



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

USA

Released 17 March 2023

At the mainstream Conservative Political Action Conference in the USA on March 4, American actor-turned-pundit Michael Knowles announced that “for the good of society... transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely” to loud applause and shouts of support.

The Lemkin Institute is horrified by Knowles’ statement, which is part of a much more widespread pattern of genocidal language and policies being used by political actors in the USA against the transgender community. While we are not surprised that the genocidal nature of anti-trans ideology is finally being made explicit, we wish to call attention to the radicalization of the movement’s agenda that is betrayed by these explicit expressions. Now that ideologues of hate can openly call for the elimination of transgender identity – in the very country that has been most open to the transgender community over the last decade – we are at a new stage in the global threat against transgender people.

The Lemkin Institute is encouraged by the response in the English-language press, which quickly called attention to the genocidal nature of Knowles’ speech.

In response to the outcry, Knowles has attempted to argue that he was not calling for genocide since he targeted “transgenderism” and not transgender people for eradication. Many media outlets have already noted the speciousness of this argument. The speed of Knowles’ response suggests that he may be concerned that his words put him in violation of laws against incitement and may make him accountable for future hate crimes and mass atrocities against trans people. If he is not concerned about these things, he should be.

The Lemkin Institute wishes to underscore here that genocide is a crime against group identities rather than against individual human beings and that it can be achieved through various acts, including *but certainly not limited to* physical murder. An apparently committed transphobe like Knowles may believe that transgender people are not real and are instead misled by something called “transgenderism,” so that by eradicating “transgenderism” he would not be eradicating a real identity. To that line of thought we can only note that the arrogance of determining which identities are real and not real, and therefore which identities can be slated for elimination, is

already a giant step in the direction of genocide. Moreover, once an identity is determined to be illegitimate, criminal, and threatening, the killing of people with that identity is never far behind.

The Lemkin Institute reminds American voters and legislators that “the gender critical movement is a totalitarian and genocidal social force that targets not just transgender people, but also all the institutions of democracy that protect individual and collective human rights,” as we pointed out in our statement on November 29, 2022. Anti-trans legislation, anti-trans organizations, and the anti-trans movement must be fought forcefully in the name of saving lives as well as securing democratic institutions from the accelerating threat of fascism in the United States.