

# Nicholas Sparks reportedly tried to ban an LGBTQ club at the private prep school he founded, emails show

 [businessinsider.com/nicholas-sparks-lgbtq-club-ban-epiphany-school-lawsuit-2019-6](https://www.businessinsider.com/nicholas-sparks-lgbtq-club-ban-epiphany-school-lawsuit-2019-6)

- The novelist Nicholas Sparks tried to shut down an LGBTQ club from being formed at the private prep school he co-founded, emails published by The Daily Beast on Thursday show.
- The former headmaster sued Sparks and the school's Board of Trustees in 2014, accusing them of discrimination, breach of contract, emotional distress, and defamation.
- Sparks said in a statement Thursday that the story was "not news, and repeats false accusations and claims made against epiphany and me, and largely ignores the overwhelming evidence we have submitted to the Court."
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The best-selling romance novelist Nicholas Sparks tried to stop an LGBTQ club from being formed at the private prep school he co-founded, according to 2013 emails by Sparks that The Daily Beast published Thursday.

Sparks, perhaps best known for authoring "The Notebook" and "A Walk to Remember," co-founded the Epiphany School of Global Studies in North Carolina in 2006.

But in 2013, Sparks and the school's headmaster, Saul Benjamin, began feuding over Benjamin's efforts to implement anti-discrimination policies and promote diversity among the student body, according to the emails.

Benjamin sued Sparks and the Board of Trustees in 2014, accusing them of discrimination, breach of contract, emotional distress, and defamation. The case is set to go to trial in August.

Benjamin alleged in the lawsuit that he "attempted to bring real diversity and inclusiveness to Epiphany," but that Sparks and the board members "were enraged and threatened by his efforts."

Several 2013 emails from Sparks to Benjamin published by The Daily Beast show that Sparks was irate at Benjamin's handling of the LGBTQ club and his broader efforts to foster diversity among the student body.

"As far as the non-discrimination policy goes, do you realize that I have never, until the last two months, heard this phrase from the headmaster ever when talking about the school? The reason I never heard it was because the school does NOT, nor has it EVER,

discriminated," Sparks wrote to Benjamin on November 18, 2013, according to a copy of the email the Daily Beast published. "Not allowing them admittance is discrimination. Not allowing them to have a club is NOT discrimination."

Sparks also said in the email that he would be "prohibiting 'protests' of any kind on campus."

## Sparks says the accusations and claims are 'false'

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Sparks said in a statement provided to INSIDER by his publicist and shared on his Twitter page Thursday that The Daily Beast's story was "not news, and repeats false accusations and claims made against epiphany and me, and largely ignores the overwhelming evidence we have submitted to the Court."

[pic.twitter.com/y4nZX6TByD](https://pic.twitter.com/y4nZX6TByD)

— Nicholas Sparks (@NicholasSparks) [June 13, 2019](#)

He added that the court has dismissed "nearly every claim against me" and "all claims of discrimination or harassment," though an upcoming trial will hear "a few remaining issues."

"As we prepare for trial, I want to make one thing clear: Epiphany is and remains a place where students and faculty of any race, belief, religion, background or orientation should feel welcome," Sparks said in his statement. "My commitment to these values, as well as Epiphany's commitment to these values, have been and remain constant."