

Nicholas Sparks tried to ban an LTBTQ+ club and student protest from his school, like a villain in a book

 news.avclub.com/nicholas-sparks-tried-to-ban-an-ltbtq-club-and-student-1835483436

And now for a bit of news as predictable as his novels: Per an extensive report from *The Daily Beast*, prolific heteronormative romance bro Nicholas Sparks- who also co-founded and runs the Epiphany School of Global Studies in North Carolina - is currently embroiled in a legal battle for an alleged pattern of discriminatory behavior that took place in his school. If you feel like the real news here is that Nicholas Sparks runs a school, well...that's fair. Though he is primarily known for his page-to-screen hits *The Notebook* and *A Walk To Remember* (and *Safe Haven*, because most of them weren't home runs), he helped to establish a private school in 2006 "anchored in the Judeo-Christian commandment to Love God and Your Neighbor as Yourself," per Epiphany's mission statement. In 2014, the school's former headmaster and CEO Saul Benjamin filed a lawsuit against members of the Board of Trustees, including Sparks who, in Benjamin's words, "unapologetically marginalized, bullied, and harassed members of the School community."

Benjamin's claims are at least partially supported by a 2013 email obtained by *The Daily Beast*, which shows Sparks tersely refusing to support Benjamin's attempt to establish an LGBTQ+ club in order to make Epiphany more expressly inclusive. When Benjamin presumably brought up the school's non-discrimination policy to support his idea, Sparks responded:

"About the non-discrimination policy you keep bringing up: please remember that sexual orientation was NOT in there originally, and that the *only* reason it was added was that YOU insisted it be specifically be [sic] added...Frankly, no one but you wanted it in there...Please stop implying it was something the [Board Of Trustees] wanted to do, it's the law....If possible, we might be able to change it back to what it was before."

It gets worse. Further along in the message Sparks reminds Benjamin that the school has had gay students before - "many of them" - who were "handled quietly and wonderfully." He continues to prove just how much of a quality guy he is by suggesting to prohibit student protest - which, according to *The Daily Beast*, "came directly in response to two lesbian girls planning to announce their orientation during chapel" - and complaining that Benjamin has spent too much time emphasizing diversity and acceptance when they should be focusing on college placement and raising money. Benjamin also cited issues with racism and harassment throughout his time with the school. A romance writer not knowing a damn thing about actual love? Now *there's* a twist.