheney-Lippold's actions as merely "disappointing" and mentioning its plans to engage faculty in "deep discussions to clarify how the expression of our shared values plays out in support of all students." In response, Mark Yudof and Ken Waltzer sent a **letter** to University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel calling for an open inquiry into the professor's actions, with Ken also **criticizing** the initial statement in the **Times of Israel**. The University then released a revised **statement** reiterating its opposition to boycotts of Israel and expressing the view that "injecting personal politics into a decision regarding support for our students is counter to our values and expectations as an institution..." President Schlissel also **addressed** the issue at a Board of Regents meeting, stating that "personal views and politics should never interfere with our support of students."

AEN member Jonathan Marks also **discussed** the situation in a piece for **Commentary**, arguing that Cheney-Lippold's actions revealed the true face of the BDS movement. "The boycott movement, in other words, can sign on to a solidarity movement that includes the targeting of civilians for death, but cannot sign letters of recommendation for their own undergraduates if those undergraduates seek to learn in Israel. That tells us all we need to know about the boycott movement. It was nice of Cheney-Lippold to tell us."

AEN Writings

In the **Times of Israel**, Ken Waltzer **responded** critically to a **Guardian** article by Nathan Thrall on the influence of the BDS movement. "Save for winning momentary majorities in student government votes on a minority of campuses where BDS has campaigned...BDS has not been successful at all in establishing a firm hold upon American opinion. BDS wins less campaigns on campus than it loses, and the campaigns it wins produce no real victories other than symbolic ones."

In the **Atlantic**, Deborah Lipstadt **critiqued** recent antisemitic statements by UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. "It was this latest recording from Corbyn that left many Jews utterly convinced that this was a man in whom contempt for Jews ran deep—far deeper than necessary. It's not a new problem in British politics."

In **Commentary**, Jonathan Marks **highlighted** an essay by Jeffrey Kopstein of UC-Irvine which recommended impacting the campus discourse on Israel through teaching and scholarship. The essay was featured in **Anti-Zionism on Campus**, which was edited by AEN members Andrew Pessin and Doron Ben-Atar. "There is no question that a rapid response to the boycott efforts that take place every year on our campuses is important. Students who do the difficult work of defending Israel against slander need and deserve support. But the kind of slow and quiet work Kopstein praises is more likely to transform campuses in the long term."

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